

THOMAS SUNDAY
FEAST OF SAINT GEORGE THE MARTYR



Icon of Saint George -- April 23rd

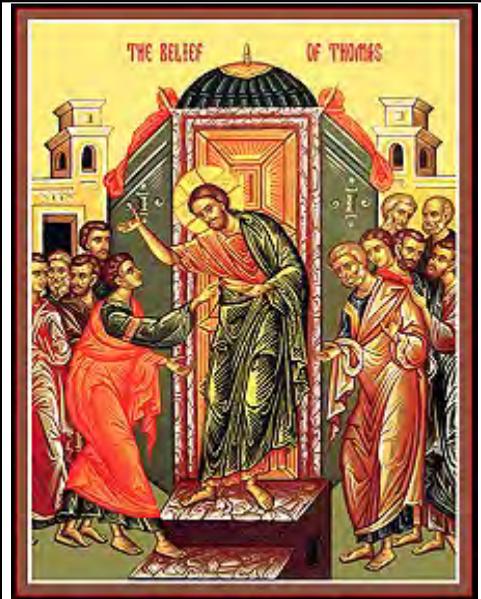
Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

As we bring BRIGHT WEEK to a close - the eight days of celebration of the Lord's Resurrection - our readings are taken, as they are throughout the Pentecostarion (i.e., *the 50 days between Pascha and Pentecost*), from the Acts of the Apostles and St. John's Gospel. As one might immediately guess, the Gospel story is the encounter that the resurrected Christ had with His doubting disciple, Thomas. It is deliberately celebrated to encourage us not to *doubt* the wondrous revelation God has made to us about our *immortality*. The Lord's resurrection from the dead reveals that one of the gifts that God has given us humans is eternal life.

Our reading from Acts relates the *Signs and Wonders* that people experienced through the hands of the Apostles after the Lord's Ascension. It also relates the challenges that the Apostles had to confront, even jail. The reading ends with Peter being rescued from jail by an angel and given this command: *Go out now and take your place in the temple precincts and preach to the people all about "this new life"*.

What is *this new life* that the Apostles were called to preach and which we, as followers of Jesus, are also called to witness? This new life is, in reality, an understanding of salvation. But we must have a true understanding of salvation. It is my deepest conviction that salvation is not a rescue from the punishment of hell and the reward of heaven but, rather, a clear and real understanding of the *meaning* and *purpose* of life. Jesus preached about and demonstrated by the way He lived that earthly life for humans is a journey of *personal transformation* - Metanoia - which results in our becoming more spiritual and more in the likeness of Jesus. Salvation truly means that we begin to think and act like Jesus, which means we begin to truly be children of God.

Why have we been born into this world? To spiritually grow, learning how to unconditionally



love others so that we are capable of loving God. We are here to also: learn how to trust and hope in God; grow in our awareness that we, like all created things, are sustained in our existence through the loving consciousness, life-force and energy of God; and that we are one with all created things.

In order to achieve this type of awareness, however, we cannot allow ourselves to DOUBT the truth that was revealed to us about life. We must make a real LEAP OF FAITH, as Thomas did. What is most interesting is that this type of FAITH is truly more supportive of personal peace than doubt is. If you want to live this life with personal peace and contentment, then belief in God's revelation through Jesus is, in my estimation, your best bet.

What do you believe?

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church



This weekend our Church also remembers the great martyr George. The Holy Great Martyr George, the Victory-Bearer, was a native of Cappadocia (a district in Asia Minor), and he grew up in a deeply believing Christian family.

His father was martyred for Christ when George was still a child. His mother, owning lands in Palestine, moved there with her son and raised him in strict piety.

Of the many miracles worked by the holy Great Martyr George, the most famous are depicted in iconography. In the saint's native city of Beirut were many idol-worshippers. Outside the city, near Mount Lebanon, was a large lake, inhabited by an enormous dragon-like serpent. Coming out of the lake, it devoured people and there was nothing anyone could do since the breath from its nostrils poisoned the very air.

