

SECOND SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST
SUNDAY OF SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS



Icon of Saint Gregory Palamas

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

On this second weekend of the Great Fast, our readings are taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews and Mark's Gospel. The Church also calls us to remember Gregory Palamas. We remember Gregory because the condemnation of his enemies and the vindication of his teachings by the Church in the 14th century was acclaimed as a second triumph of orthodoxy. For this reason we annually remember him on the second weekend in the Great Fast.

We are reminded of this from Paul's Letter to the Hebrews:

...therefore, we must pay close attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it. How shall we escape if we neglect such salvation.

This builds on what we heard in the readings from the First Weekend.

We heard this:

...and these all, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised since God has foreseen *something better for us (Paul to the Hebrews)*; and

...you shall see greater things than these...you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man (*John's Gospel*).

The message of these passages is that we who believe in Christ and who prepare ourselves for Pascha, shall see the inauguration of the new age, the fulfillment of all promises, the manifestation of the Kingdom. But we shall only see this if we



if we desire to engage in the effort of personal transformation or *Metanoia*.

The Gospel story we hear this weekend highlights the *desire* needed to truly change our lives. It means that we will do whatever is necessary to come into the presence of Christ. It means that: *we will pay close attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from our efforts (Paul to the Hebrews)*.

I truly believe that the Great Fast is given to us by the Church to focus our lives on discerning the meaning and purpose of this earthly life. The entire Church, during this time, reflects on the revelation given to us by God about the meaning and purpose of this earthly existence - on what we are to accomplish during this earthly sojourn. There is a reason why we have been given this human life.

Although we are called to focus on our spiritual development throughout the year, the fact that we intensely focus on the life of Jesus during this time and how He met the challenges of life, supports our efforts to change.

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

As I shared in the last issue of this article, the Eastern Church's unique approach to the observance of the Great Fast is to refrain from serving the Divine Liturgy during week days, which are "fast days". I then raised a question which Western Catholics have frequently asked, namely, why do we distribute *presanctified communion* then during week days? Does this not contradict the liturgical principle that I enunciated?

To answer this question, I must share the Eastern Church's thoughts on the second meaning of Communion. It is considered the source and sustaining power of any spiritual effort. Holy Communion is the fulfillment of all our efforts, the goal toward which we strive, the ultimate joy of our Christian life. Communion is also the source and *beginning* of our spiritual effort itself, that which makes it possible for us to know, to desire and to strive for a more perfect communion with our God.

When we take apart the word communion, it truly means *union-with* our God. This is also why we say that the task of this earthly life is to become more like Jesus. As we become more like Jesus, we enter into deeper UNION with our Triune God. Through the partaking of COMMUNION, we are given the gifts of courage, strength and true determination to enter into a deeper UNION with our God.

Of course we have to understand that Communion is a joining of our



hearts and minds with Jesus, Who is God Himself in human form. When we partake of communion, we spiritually and psychologically declare our desire to be one with Jesus and, therefore one with God. We know, however, that to be one with God we must become like Jesus. This requires of any human being a change of heart and mind.

Partaking of Communion also joins us, in a unique way, to God's Kingdom, albeit, at this present time, not in its fullness. Holy Communion, however, gives us a foretaste of His Kingdom.

So Communion is distributed during the week days of the Great Fast to support us in our efforts of personal change and transformation. As I have shared with my readers before, God has given us humans the *potential* to be like the Person of Jesus. We cannot, however, achieve the actualization of this potential without His help. We must cooperate with Him if we desire to actualize this potential. He supports us in this effort through His presence with us in Holy Communion. We truly believe that He is truly present to us when we partake of the transformed bread and wine which, we believe, are His Body and Blood - are Him!

The Divine Liturgy and Our Worship of God

As we celebrate the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great during the Great Fast, it should become obvious to all that the main difference between this Liturgy and that of John Chrysostom are mainly the prayers that the celebrant offers on behalf of the community. There is one prayer that changes for the faithful, namely the prayer to the Mother of God which occurs in the Anaphora.

Here are the different prayers: the two Prayers of the Faithful before the Great Entrance; the priestly prayers of the Anaphora itself; the bowing prayer said after the Our Father; and the prayer at the end of the Litany of Thanksgiving.

