

FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST
SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY



Icon of the Holy Images

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend



The first weekend of the Great Fast challenges us with two very interesting readings. The first is from Paul's Letter to the Hebrews and the second is from John's Gospel about the calling of both Philip and Nathanael. In the Eastern Church this first weekend of the Fast is also known as the *triumph of orthodoxy* - it commemorates the victory over Iconoclasm and the restoration of the veneration of icons in Constantinople in 843 CE. The connection of this celebration with Lent is purely historical - this event took place on the first weekend of the Great Fast in the ninth century. I truly do believe, however, that we

can connect this with the common message from our readings.

The common message in the readings is that our FAITH tells us that God is truly involved in our lives. He is not distant and unconnected. Faith can make a difference. Faith can help us to come to a true understanding of the meaning and purpose of our lives. We are called by God to be people of FAITH. It is the one force that can sustain us on life's journey.

This same message is conveyed through the Gospel story of Jesus meeting Nathanael. In the story Jesus tells Nathanael that He saw Him sitting under a fig tree before He actually met him. This clearly reinforces the thought that God is very aware of our lives and all of our struggles and successes and is with us, if we only believe. We see this in Nathanael's response: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel". God, through His Son Jesus, knows all about us and cares for us, if only we believe. Jesus says to Nathanael, "Do you just believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see much greater things than that!"

How do we connect the message of these readings with the *triumph of orthodoxy*? When we are people of true FAITH, we become living "icons" of God. We reflect to our world a God Who is with us, loving us and supporting us on the journey of earthly life.

We must always remember that we have FAITH in a Person, namely our Triune God. While we hold sacred various truths about our God, our FAITH is placed in Him. It is critical that we understand that we believe, first of all, in God. Hopefully His Church supports us in our striving to believe and hope in Him and Him alone! We strive to become "living icons" of our God.

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

Of all the liturgical rules pertaining to the Great Fast, one is of importance for the understanding of the peculiar Tradition of our Greek-Catholic Church. It is one that has not been universally followed after our union with the Western Catholic Church. It is now becoming much more widely accepted as our Church is more completely embracing our Sacred Tradition. That liturgical rule, simply stated, is that the *Divine Eucharistic Liturgy is not to be celebrated on weekdays of the Fast*. The ancient rules are clear: under no circumstances is the Divine Liturgy to be celebrated Monday through Friday, during the Great Fast, with one exception: the major Feast of the Annunciation (*the feast that celebrates when Mary conceived Jesus at the proclamation of the Archangel Gabriel*). Tradition prescribes a special evening service of Communion which has been consecrated on Sunday. It is called the *Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts*. This Tradition is based on a fundamental liturgical principle: the incompatibility of the Eucharist with fasting. To truly understand this principle, however, we have to first consider the meaning of the Eucharist.

The Eucharist has always preserved its festal and joyful character. It is the first of all mysteries of Christ's coming and being present among His followers. So, in a very real sense, it is always the celebration of His Resurrection and is, of course, proof of His Resurrection. We



must remember the story of Jesus meeting His disciples on the way to the town of Emmaus. His disciples did not recognize Him except in the “breaking of bread”. When He joined them for dinner, He took bread and broke it and gave it to them. When He did that, they immediately recognized Him.

The Eucharist must be for us, as it was for these disciples, a joy and “burning of heart” knowing that He is with us. So, the celebration of the Divine, Eucharistic Liturgy is always a celebratory occasion (*This is also one reasons why we completely end the Divine Liturgy and close the Royal Doors before we serve a Panahyda. The Requiem service is not to be seen as a part of the Liturgy*).

Every time the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she is in heaven. One understands then why the Eucharist is incompatible with fasting, for fasting is the main expression of the Church as still in a state of pilgrimage - a state of still making her way to the Heavenly Kingdom. Remember that Christ said that the “sons of the Kingdom” cannot fast while the Bridegroom is with them”. So then why do we distribute Communion on fast days?

The Divine Liturgy and Our Worship of God

As we enter into the Great Fast and worship our God using the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, we are also drawn into a detailed description of what we believe about our God. We pray this:

Who indeed is able to describe adequately Your deeds of might or proclaim the wondrous works you have performed at all times?

Our Church indeed calls us to stand in awe before our God. St. Basil shares with us the characteristics of our God when we pray:

You Who are without beginning, invisible, incomprehensible, unbounded and unchangeable

In light of these words, I would ask you to recall the challenge I gave you on the Weekend of the Prodigal Son, namely to assess your understanding of Who God is and to change that understanding to what God is as He as He has revealed Himself to be through the Church. When we really understand that we, as His creations, cannot change even one iota of His disposition toward us by our actions, we will begin to spiritually grow.

