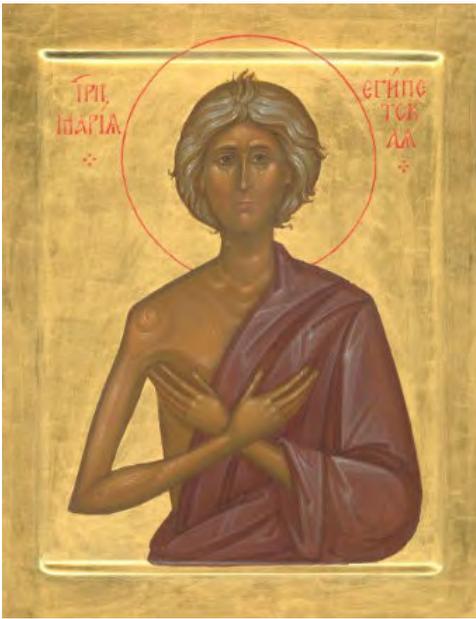


FIFTH SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST
SUNDAY OF SAINT MARY OF EGYPT



Icon of Saint Mary and Saint Zosimos

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend



On this fifth weekend of the Great Fast, we remember our Mother among the saints, Mary of Egypt and our readings are taken from Paul's letter to the Hebrews and Mark's Gospel. This coming week will bring to an end our Great Fast since the week that follows is the Great and Holy Week.

Our epistle reading rightly prepares us for the coming of Great and Holy Week since it shares Paul's understanding of the sacrifice of Jesus. Paul depicts Jesus as our "high priest" who *through the eternal spirit offered himself up unblemished to God*. Paul then offers the reason why saying: *to cleanse our consciences from*

dead works to worship the living God.

Our gospel reading relates Christ's Third Teaching about His Passion and Resurrection and also relates, through the story of the ambition of James and John, how we must live if we desire to be His true followers. Jesus is quoted as sharing this with His disciples:

Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest; whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all. The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve - to give his life in ransom for the many.

Anyone desirous of following Christ, must think about these words and integrate them into his/her life. It is when we serve others for the sake of the Kingdom of God that the Kingdom becomes real and we can truly sense the presence of God. God is not present only in churches. He is truly present in the hearts of persons who are willing to love their neighbors as themselves.

When we truly begin to make our worship an act of joining with Jesus in offering ourselves to the Father we begin to more fully realize this idea of *service to others*. As we think of service to others, we begin to think of others in a different light - we begin to see them as an opportunity to become more like Jesus and to gain a greater understanding of the meaning and purpose of life.

As we prepare for the Great and Holy Week, let us redouble our efforts to prepare our hearts and minds to truly enter into the things that we recall about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Let us open our hearts and minds to come to a deeper awareness of what these events really mean to us and all humankind.

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

I have been sharing the reasons why our Church, during the Great Fast, traditionally only celebrates the Divine Liturgy on weekends but distributes presanctified Holy Communion on Wednesdays and Fridays in a service know as the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts. The very first and truly essential characteristic of this Liturgy is that it is an *evening service*. It is an truly an evening service because it is VESPERS with the distribution of Communion. Vespers, as I am sure my readers know, is *Evening Prayer*. Drawing upon Jewish tradition, Vespers is always celebrated after sundown and, in fact, marks the beginning of a new day. (This is one of the reasons why the Liturgy, if it is celebrated on Saturday in place of Sunday, is to be celebrated after sundown so that when it is celebrated it is really Sunday).

There is a tradition in the Eastern Church that encourages the faithful to *fast* before the reception of Holy Communion since fasting is seen as a traditional way to prepare oneself for the celebration of Christ's presence with us. Therefore the reception of Holy Communion *breaks one's fast*. So during the Great Fast, when we fast during the day, our fast is broken by the reception of Communion and, as I shared before, Communion is given to us in order to strengthen our efforts to prepare ourselves for the celebration of the Great Mystery of our Salvation, namely the Death and Resurrection of



Jesus, our Savior.

The service of Vespers takes us through creation, sin, and salvation in Christ. It leads us to the meditation of God's word and the glorification of his love for men. It instructs us and allows us to praise God for the particular events or persons whose memory is celebrated and made present to us in the Church. It prepares us for the sleep of the night and the dawn of the new day to come.