On the advice of the demons inhabiting the idols, the local ruler came to a decision. Each day the people would draw lots to feed their own children to the serpent and he promised to sacrifice his only daughter when his turn came. That time did come and the ruler dressed her in her finest attire, then sent her off to the lake. The girl wept bitterly, awaiting her death. Unexpectedly for her, Saint George rode up on his horse with spear in hand. The girl implored him not to leave her, lest she perish.

The saint signed himself with the Sign of the Cross. He rushed at the serpent saying, "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Saint George pierced the throat of the serpent with his spear and

trampled it with his horse. Then he told the girl to bind the serpent with her sash, and lead it into the city like a dog on a leash.

The people fled in terror, but the saint halted them with the words: "Don't be afraid, but *trust* in the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in Him, since it is He Who sent me to save you." Then the saint killed the serpent with a sword, and the people burned it outside the city. Twenty-five thousand men, not counting women and children, were then baptized. Later, a church was built and dedicated to the Most Holy Theotokos and the Great Martyr George.

It is fitting that we hear this story of the Martyr George today since we are called to *trust* God and not to doubt that He loves us. Trust in God does not mean, however, that we expect Him to always do for us what we desire. Trust in God means that we truly believe that God will always allow life to deliver to us that which is in our best interest. This, however, is one of the more difficult things that we must learn as humans. When we pray for something and God does not grant it the way that we want, then we must trust that it is in our best interest. Like a good father, God will always desire those things which are best for us. Pray to Martyr George today to help you truly trust God.



The Divine Liturgy and Our Worship of God

During the Great Fast I shared, in this article, certain things about the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. It is an intense Liturgy that is filled with many lengthy prayers which present much about our faith. The real problem is that it presents so very much it is difficult to fully comprehend all the meaning that Basil infused into it.

Before the Great Fast, I shared thoughts about St. John Chrysostom's Liturgy and about liturgy in general. You will recall that the word *liturgy* means common work or common action. The Divine Liturgy is the common work of the Church. It is the official action of the Church formally gathered together as the chosen People of God. (The word *church*, you will remember, means a gathering or assembly of people specifically chosen and called apart to perform a particular task and who share a common belief).

The *divine liturgy* is a single, though also multifaceted, sacred rite, a single sacrament, in which all its "parts," their entire sequence and structure, their coordination with each other, the necessity of each for all and all for each, manifests to us the inexhaustible, eternal, universal and truly divine meaning of what has been and what is being accomplished by God.

Such is the tradition of the Church, such is her living experience in which the sacrament of the Eucharist is inseparable from the divine liturgy. For its setting, its entire sequence, order and structure consist in manifesting to us the meaning and the content of the sacrament, in bringing us into it, in converting us into its participants and communicants.

It is precisely this unity, this integrity



of the Eucharist, the indissoluble link of the sacrament with the liturgy, that calls us to enter into a deeper relationship with God by joining with our Savior, Jesus, in offering our lives to the Father as an act of Thanksgiving for the gift of life. This act has both spiritual and psychological dimensions to it.

First, we must believe that, when we remember what our Brother Jesus did and ritually repeat His actions, something happens. Second, we must be prepared psychologically to THANK GOD for the life that we have. Last, we must be desirous of being joined with others in worship.

This last point, I think, is frequently overlooked. Just as many grains of wheat and many grapes must be crushed and kneaded together to make bread and wine, the symbols of life, so too must we recognize that we must be joined together in love to make the Eucharist a true act of worship. This is one of the reasons why our divine liturgy explicitly states before we recite the Creed: *Let us truly love one another so that with one mind we might profess belief in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.* Mutual love of those we worship with is essential. It is this mutual love that also makes us CHURCH, or a gathering of people who believe in our Triune God.



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

2017 SVIACHENNE

Today, April 23rd - After Liturgy

Today we gather as a spiritual family to celebrate the truly great mystery of our Lord's Resurrection. This is a tradition and long-standing custom not only in our parish but in our Church. I would thank all who made this possible.



SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Sunday April 30th - After Liturgy



Please set aside time after the Divine Liturgy on this date to stay and support our deacon-in-training, Leonard Mier, as he makes a presentation that is required by his studies at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh. A part of his training requires him to make a *religious education* presentation to a parish.