I truly believe that if we only see God as a Judge and an all-powerful being that demands we act a certain way or be punished, we can never respond to His love and can never truly become His children. We see that Jesus, despite the grave challenges He had to face, always thought of His Father as “Abba”, truly an affectionate term that expressed



the fact the Jesus understood that the Father loved Him and that He, in turn, desired to voluntarily return the Father’s love. St. Basil, in the first prayer of the Anaphora, continues the prayer by addressing who the Son and Holy Spirit are. The prayer states that the Lord Jesus Christ is:

Great God and Redeemer, our hope, Who is the image of Your goodness, the seal of Your own likeness, showing You forth in Himself, O Father - the living Word, true God, eternal Wisdom, life, Sanctification, Power, the true light.

St. Basil then states that Jesus is the One through Whom

The Holy Spirit manifested Himself; the Spirit of truth, the gift of the adoption of Son, the pledge of our future inheritance, the first fruits of everlasting blessedness, the life-giving power, the found of sanctification, through Whom every creature possessed of reason and understanding is given the power to serve You (Father) and to send up to You an unending hymn of glory, because all things are Your subjects.



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!



SPIRITUAL ACTS

If you add *Spiritual Acts of Mercy* to your Lenten efforts, you will find great reward. This week try to connect with a friend or relative you have not had contact with for some time.

WINDOWS

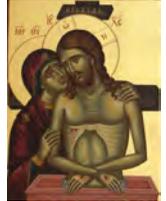
One of the things that I am currently working on is how to soften the impact of the light from our new windows. They cast a light blue hue over the entire nave. I truly feel that the screen that you see on the windows is a first step. I am exploring other options to help with this. I do know that the noise is dramatically cut down and our heating and cooling costs will be dramatically reduced.



There is only one happiness in this life, to love and be loved.

CALLED TO HOLINESS

I don't know if any of my readers have ever thought about this, but the purpose of this life on earth is to imitate Jesus Who worked to make God's Kingdom real during His lifetime. If we truly become engaged in making our God's Kingdom real during our lifetime, we will be changed - transformed into God's children. For to work for the establishment of the Kingdom, we have to become people who see the importance of "love of neighbor". Love of neighbor, however, requires that we are ready and willing to not only *forgive* our neighbors but also accept them as they are. This process changes us.



When we refuse to be bigoted, prejudiced, judgmental, hateful and unloving, we change and God's Kingdom become a little more real in our world. We are the instruments that He has chosen to bring about His Kingdom in the here and now.

I find that when people only think about God's Kingdom as something (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

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.

MONDAY, MARCH 6th

Let me, O Lord, make haste to humble my flesh by abstinence as I continue the God-given course of the Fast. With prayers and tears let me seek my Savior. Laying aside all memories of evil, let me cry aloud: I have sinned against You, O Christ. Save me as You did the men of Nineveh and, in Your compassion, make me a sharer of Your Kingdom. Let me set out with joy upon the season of the Fast and prepare myself for spiritual combat. Let me purify my soul and cleanse my flesh. Rejoicing in the virtues of the Spirit may I persevere with love and so be counted worthy to see the solemn Passion and Resurrection of Christ, my God. I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

TUESDAY, MARCH 7th

O Lord, gather together my scattered mind and purify my dry and barren heart, giving me repentance like Peter, the sighs of sorrow like the Publican and the tears like the Harlot so that I may cry with a loud voice unto You: Save me, O God, for You only are compassionate and love me. Often when I offer praise to You, O Lord, I am committing sin. For, while I sing the hymns with my tongue, my soul ponders evil thoughts. But through repentance, Christ my God, set right my tongue and soul and have mercy upon me. I want to wash away with tears the record of my sins and through the rest of my life to please You by repentance. I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8th

As the Prodigal Son I come to You, O compassionate Lord, and I fall down before You. Accept me as one of Your hired servants and have mercy on me. Just as the man who fell among thieves, I too have fallen, through my sins, and my soul is truly wounded. To whom shall I flee for refuge if not to You, the merciful Physician of souls. Pour on me, O Lord, the oil of Your great mercy. Sinner though I be, O Savior, cut me not down as the barren fig tree. Grant me forgiveness for my many years of sin and water my soul with tears of repentance so that the fruit I produce may be acts of mercy and compassion. 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

THURSDAY, MARCH 9th

Indeed, O Lord, most blessed is the grace of the holy Fast. For through fasting Moses was glorified and he received the Law written upon tablets; and through fasting the three Children were made stronger than the fire. Through fasting, then, let me quench any desire to be self-centered and therefore unloving and unforgiving to others. Help me, O Lord, to obtain the fruits of my voluntary abstinence from certain foods and behaviors. Help me to focus my thoughts on the task of truly becoming Your child by imitating Jesus, my Savior and Lord. Help me, O Lord, to develop the desire of Zacchaeus and the humility of the Publican so that I might do everything in my power to spiritually grow. I again ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