Although I had started sharing the prayers of the Anaphora, I would take time to back-track, at this point, and just share some thoughts about the prayers we offer before the Anaphora. It is my sincere hope that as we pray this Liturgy together our faith may be strengthened.

First, we typically use two different antiphons. The first is actually an adaptation of Psalm 103 (*Septuagint version*). This is a *thanksgiving Psalm* of deep, religious sensitivity. It is a simple and beautiful reaction to God's goodness. Yahweh is a saving God Who forgives man's sin and blesses him with good things. Perhaps one of the most poignant lines is: *As a father cares for his children, so the Lord cares for those who revere Him*. I would beg you to listen to the words.



As we pray Basil's Liturgy, we also use a different second antiphon. For this antiphon we use St. Matthew's version of the **BEATITUDES**. We use a very beautiful, haunting refrain between each verse, that is a version of the prayer of the Good Thief: *Remember us, O Lord, when You come into Your Kingdom*.

We pray, *blessed are the: poor in spirit; the sorrowing; the lowly; those who hunger and thirst for holiness; those who show mercy; the single-hearted; the peace-makers; and those who are persecuted*. In effect the Beatitudes tell us that we will be blessed - we will find understanding - when we meet the challenges of life the way that Jesus did, that is meet the challenges with a desire to understand how they can help us to spiritually grow. Jesus met all of the challenges of His life with a peaceful determination to use them to help Him truly become His Father's son.

Again, I would encourage all to truly think about what it is that we pray and to reflect upon the refrain: *Remember us, O Lord, when You come into Your Kingdom*.

More to follow!



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!

MIDDLE OF THE GREAT FAST

SOUP LUNCH - March 19th

It has become a tradition here at St. Michael's Parish to mark the half-way point of the Great Fast by a **SOUP LUNCH**. You are kindly requested to make reservations by signing-up on the sheet provided in the vestibule. If you will be bringing a soup, we ask you to indicate that and also to make it "a Lenten Soup" which means no meat or dairy products.



ACTS FOR THE GREAT FAST



If you are adding *Spiritual Acts of Mercy* to your Lenten efforts, why not try, this week, to embrace a more quiet life and use the time to prayer for someone having difficulties with life.

Don't walk behind me; I may not lead.
Don't walk in front of me; I may not follow.
Just walk beside me and be my friend

CALLED TO HOLINESS

The Great Fast is truly a wonderful time to think about God's call to us to be holy. Why? Because we are more focused on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Although we the life of Jesus is always in our thoughts throughout the entire year, the liturgical life of the Church during the Great Fast is much more focused on how Jesus actually met the challenges of His life - the greatest challenges of His life! We are called to focus on how He lived out the life that was given to Him.



For example, it is reasonable to assume that Jesus knew that if He preached a message of "inclusion" and "love of enemies" to others, that He would necessarily disturb the leaders of His religion. He knew this as a man. And yet, because He knew this to be right, He chose to preach what He did. So at some level He knew that He would "tick-off" the leaders of His faith. He realized, however, that things had to change if people were to have a true relationship with God.

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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 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

MONDAY, MARCH 13th

O Father and God of all, let me cry to You with the words of the Prodigal. Let me fall down before You, saying: I have sinned against You, Father. Accept my repentance! You have conferred upon me a royal birthright by becoming a man. But I have not truly appreciated Your gift and have, at times, fed swine, the offspring of my sins. But in Your compassion spare me, O Savior. I would, like the Prodigal Son, kneel before You seek Your forgiveness. Run out to meet me and, taking me in Your embrace, grant me the tokens of Your salvation. Instead of a hired servant, make me truly Your child. I voluntarily surrender to Your will, O Savior Who loves mankind and ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

TUESDAY, MARCH 14th

When I consider my actions, wasting in prodigal desires the wealth which You have given me, I am filled with fear and in repentance and I cry out to You, my Father and my God: I have sinned, save me. As I think about my life, I realize that sinning on earth makes me afraid of heaven. For I alone will be my accuser, O Word of God, when all things are made know at the end. I admit I fed on dark and swinish thoughts when, like the Prodigal, I left You, O Savior, and went into a far country. But now I cry: I have sinned against You. Save me, for fervently I run for refuge to Your tender mercy. I again ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15th