COMING THIS FALL

Start cleaning out your cupboards and storage spaces for a major fall fund-raiser - our RUMMAGE SALE. This year we will not be including *clothing* or *shoes* in our sale. Please do not offer items that are not clean or are not in working order. Thank You!



You've gotta dance like there's nobody watching,
Love like you'll never be hurt,
Sing like there's nobody listening,
And live like it's heaven on earth.

CALLED TO HOLINESS

The call to holiness is made ever-more explicit during this time when we celebrate the great feast of Pascha. As I have preached during this time, Pascha is our own Christian PASSOVER -



the historical event which has truly formed us and is forming us as a *People of God*. It is not just a past historical event! It is the event which continues to form us as a people who truly sees the connection between us and our God. This event, because it reveals to us that the life we experience and enjoy is truly immortal and eternal, reveals to us that life is a sharing in God's own divine life and that life's journey is to make progress in becoming more and more like the person Jesus who shares our human nature.

As one might easily surmise, this understanding is much different than that subscribed to in Western Christian Churches. It is important, however, not to think of one way being right and the other wrong but, merely, to thank God for the way that we understand the journey of life. For me, the Eastern way is much more positive and a way that I can more easily embrace. It speaks very dramatically to the great love that our God has for us and flows from the way we worship.

(Continued on page 6)

Schedule of Services

WEEK OF ST. THOMAS

Sunday April 23 - The Anti-Pasch - St. Thomas Day

10:00 AM - Eva Papinchak; Bob & Corinne Boyko (10th Ann)

Parish PASCHA Dinner - Svichanne - Immediately after Liturgy

Monday April 24 - Sabbas, Martyr

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Tuesday April 25 - Mark, Apostle and Evangelist

No Service Scheduled

Wednesday April 26 - Basil, Bishop-Martyr

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Thursday April 27 - Simeon, Bishop-Martyr

No Service Scheduled

Friday April 28 - Jason & Sosipater, Apostles

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday April 29 - The Nine Holy Martyrs of Cyzice

No Service Scheduled

THIRD PASCHAL WEEK

Sunday April 30 - Weekend of the Ointment Bearers

10:00 AM - Michael Washuta; Mr & Mrs Walid Khalife

(Continued from page 5)

Consider how we celebrated Pascha. We declared over and over again that Christ IS Risen from the dead. Hopefully these were not just idle words to us who sing them! They are meant to be words that call us to real belief in what God, by this event in history, revealed to us about human life through the life of His only -begotten son, Jesus.

The call to holiness, I truly believe, is a call to think about and reflect upon what we do and say in our worship and to fully embrace these beliefs. Our worship is meant to *transform* the way we think and behave. It proclaims the *Good News* that God has revealed. Ask yourself, *What do I think the Good News is?* I think it is essential that each of us attempts to answer this for ourselves!



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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

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

Gaining a Deeper Understanding of the New Testament

Prior to the Holy Days that we just celebrated, I shared some of the *key words* that St. Mark embedded in his narrative. They were deliberately used by Mark to make a point. Mark also uses patterns and design to shape his narrative.

Mark shapes his narrative in patterns of twos and threes. The reader will be first aware of doublets. Sometimes this is a matter of repeating episodes; sometimes it is a matter of echoing words. There are, for example, two instances in Mark when Jesus calms the sea. Twice he multiplies bread for a hungry crowd. There are two occasions when people discuss who Jesus is. There are two instances in which Jesus gives specific instructions to his disciples. And there are numerous other examples. If you truly want to learn more about the Gospel of Mark, why not pick up your New Testament (NT) and try to find these doublets.

At the end of Chapter 8, Mark seems to give a reason for his method when he describes Jesus' healing of a blind man in two stages. Here he dramatizes the idea that the blind man cannot shift from darkness to vision all at once; he needs to go through a process of coming to sight. In the same way, careful readers will find that each repetition enlarges their understanding.