FRIDAY, MARCH 10th

O Lord, let me enter the inner chamber of my soul and there offer prayers to You, crying out and saying: Our Father, Who art in heaven, remit and forgive my transgressions, for You alone are compassionate. Help me to forgive others as I desire to be forgiven. Then, showing joyfulness of soul in the Fast, let me not be of a sad countenance. For the change in my way of life during these blessed days will help me to gain holiness. Through abstinence, give wings to my soul and let me offer acceptable prayers to You, the Lord of heaven. In a spirit of compunction, let me weep for the deliverance of my soul and sing the praises of Christ forever. I again ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

SATURDAY, MARCH 11th

Beyond my understanding is your child-bearing, O Mother of God. For without man you conceived and, in virginity, you gave birth to a Child Who is God. Him I magnify, O Virgin, and call you blessed. Through fasting let me intensify my prayer. With a pure heart like Moses, let me also look on God, receiving inwardly the commandments and shine with glory in the presence of God's love. Let me see these commandments not as laws to be kept or broken but as guides to how I am called to treat others. I realize that you, dear Mother, taught your Son Jesus to embrace them as a guide for His life. Help me to do the same. With all the hosts of heaven I magnify Him and I call you most blessed, O Mother of God. AMEN.

SUNDAY, MARCH 12th

O Lord, help me to become Your child. I have no other hope but You. In the abundance of Your goodness, save me and help me to spiritually grow through my efforts during this Great Fast. Help me to understand that if I grow in my imitation of Jesus, Your only-begotten Son, I will discover the true meaning and purpose of this earthly life. Let me cleanse myself by almsgiving and acts of mercy, not sounding a trumpet or making a show of my charity. Let not my left hand know what my right hand is doing. Let not vainglory scatter the fruit of my almsgiving, but, in secret, let me call on You Who knows all the secrets of my life. I again ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

Schedule of Services

Sunday, March 5 - First Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 1
10:00 AM - Lydia Soja; Lesia Florchuk

Second Week of the Great Fast - Tone 2

Monday, March 6 - 42 Martyrs of Ammorium
No Liturgy Scheduled

Tuesday, March 7 - Basil & Others, Bishop Martyrs of Cherson
No Liturgy Scheduled

Wednesday, March 8 - Theophylact, Bishop-Confessor
No Liturgy Scheduled

Thursday, March 9 - 40 Martyrs of Sebaste
No Liturgy Scheduled

Friday, March 10 - Condratus & Others, Martyrs
7:00 PM - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, March 11 - Holy Father Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem
No Liturgy Scheduled

Sunday, March 12 - Second Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 2
10:00 AM - John Kushner; Luba Bluj

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

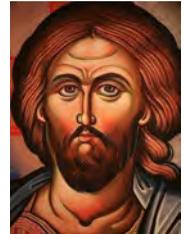
Greg & Esther Petrovich
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

that will only transpire in the future after death, they are not as concerned about making it real at the present time. Jesus was concerned about transforming His society **NOT IN THE FUTURE** but **DURING HIS LIFETIME**. That is why He was willing to die in order to give true life to His teaching. It is only in the present moment that we can change. Now is the time to give ourselves to spiritually growth and development. This present life, as God designed it, allows us multiple opportunities to spiritually grow if only we seize the moment. **AND**, just keeping rules will not bring about spiritual development. Personal transformation is the result of actively trying to make ourselves grow in the image and likeness of Jesus. That is the primary task of life. That is the true meaning of life! Ask yourself this:

What does it mean to me to be a Christian?



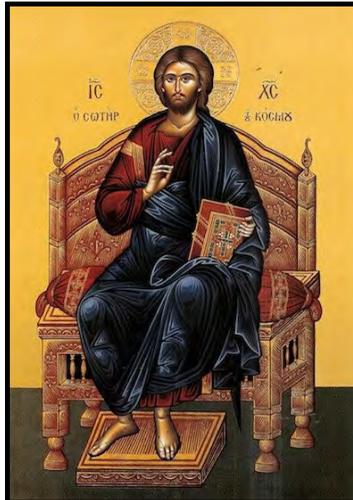
<http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org> - and - [Facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn)

Gaining a Deeper Understanding of the New Testament

In this article I have been providing information about the Gospel of Mark, considered to be the oldest of the four Gospels and the source of much of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. When we read Mark's Gospel, we need to be aware that Genesis was always in the background. Mark was always thinking of God as the Creator, whose primary concern is to create, sustain and restore life. His Gospel is filled with reminders of "the beginning." It is structured around the idea that God desires to lead us back to the original Garden. Indeed of particular importance to Mark is God's creation of human beings in God's image. Mark presents Jesus as a NEW ADAM (*son of man*) and as image of the divinity (*son of God*). I have also hoping that these comments on the Gospel of Mark might inspire some to read the Gospel during the Great Fast. It could be a very good exercise during the Fast and, as you read the Gospel, you could also read this article.