We who believe in You, O Master, know the wealth of Your great and measureless compassion. With the Prodigal Son and in deep sincerity, I bow down before You. Accept me, a sinner, who flees to You for refuge. For I truly believe that there is no sin, O compassionate Lord, that can overcome Your love for me and all humankind. Therefore I proclaim in faith my belief that You are not three Gods but one Godhead. I honor three Persons: the Father unbegotten, the Son begotten from the Father and the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father, One God in Three. I come before You, O God, as Your child, desirous to offer You praise and glory. Please accept my humble praise. This I ask 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 16th

O Master, I believe that You humbled Yourself, because of Your compassion, and speak with kindness to Your fallen children. In Your love for humankind, You go out to meet the sinful and, embracing them, You grant them salvation. If any person reproaches You for this, You, in Your tender love, do not respond to him in anger but, because of your measureless mercy, You forgive him. Knowing and believing this, I bow down before You, my Lord and my God, and ask You to truly help me to become Your child and never question the depth of Your mercy. Help me only to remember my own sinfulness and be grateful for Your mercy This I desire with all of my heart and ask You, who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit to help me. AMEN

FRIDAY, MARCH 17th

O Master, as I continue this Great Fast, help me in my efforts to understand the meaning of my preparation for Pascha, the Christian experience of exodus from sin and earthly bondage to a journey into the Promised Land, the Kingdom of Our Heavenly Father. Help me to understand that this earthly life given to me is truly a journey to a deeper union with my Triune God and that it is a journey that is only accomplished through personal transformation and change. Help me to understand how I must change. Help me to open my heart and mind to the presence of the Holy Spirit within me, loving me and calling me to deeper union with You, my God. I ask this of You, who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit to help me. AMEN

SATURDAY, MARCH 18th

As we approach the mid-point of the Fast, O Master, I ask You to help me continue my efforts to prepare myself to celebrate all You have done for me. With the Church I declare: Shine your grace, O Blessed Cross, upon my heart so that I may understand God's great love for me. Help me to embrace the Cross, knowing that through it my fear of death has been abolished and the joy of eternal life is granted me. Help me, O Lord, to understand the meaning of the Cross, the Tomb, the Resurrection, the Ascension into heaven and the sitting at the right hand of the Father. I believe that Your actions have opened the door to salvation. I ask this of You, who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit to help me. AMEN

SUNDAY, MARCH 19th

On this day of the Veneration of the Holy Cross of Christ, O my soul, join with the Church in declaring: Hail, life-giving Cross, the Tree of incorruption that brings humankind the enjoyment of eternal glory. Through you, O Cross, the hosts of demons have been driven back and the hierarchies of angels rejoice with one accord. You are an invincible weapon, an unbroken stronghold. Grant me now the grace and faith to draw near to the Passion of Christ and His Resurrection for through you, O Cross, the power of death is swallowed up, giving mankind access to heaven. O invincible weapon, glory of martyrs, ornament of saints, haven of salvation, bestow on me and the world great mercy. I ask this of You, who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit to help me. AMEN

Schedule of Services

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

Third Week of the Great Fast - Tone 3

Monday, March 13 - Translation of Nicephorus' Relics
No Liturgy Scheduled

Tuesday, March 14 - Benedict, Venerable
No Liturgy Scheduled

Wednesday, March 15 - Agapius & Others, Martyrs
No Liturgy Scheduled

Thursday, March 16 - Sabinus & Papas, Martyrs
No Liturgy Scheduled

Friday, March 17 - Alexis, Man of God, Venerable
7:00 PM - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, March 18 - Cyril, Patriarch of Jerusalem
No Liturgy Scheduled

Sunday, March 19 - Third Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 3
10:00 AM - Walt Kizel; Halyna Bialczyk

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

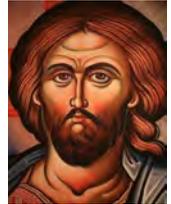
Greg & Esther Petrovich
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

And so He chose to preach the truth, even know He would have to face the consequences. *(An aside. All the prophets before Him faced the same thing. They all felt that Israel had to change. All were also killed because they opposed the status quo. Does this sound familiar?).* He chose to lead an authentic life, living in accord with His beliefs.