So during the Great Fast this is the perfect service. It begins our movement into a more perfect union (com-union) with God through the reception of the Sacred Gifts which makes Christ present to us in a real and true manner.

The Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts is a "liturgical" service - a true worship service - and not a pious devotion. It, like the Divine Liturgy, brings us into more direct contact with our God since it calls us to actually take our God into our lives in a much more real and concrete way. The act of consuming the Divine Gifts calls us very directly to think about our union with God and more profoundly encourages us to live more like Him.

The Divine Liturgy and Our Worship of God

The priestly prayer that follows the Holy, Holy, Holy of the Anaphora of St. Basil the Great, is typically heard only in part by the faithful because it is so long. I would encourage all to take some time and read the entire prayer. It is a magnificent statement of our beliefs about God and His actions in our world.

The prayer begins by declaring to God that we are making our prayer - our worship - together with the blessed powers, namely the angels. We declare there is “no measure to the majesty of Your great holiness.” The prayer then goes on to state the entire history of salvation, beginning with the creation of humankind when God “formed man by tasking dust from the death and, stamping Your own image on him, O God, had placed him in a paradise of delights.”

So, the prayer indicates that God, after He had created inanimate things (i.e., the earth and all other things), used that very creation to form man by infusing it with His breath. This indicates that all things are joined in a miraculous manner. This supports the more recent ideas that scientists have hypostasized about the universe and all living things.

Basil then offers this prayer to God:

You did not utterly turn away from Your creature whom You had made, O gracious Lord. You did not forget the work of Your hands but devised for him a salvation through regeneration coming from Your Christ Himself.



The regeneration that comes from Christ that St. Basil mentions is, of course, achieved when we cooperate with God and strive to become more like Jesus - when we truly embrace personal transformation. *Theosis*, this spiritual process of becoming a spiritual person like Jesus, is what the journey of life is all about. We are here on this earth to “learn” how to be truly spiritual as well as material beings - to learn how to be a child of God, a person like Jesus.

St. Basil then, later in the prayer, asserts something that is important, namely that

On the third day He rose again, having established the way to the resurrection of all flesh from the dead because it was not possible that the Author of Life Himself should be the victim of corruption.

This is a clear declaration of our faith that Jesus is truly God Himself Who became incarnate as a human for the sake of revealing to us how to live this earthly life and come to a deeper union with Him. The purpose of human life is to come to a deeper union with our Creator-God. *Do you understand this to be the purpose of your life?*



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

2017 SVIACHENNE

April 23rd - After Liturgy

You will find an invitation for our Annual Easter Dinner in the Bulletin. It will be a catered dinner. So, **RESERVATIONS** are essential! We hope that cancellations after April 16th will be honored with a donation.



CALLED TO HOLINESS

As we grow ever closer to the Great and Holy Week, during which we look ever closer to the final days of the life of Jesus, I believe that the call to holiness becomes ever more clear. First, I think that the call to holiness is a call to face the *challenges of life* with nobility and courage which are supported by a deep *trust* in God. We hear again how Jesus faced betrayal, false accusation, torture and death with quiet nobility. He did not allow the hatred of others and the falseness of their assertions to catapult him into protestations of innocence or urge him to use violence to counter violence. He did not get defensive! He knew that how he lived and what he taught was God's truth. His true courage declared the truth of what he taught. If we know that we stand with God, there is no need to defend ourselves.



SPIRITUAL ACTS

This week, take time to pray for someone else, asking God to bless them with good health and peace. If you can, mention a particular name so that your prayer is specific.

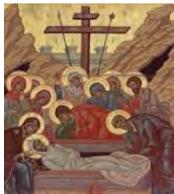


PREPARING FOR HOLY WEEK

FLOWERS: If you donated a Floral Memorial for Easter, make sure I have the names
SCHEDULE: Pick up a Great and Holy Week Schedule. They are in the Vestibule.

PLANNING FOR GREAT AND HOLY WEEK

Is the Great and Holy Week the most important week of the year for you? If it is, then you should plan how you are going to spend it. Take home a schedule of services - its on the table in the vestibule. Then plan how you will spend the week. Will God have any special part in it? We need 20 people who are willing to sit vigil at the Lord's Grave.