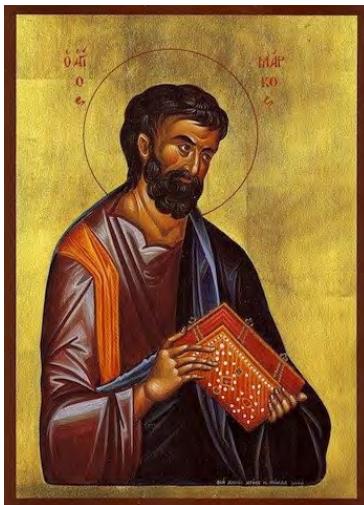
Further, Mark's whole Gospel is divided into two parts and Mark has worked out this structure to shift the

reader's perceptions from a conventional to an unconventional way of seeing. We must always remember that this Gospel, like the others, was written to attract and convince others that Jesus IS the Messiah, the Savior.

Mark also likes to pattern things in threes. There are three healing miracles, for example, in chapter 1, three questions asked of Jesus in chapter 2, three seed parables in chapter 4. Jesus has three chief disciples (*Peter, James and John*), whom he takes with him on three key occasions (*Chapter 5: the raising of Jarius' daughter; chapter 9: his transfiguration; and chapter 14: his agony in the garden*). There are also three key anonymous women who are healed in the first part of the Gospel. In the second part, three women (*two Marys and Salome*) who follow Jesus to Jerusalem, watch where he is laid in the tomb, and then come to anoint Him (chapters 15 and 16).

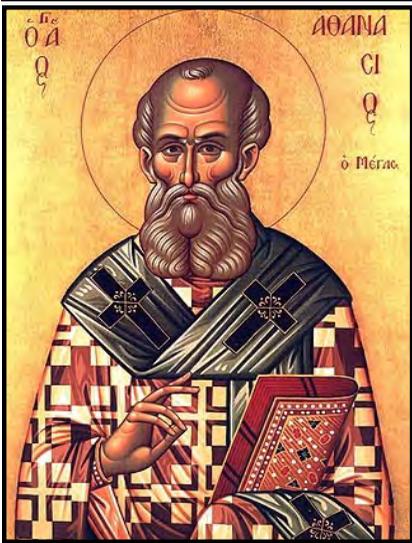
As with the doublets, there are numerous other examples. If you become alert to this pattern, you will see that Mark always uses the middle of these triads to shed light on the other two.

Marks whole Gospel might also be viewed as having three parts. *The middle of this large triad, shedding light on both sides, is the scene of His transfiguration*. So you see there is much more to Mark's Gospel that meets the eye. This is also true of the other four Gospels. They are not history but documents of faith.



ST MARK THE EVANGELIST

Learning Our Faith From the Greek Fathers of the Church



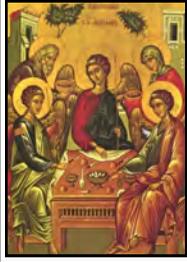
Before Pascha, I had started sharing information about the argument between Arius, the heretic, and St. Athanasius. It is, actually, quite a fascinating bit of our Christian history. Athanasius argued that the fundamental error of Arius and his followers was in their limited thinking and speaking about God. They only seemed to think about God in human terms and from a human perspective. St. Athanasius, concedes that if the Scripture were describing a human man or relationship, the Arians would be correct. “Now if they are discussing a *man*, then they may argue about his word and his son on the human level. But if they are talking about God, man’s creator, they must not think of him on a human level.”

This, Athanasius contends, is the Arian’s fundamental mistake. Human procreation does take place in time and space. Human fathers are both older and separate from their children. Begetting does involve division and separation. Not so, however, with God. The Arians have forgotten who the subject of the discussion actually is: “The character of the parent determines the character of the offspring. Man is begotten in time and begets in time; he comes into being from non-existence. The same is true of human speech: “his word ceases and does not remain...A human word is a combination of syllables, and has no independent life or activity; it merely signifies the speaker’s meaning, and just issues and passes away and disappears, *since it had no existence at all before it was uttered*; therefore a man’s word has no independent life and activity; in short it is not a man.” (*This quote from Athanasius has to do with the fact that we say that Christ is the WORD of God*).