Of course the "call to holiness" is a call to live in accord with our beliefs and not be hypocrites or Pharisees. That was truly a real part of His message. **LIVE AS YOU BELIEVE!** When you think about it, however, you realize that He said this to people within His own religion. He didn't push His beliefs down the throats of those who didn't believe like Him. He only sincerely lived the way He believed. So the call to holiness is a call to truly be the persons we profess to be. Faith is not a game!



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

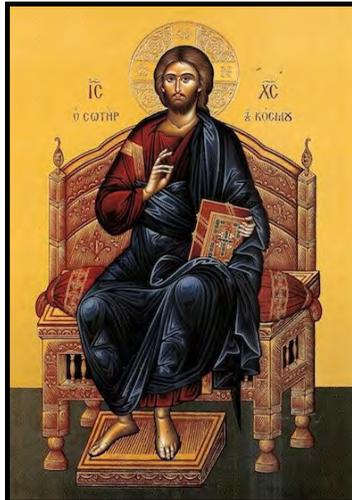
Gaining a Deeper Understanding of the New Testament

I have been sharing thoughts about the Gospel of Mark, considered the first of the Gospels that was formulated from oral and written traditions. We know that both Matthew and Luke based much of their narratives on the Gospel of Mark, although they composed them for particular audiences.

When Mark composes the narrative of Jesus' death, he makes use of a range of Scriptures that depict God's righteous servant put to death by evil forces. First and foremost, he interprets Jesus' death through the lens of Isaiah's "Suffering Servant". In certain passages known as "the Songs of the Suffering Servant" (Isaiah 42:1-4, 49:1-7, 50:4-11, 52:13-53:12). Isaiah draws a portrait of God's faithful servant who is tortured, mocked and killed by the obtuse kings of the world, who do not understand the identity of the one whom they are killing. They also are slow to understand that his death atones for their sins and that after death he will be raised up and exalted by God. (*One thing you might do during the Great Fast is pick up your bible and look up these passages in Isaiah*).

Mark, who was a practicing Jew, also draws on similar patterns in the Psalms. And he surely had in mind the opening of the Wisdom of Solomon,

where "godless men" put "the righteous one" to death because his goodness truly makes their lives uncomfortable and because "he styles himself a child of the Lord" (Wisdom 2:13) and "boasts that God is his Father" (Wisdom 2:16). In this work, the righteous one is not only exalted by God but given immortality as well (Wisdom 2:23).



In general, the most significant background comes from the Wisdom writings. In Catholic tradition, there are seven Jewish Wisdom writings: Proverbs, Psalms, Job, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon (Protestant tradition does not include these same writings nor does the Jewish Bible). Each of these works is distinct, yet they share certain

significant things in common. They are all set in domestic situations and everyday life. Many of them use a pithy, aphoristic style of speech. They are all focused on how to live a wise and holy life. They all agree that "fear of the Lord" [in the sense of holy awe] is the beginning of wisdom". Most important, they of them (i.e., Proverbs, Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon) imagine God's Wisdom as a personified attribute that walks on earth and dwells among human beings. Is this not Who Jesus is?

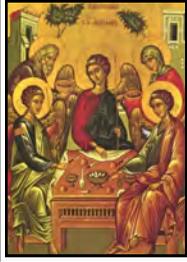
Learning Our Faith From the Greek Fathers of the Church



In the last issue I shared more about Arius, whose teachings were anathematized, in order that my readers might have an accurate idea of what drove the Fathers of the Church to develop the particular belief we hold about the person of Jesus. As much as Arius struggled to maintain the unique status of Jesus, he was still left with a creature, however exalted such a one may be. Can such a creature be worshipped? Can such a creature save humanity from the awful reality of sin? If not, if the Son indeed shares the same divine nature with the Father and the Spirit, how can the Church best think and speak of such a mysterious reality?

Of course one of our greatest Fathers of the Church, Athanasius, had a response to Arius and his position. Athanasius' response to the Arian position is a deft mixture of biblical exegesis and theological insight. Athanasius insists that Arius' explanation of the Son's relationship to the Father is fundamentally flawed. Athanasius argues, that Arius has failed to think through the implications of his assertion that "the Son is from nothing" and "did not exist before He was begotten." If Arius is correct, how could the Son rightly receive such names as "Son," "God" and "Wisdom"? If these names do not pertain to the Son by nature, that is, because of what he essentially is, they must be attributed to him because he participates in something beyond himself. Exactly what?