Second, I believe the call to holiness is a call to truly *believe that love is more powerful than hate and to live according to this belief.*

(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, APRIL 2nd

O my God, who I know to be Three Sacred Persons in One Godhead, I praise You and ask You to help me complete my preparation for the coming celebration of Great and Holy Week. In one short week, my Church will call me to recall the last days of the life of Jesus, who I believe to be You, O God, incarnate. My Church shall call me to remember the Life, Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus. Help me to use this remaining time of the Great Fast to truly prepare my heart and mind to understand these events as expressions of Your love for me. Help me to learn how to live my life through the celebration of that special week. I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

MONDAY, APRIL 3rd

Heavenly Father, help me to understand the meaning of the Gospel story about the rich man and the beggar Lazarus. The rich man in his vileness was splendidly clothed in scarlet clothing while the poor man Lazarus lay a pitiable outcast at his gate, longing to eat the crumbs that fell from his table. The rich man gave him nothing. But now he reigns with Christ in glory. I know that this story tells me that how I treat others is important if I am to truly become like Jesus and Your child. Therefore, give me the courage to treat others as I want to be treated, regardless of how they treat me. This is critical if I am to be Your child. I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

TUESDAY, APRIL 4th

The Kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and abstinence with holiness. So those who strive only after the things of this world shall not enter into it. Those, however, who strive, O Heavenly Father, to bring about Your Kingdom by showing mercy, love and compassion to others, will enter into it. The prophet David teaches us, saying, the righteous person shows mercy all the day long. His delight is in the Lord and he walks in the light and does not stumble. I know that all this was written for my admonition, indicating that I should fast and do good works so that I might obtain the things of heaven. Help me, my God, to walk in Your Light. I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5th

O God, as I begin this sixth week of this Great Fast, let me sing a hymn in preparation for the Feast of Willow Branches. Let me prepare myself to welcome Him into my heart as the children of old welcomed Him into Jerusalem. Help me to walk with the assurance that Christ had as He went into the City of Jerusalem to His death. Help me to embrace the challenges of my life as He did. With reverence, let me prepare the branches of the virtues, emblems of victory and let me cry Hosanna to the Creator of all. Help me not to display the fickleness of those who greeted Him at Jerusalem and then, a few days later cry: Crucify Him. 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, APRIL 6th

Through Your Church, O Heavenly Father, You have set before me the story of Lazarus and the rich man. Reflecting upon the end of both of them, let me avoid the cruelty of the one, the rich man, and his hatred of mankind and let me imitate and emulate the fortitude and longsuffering of the other, Lazarus, so that I may, with Lazarus, enjoy rest in Your Kingdom, crying aloud: O Heavenly Father, my Triune God, glory be to You. I also pray You to help me, O Father, to prepare my heart and mind to fully celebrate the coming Great and Holy Week, entering, with Jesus into these life-giving events. Help me to desire to carry my cross in imitation of Him. I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

FRIDAY, APRIL 7th

O Father, having almost completed the forty days designed to bring profit to my soul, I beseech You to help me to behold the Holy Week of the Passion of Your Son so that, in it, I might glorify Your mighty acts for my salvation. Through Your Son Jesus You revealed to me how to lead this life that You are sharing with me. Help me to truly become Your child and heir to Your Kingdom. Through Your Son You have revealed to me Your love; shown me how to live; and also disclosed to me that human life is immortal. Help me to appreciate Your great kindness toward me. Help me to freely embrace Jesus' Way of Living. I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

SATURDAY, APRIL 8th

O Lord, Your voice destroyed the dominion of hell and Your power raised Lazarus from the tomb. By Your actions, O Savior, Lazarus became the saving first-fruits of the regeneration of the world. By raising Lazarus from the dead, You desired to give to Your disciples and me an assurance of Your Resurrection and my resurrection from the dead. You came to the tomb of Lazarus and called to him by name. Then was hell destroyed and it released the one that had been four days dead. All things are possible to You, O Lord and King of all. Bestow upon me, Your servant, cleansing and great mercy. Help me to truly believe what You have revealed to me. I ask You to I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

SUNDAY, APRIL 9th

Today, O God, the grace of Your Holy Spirit calls me to join my community of believers, my Church, in welcoming Christ my Savior into my heart and life just as the people welcomed Him into Jerusalem. Help me to cry out in my heart: Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest! As I enter into this Great and Holy Week, O God, I ask Your help to focus my attention on the life, death and burial of Jesus so that I may truly cry out with great joy on Pascha: CHRIST IS RISEN. Grant me the courage, O God, to commit myself to meeting the challenges of my life as He did. I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Spirit, now and forever. AMEN.