The Arians are guilty of a serious category error. They have applied human categories to God in an inappropriate and illogical fashion. “God,” Athanasius insists, “is not like man.” Rather, “he is ‘he who exists’ and exists forever.” Furthermore, “his Word is ‘that which exists eternally with the Father, as *radiance from a light*.’” But God’s word is not merely ‘emitted,’ as one might say, nor is it just an articulate noise; nor is ‘the Son of God’ just a synonym for ‘the command of God,’ but he is the perfect offspring of the perfect.”

God’s divine Word is, indeed, utterly unique. A human word is spoken, communicates and disappears into the air. In itself it has no capability “to affect anything.” Not so with God and his Word. God, as Athanasius puts it, does not speak his Word so that a subordinate might hear God’s command and then carry it out. No, “this is what happens in human affairs. But the Word of God is creator and maker, and he *is* the Father’s will.

Sorting out who Jesus is was a long, hard-fought struggle for the Church. It is inappropriate to think of God in human terms. *More to follow!*



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 63 No 17 WEEKEND OF THE OINTMENT BEARERS April 22-23, 2017

The Spirituality of the Christian East

Eastern Christian spirituality aims at the perfection of the faithful in Christ. This perfection can't be obtained in Christ, except by participation in His divine-human life. Therefore the goal of Eastern Christian spirituality is the perfection of the believer by his *union with Christ*. He is being imprinted to a ever-greater degree by the human image of Christ, full of God.

So the goal of Eastern Christian spirituality is the union of the believer with God, in Christ. But as God is unending, the goal of our union with Him, or of our perfection, has no point from which we can no longer progress. So all the Eastern Fathers say that perfection is unlimited.

Our perfection, or our union with God, is therefore, not only a goal, but also an unending progress. On this road two great steps can be distinguished: first, the moving ahead toward perfection through purification from the passions and the acquiring of the virtues and secondly a life progressively moving ahead in the union with God. At this point, man's work is replaced by God's. Man contributes by opening himself up receptively to an ever-greater filling with the life of God.

Given the above understanding, the following are the basic features of Eastern Christian spirituality:

1. The culminating state of the spiritual life is a union of the soul with God, lived or experienced.
2. This union is realized by the working of the Holy Spirit, but until it is reached man is involved in a prolonged effort of purification.
3. It takes place when man reaches the "likeness of God." It is at the same time knowledge and love.
4. Among other things, the effect of this union consists of a considerable intensification of spiritual energies



in man, accompanied by all kinds of charismas.

The East also uses the daring word "deification," or participation in the divinity, to characterize the union with God. So the goal of Eastern Christian spirituality is none other than living in a state of participation in the divine life. This experience, strikingly expressed as a state of deification, includes several general teachings. During the coming weeks I shall share these and more. Eastern Christian spirituality is all about growing in our likeness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer.

Fight the Good Fight of Faith

“Let us celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” ... Elsewhere the Apostle says: “Let us run with fidelity the race that has been set before us, with our eyes on Jesus, the origin and the goal of our faith.”

So a man who openly despises the accolades of this world and rejects all earthly glory must also practice self-denial. Such self-denial means that you never seek your own will but God’s, using God’s will as a sure guide; it also means possessing nothing apart from what is held in common.

In this way it will be easier for you to carry out your superior’s commands promptly, in joy and in hope; this is required of Christ’s servants who are redeemed for service to the brethren. For this is what the Lord wants when He says: Whoever wishes to be first and great among you must be the last of all and a servant to all.

Our service of mankind must be given freely. One who is in such a position must be subject to everyone

and serve his brothers as if he were paying off a debt.

Moreover, those who are in charge should work harder than the others and conduct themselves with greater submission than their own subjects. Their lives should serve as a visible example of what service means, and they should remember that those who are committed to their trust are held in trust from God.

Those, then, who are in a position of authority must look after their brothers as conscientious teachers look after the young children who have been handed over to them by their parents.

If both disciples and masters have this loving relationship, then subjects will be happy to obey whatever is commanded, while superiors will be delighted to lead their brothers to perfection. If you try to outdo one another in showing respect, your life on earth will be like that of the angels.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

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