Perhaps, Arius suggests, such names can be attributed because of the Son's "participation" in the Holy Spirit. That is, the Holy Spirit has communicated to the Son attributes the Son himself does not possess by nature. But does not this participation and communication reverse the order of giving and receiving that Jesus teaches in the Gospel of John? Jesus states that the Spirit "will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14). Yes, Athanasius insists, the Son does receive by participation, but this is an eternal, essential participation, one that characterizes the relationship *between Father and Son alone*. This is the only possibility. We see that the Fathers had a great difficulty in finding ways to present God as "Three-In-One".



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 63 No 11 Second Weekend of the Great Fast March 11-12, 2017

The Spirituality of the Christian East

The triad of virtues - faith, hope and love - is not only the end and summit of John's *Ladder* but also its beginning. John states:

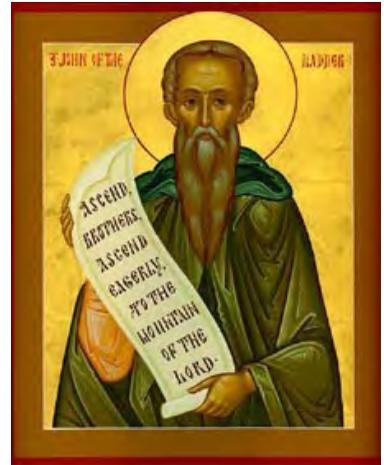
A strong faith is the mother of renunciation!

Unswerving hope is the gateway to detachment!

Genuine love of God is the foundation of exile!

Many people do not understand why faith is a virtue, for faith is usually understood as nothing more than believing in something that cannot be proven. But when we speak of faith as a Christian virtue, we are speaking of something more specific than this. It is not a virtue to believe, for example, that what so-and-so told me is true or that the weather will be good tomorrow despite the gloomy forecast. Faith, or belief, does not mean gullibility. Unfortunately many think of religious faith in this way. But that kind of faith is far too rudimentary to deserve a place at the top of the ladder of Christian virtues. Faith as "the evidence of things not seen" is the beginning of faith, but not its end.

Faith, like hope and love, truly describes our relationship with God. The reason faith lies at the summit of the Ladder is that it both shapes our relationship with God and, at the same time, is the fruit of that relationship. It is therefore better understood as trust, faithfulness, loyalty and dedication. The more we come to know God, the more we trust in Him and the more we dedicate ourselves to Him. And yet, the greater our faith, the more we grow in the other virtues. We cannot begin



to ascend the Ladder without faith, and yet the higher we ascend, the more faith increases.

Unfortunately, many Christians think that our faith is placed in the Church. It must be placed in the Person of our Triune God. The main purpose of the Church is to assist us in building our relationship with God. One of the tasks of this earthly life is to grow in our trust and faith in our God and His great love for us!

Wisdom from St. Gregory Palamas

“If, then, the time of this life is for repentance, the very fact that a sinner still lives is a pledge that God will accept whoever desires to return to Him. Free will is always part and parcel of this present life. And it lies within the power of free will to choose or to reject the road of life or the road of death ... for it can pursue whichever it wishes. Where, then, are the grounds for despair, since all of us can at all times lay hold of eternal life whenever we want to?”

“The passion for popularity brings such injury upon those it masters that it shipwrecks faith itself.”

“Natural things are not indictable; for they were created by God who is good, so that through them we can act in ways that are also good. Hence in themselves they do not indi-

cate sickness of soul, but they become evidence of such sickness when we misuse them. When we coddle the flesh in order to foster its desires, then the passion becomes evil and self-indulgence gives rise to the carnal passions and renders the soul diseased.”

“We start the imitation of Christ with Holy Baptism, which symbolizes the Lord’s Burial and Resurrection. Virtuous living and conduct in accord with the Gospel are its intermediate stage, and its perfection is victory through spiritual struggles against the passions, which procures painless, indestructible, heavenly life.”

“It is pointless for someone to say that he has faith in God if he does not have the works which go with faith ... namely, deeds of love and compassion.”

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