Mark also connects Jesus to the central prophets of Jewish tradition - Moses and Elijah. In terms of narrative structure, Jesus' relationship to John the Baptist is patterned after the Elijah -Elisha cycle in the two books of Kings, a cycle which, in its own way, echoes

the biblical narrative from Genesis to Kings. The miracles that Mark shows Jesus performing have their connections to Elijah's raising up a young man from death (1 Kings 17:17-24), to Elisha's multiplication of loaves (2 Kings 4:42-44) and to his cleansing of a leper (2 Kings 5:1-14). When Mark shows Jesus in his state of transfigured glory, he shows him in conversation with Moses, the giver of God's word and with Elijah, the prophet who, according to biblical legend, never died but was taken up to heaven.



Mark also places Jesus in the tradition of the prophets seeking the reform of the Temple. By means of interweaving quotations from Scripture, Mark links Jesus to the warnings of Jeremiah and the vision of Isaiah. He shows Jesus warning that the Temple would be destroyed unless the Temple authorities gave up their idolatrous connections with foreign power and wealth. At the same time, Mark shows Jesus sharing Isaiah's vision of a sacred space where all peoples will join together in worshipping the one God.

We must always remember that Mark, unlike Luke, was a Jew and was deeply immersed in Judaism and that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah.

Learning Our Faith From the Greek Fathers of the Church



As I shared in the last issue of this article, the Arian heresy began when Arius refused to accept Alexander's formulations about Jesus. If the Son, Arius exclaimed, possesses the same divine nature as the Father - is "consubstantial" with him - then "the Father is compound and divisible and alterable and a body, and according to them presumably, the bodiless God is thought of as suffering what belongs to a body."

The Father, Arius insisted, cannot share his divine nature with another. He is by definition simple (*not made up of parts*) and indivisible (*incapable of division into parts*). Hence, whoever and whatever the Son is, he cannot be

eternally God, uncreated and consubstantial with the Father. Some other definition regarding the Son will have to be formulated, and Arius appoints himself for the task.

"What is it that we say, and think, and have taught, and teach?" Arius asks Eusebius.

That the Son is not unbegotten, nor a part of the unbegotten in any way, nor formed out of any substratum, but that he was constituted by "God's will and counsel, before times and before ages, full of grace and truth, divine, unique, unchangeable. *And before he was begotten or created or ordained or founded, he was not.* For he was not unbegotten. We are persecuted because we say, "The Son has a beginning, but God is without beginning." For this we are persecuted, and because we say, "he is made out of things that were not." But this is what we say, since he is neither a part of God nor formed out of any substratum. For this we are persecuted, and you know the rest.

Frankly, Arius seems to want his cake and to eat it, too. On the one hand, he wants to affirm that the Son is in some way divine. On the other hand, if Arius is to preserve God's simplicity and indivisibility, he must affirm that the Son has a beginning, even if he posits this as a beginning outside of time as we know it. Arius asserts, then, that the Son was "begotten timelessly by the Father and created before ages and established." Arius admits that the Son is utterly unique - "He alone was constituted by the Father - yet the Son is "neither eternal nor coeternal nor co-unbegotten with the Father, nor does he have his being together with the Father."

Let Your Prayer Come from a Humble Heart

When we pray, our words should be calm, modest and disciplined. Let us reflect that we are standing before God. We should please Him both by our bodily posture and the manner of our speech. It is characteristic of the vulgar to shout and make a noise, not those who are modest. On the contrary, they should employ a quiet tone in their prayer.

Moreover, in the course of His teaching, the Lord instructed us to pray in secret. Hidden and secluded places, even our own rooms, give witness to our belief that God is present everywhere; that He sees and hears all; that in the fullness of His majesty, He penetrates hidden and secret places. This is the teaching of Jeremiah: Am I God when I am near, and not God when I am far away? Can anyone hide in a dark corner without my seeing Him? Do I not fill heaven and earth? Another passage of Scrip-

ture says: The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, observing both good and wicked men.

The same modesty and discipline should characterize our liturgical prayer as well. When we gather to celebrate the divine mysteries with God's priest, we should not express our prayer in unruly words; the petition that should be made to God with moderation is not to be shouted out noisily and verbosely. For God hears our heart not our voice. He sees our thoughts; He is not to be shouted at. The Lord showed us this when He asked: Why do you think evil in your hearts? The Book of Revelation testifies to this also: And all the churches shall know that I am the one who searches the heart and the desires.

St. Cyprian of Carthage

Visit www.ecpubs.com for more publications.