Schedule of Services

St. Michael the Archangel
Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church
6340 Chase Road
Dearborn, MI 48126

Rev. Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Pastor

Rectory: (313) 582-1424
Cell: (313) 580-4412
WRuchgy@gmail.com

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Sundays @ 10:00 AM
Ukrainian & English

Weekdays @ 8:00 AM
English

SACRAMENTS

Penance
By Appointment

Baptism & Matrimony
In most instances membership
required for six months

Funerals
Membership of an immediate
family member required

Parish Life Council

Bob & Corinne Boyko
734.451.1893

John & Janet Dicky
313.563.5509

Daria Drobny
313.791-0292

Robert Krokosky
248.431.9554

Leo & Mary LaDouceur
313.278.7378

Gordon Malaniak
734.564.9817

Leonard Mier
313.584-6795

Greg & Esther Petrovich
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

Sunday, April 2 - Fifth Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 5
10:00 AM - Walter Kizel; Bob & Corinne Boyko

Sixth Week of the Great Fast - Tone 6

Monday, April 3 - Nicetas, Venerable Confessor
No Liturgy Scheduled

Tuesday, April 4 - Joseph & George, Venerables
No Liturgy Scheduled

Wednesday, April 5 - Theodulus, Agathopodes & Others, Martyrs
No Liturgy Scheduled

Thursday, April 6 - Death of Methodius, Apostle to the Slavs
No Liturgy Scheduled

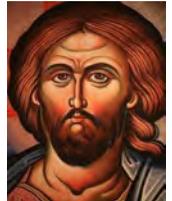
Friday, April 7 - Euthyches, Archbishop
7:00 PM - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, April 8 - Lazarus Saturday
No Liturgy Scheduled

Sunday, April 9 - Willow Or Palm Weekend - Festal Tone
10:00 AM - Intentions of the Grech Family
Initiation of Anastasia Marie Grech into the Church

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

The call to holiness means that we freely choose to respond to others with love and kindness, regardless of how they treat us. Jesus refused, because of His love for His Father, to allow the actions of others to dictate how He lived. He lived as He believed and knew His Father wanted Him to live.



And finally, I believe that the call to holiness is a call to understand that *personal transformation* IS the purpose of earthly life. Jesus proved this, I truly believe, by the way He lived and died. The way He lived and died is the key to His resurrection. This is why He is our Messiah - the Person who can truly help us to make sense out of this earthly existence.

We all have choices about how to live our lives. I, myself, cannot possibly find any better model to try to imitate than Jesus. His way of living allowed Him to achieve personal resurrection and peace.

<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 of this article, I shared that Mark, in the 15th chapter of his gospel, says that Jesus *released his last breath*, thus implying that in dying Jesus himself is set free.

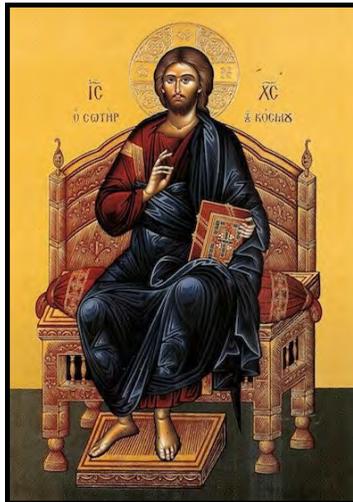
The various forms of *rise up* or *be raised* are significant because together they form a running refrain that points to Jesus' resurrection. Mark uses the phrase *raised up* repeatedly. In chapter 6, for example, when Herod is speculating on the identity of Jesus, he says, "It is John Whom I beheaded. He has been raised up". By using the word here, Mark hints at the future "raising up" of Jesus. In chapter 14, Mark notes that Jesus says to His disciples, "After I have been raised up, I shall go before you to Galilee" At the end of his Gospel, Mark indicates that an angel repeats these words to the women who came to the tomb; "He has been raised; he is not here". In other places, Mark consistently uses some form of the same verb to denote the effect of Jesus' healing miracles. Unfortunately, English translations often blur this meaningful refrain by using synonyms.

When Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law, for example, Mark notes that Jesus said, "Rise up". Jesus uses the exact same words to the man with the withered hand and to Jairus' daughter,

the little girl whom everyone had given up for dead. By using this word again and again, Mark suggests that Jesus' healing miracles are related to the great miracle of his resurrection.

Another word that is important to Mark is "straightway." The word sounds odd to modern ears, and most English translations, including the New American Bible, either translate it as "immediately" or "at once" or omit it entirely. But it truly echoes the message of the prophetic voice in chapter 1 that cries out in the desert, telling the people to prepare for God's coming by making "straight" his "ways". Mark was so intrigued by this pun (which works in both Greek and English) that he uses it forty-three times in his Gospel.

In the first part of his Gospel, Mark uses the word to signal an act of moral urgency. In the first chapter alone, Mark uses this word eleven times. Mark says that Jesus ascended from the baptismal waters "straightway". The Spirit drives Jesus into the desert "straightway". When Jesus calls Andrew and Simon, they leave their nets "straightway" and Jesus calls to James and John "straightway." It is not just be chance that Mark uses this word so many times throughout his Gospel. ***More to follow!***



Learning Our Faith From the Greek Fathers of the Church



I shared in the last issue how Athanasius tried described the relationship between the Father and the Son as the relationship that exists between the son and its own light. Athanasius' point is that just as the sun is inseparable from its rays - to be the sun is to shed light - so for the Father to be Father is to possess a Son. How could things be otherwise? And, as he later writes, whatever kind of "begetting" is involved in the relationship between Father and Son, this begetting cannot be external to their natural, inherent paternal and filial relationship.

Athanasius' argument and illustration run directly against the Arian insistence that the

generation of the Son is external to the Father, that is, a generation that takes place at some "time," even if that time is before the creation of the heavens and the earth. As long as Arius insists that there was a time when the Son did not exist, such must be the case. Hence, Athanasius' use of the illustration of the sun and its rays. The two are, Athanasius insists, inseparable, as are the Father and the Son.

Athanasius believes that at least part of the Arian error can be linked to the kinds of questions Arian theologians tend to ask. Think of the following two questions:

1. How can the Son exist eternally with the Father? Do not human fathers beget sons "in the course of time"? No human son existed before his father beget him in time. Every human son did not exist before he was begotten.
2. How can the Son be the Word, or the Word be the image of God?" Human "speech is a combination of syllables," signifying a speaker's meaning as one speaks that meaning into the air. The words did not exist before the speaker chose to speak them, and they cease to exist once they have been uttered. How then, Arian thinkers ask, can God's Word always exist and continue to exist once it has been spoken? No human analogies exist to demonstrate that this can be possible.

Hopefully my readers can see how intense the arguments were as the Church struggled to come to a true understanding of Who Jesus IS and, therefore, Who God IS!

The Mystery of Mankind's Reconciliation with God

He who is true God was born in the complete and perfect nature of a true man, whole in His own nature, whole in ours. By our nature we mean what the Creator had fashioned in us from the beginning, and took to Himself in order to restore it.

He took the nature of a servant without stain of sin, enlarging our humanity without diminishing His divinity. He emptied himself; though invisible He made himself visible, though Creator and Lord of all things He chose to be one of us mortal men. Yet this was the condescension of compassion, not the loss of omnipotence.

Beyond our grasp, He chose to come within our grasp. Existing before time began, He began to exist at a moment in time. Lord of the universe, He hid His infinite glory and took the nature of a servant. Incapable of suffering as God, He did not refuse to be a man, capable of suffering. Immortal, He chose to be subject to the laws of death.

He who is true God is also true man. There is no falsehood in this unity as long as the lowliness of

man and the pre-eminence of God coexist in mutual relationship.

As God does not change by His condescension, so man is not swallowed up by being exalted. Each nature exercises its own activity, in communion with the other. The Word does what is proper to the Word, the flesh fulfills what is proper to the flesh.

One nature is resplendent with miracles, the other falls victim to injuries. As the Word does not lose equality with the Father's glory, so the flesh does not leave behind the nature of our race.

One and the same person – this must be said over and over again – is truly the Son of God and truly the son of man. He is God in virtue of the fact that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He is man in virtue of the fact that the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

St. Leo the Great

Visit www.ecpubs.com for more publications.