

SUNDAY OF THE MAN BORN BLIND



Icon of Saints Constantine and Helen -- May 21st

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

This is the second to the last weekend before the end of the Paschal Season. On Thursday of this coming week, May 25th, we will celebrate the feast of the Ascension of our Lord - which marks the 40th day after the Resurrection. Next week we will remember the Fathers of the Nicaea Council which began the work of the Church in declaring Jesus as both God and Man. This Council took place in 325 CE in the city of Nicaea.

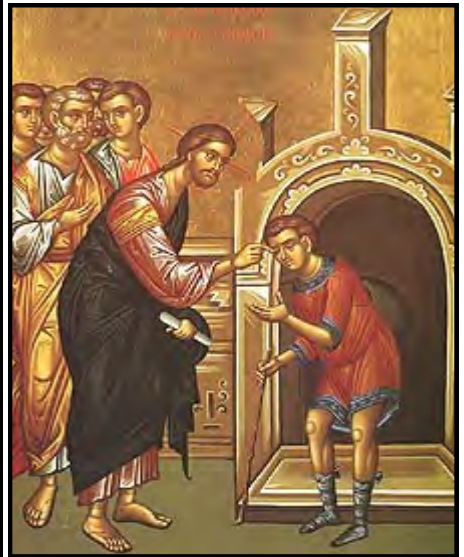
It took the Church a number of centuries to actually recognize that Jesus, who performed so many wondrous works and who also appeared to His followers after His death, that He was God who became incarnate (i.e., became a human being) in order to reveal to humans the true meaning and purpose of life.

In today's Gospel we hear John attributing these words to Jesus: "I am the light of the world." Indeed, Jesus gives life to this world. He reveals to us the meaning and purpose of life.

What is the meaning and purpose of life? To use all the challenges of life as opportunities to truly trust in God, our Heavenly Father. Perhaps the greatest revelation Jesus made to mankind is that God is actually our FATHER - our Abba.

The Epistle confirms this. The young girl who was a clairvoyant, declares that Paul and his companions, who were professed followers of Jesus, the Christ, were servants of the "most high God." People who are followers of Jesus are the servants of the Most High God, our Heavenly Father. If you follow Jesus, you know that you see God as your Heavenly Father and you realize that it is God's own Spirit which causes you to declare this to be true. We only come to know God because God Himself gives us the help to be able to recognize this truth.

I think that the Epistle tells us of the unique ways that God chooses to reveal Himself to us. We should never think that we know how God chooses to reveal Himself to us. He always does it in very unique ways. We must be open to accepting the



way that He chooses to reveal Himself. We know this to be true. If we are open to His revelation of Himself, He will do it in ways that we least expect. This, I feel, is the loving way that He makes Himself known to us. If we open our hearts and mind to Him, we will find that He reveals Himself in ways that we never anticipate.

We should always remember that God loves us and makes every attempt to reveal Himself to us so that we may know that we are loved and that this life is only a vehicle to bring us to a deeper relationship with Him! Because He gave us free will, He will never force us to recognize Him. This is because He desires our free response to His love.

Let us not be blind to the many opportunities we are given to come to know Him. Let us embrace His gift of love.

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

We are called, like the early Church, to rejoice in the event of the Resurrection. The new and principal day of worship of the Christians was the first day of the Jewish week (i.e., the day in which the Lord was raised from the dead). They assembled on that day to celebrate the Eucharist, through which they proclaimed the Lord's death and confessed his resurrection. That is what we actually do in the Divine Liturgy. Eventually they gave this day a Christian name, the Day of the Lord. It would be hard to imagine that the Christians of the first century would not have projected and connected in some new and significant way their weekly celebration of the sacred events of Christ's death and resurrection on the annual observance of the Passover. Truly, Christ is the new MOSES who has led humans out of bondage and captivity to the mores and customs of society to the freedom of the Kingdom of God.

As I shared in the last Bulletin, a part of the early Church began to celebrate the feast of the Resurrection on the 14 of Nisan, while all the other churches observed Pascha on the Sunday after the 14 of Nisan, emphasizing the resurrection. These two ways of computing the date of Pascha gave rise to the Paschal controversies of the second century. At the beginning of the third century, these disputes were settled in favor of the Sunday observance of Pascha. However, difficulties with inadequate calendars continued to plague the local churches, until the issue was finally resolved by the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. The Fathers of the Council decreed that henceforth Pascha was to be celebrated on the first Sunday, after the first full moon of the spring equinox. The Council, also, determined that



the date would be calculated in accordance with the Alexandrian calendar. Most of the Christian Orthodox world and some of the Eastern Catholics still maintain this tradition (*This past year the calendars were uniform and all Christians celebrated Pascha on the same day*).

In the early Church, according to local custom, the celebration of Pascha was preceded by a one or two day fast. In a letter written to Pope Victor regarding the Paschal disputes, Irenaeus makes mention of the fasting practices that were being observed in his time by various local churches. He wrote, "for the controversy is not only concerning the day, but also concerning the very manner of the fast. For some think that they should fast one day, others two, yet others more; some moreover, count their day as consisting of forty hours day and night. And this variety in its observance has not originated in our time but along before in that of our ancestors.

It is clear from this testimony that fasting had become an integral element of the Paschal observance from the apostolic period. It probably came about as a result of the words of the Lord, "can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

The Divine Liturgy and Our Worship of God

While I know that this article has seemingly wandered around many different important topics, nevertheless it is all about trying to help my readers come to a deeper understanding of what it means to celebrate the Holy Eucharist - the Divine Liturgy. As I have tried to express, it means making the Divine Liturgy truly your personal way of offering worship of God. I have suggested that the Divine Liturgy is the worship of God the Father with the Son in the Holy Spirit. It is the ritual that allows me and you to join ourselves with Jesus Christ in offering to God the Father our very lives in deep and complete THANKSGIVING for the very gift of life. Our Liturgy is not the worship of Jesus Christ, in my estimation, but, rather the worship of God the Father, the Creator and Lord, with the Son in the Holy Spirit. This means that I join with Jesus in offering my very life to the Father in thanksgiving for His loving sharing of His very life with me.

This, I know, requires some thought! Our worship is not meant to be ignorant and unintelligible. We are called to intellectually and willfully enter into a ritual that expresses our willingness to offer our very lives back to God in deep and sincere thanksgiving. Of course, as you might guess, this means that we have to be thankful for the lives that have been given to us and to call upon our faith to help us understand that the life each of us experiences is given to us in order that we might spiritually grow and truly become sons and daughters of our most high God, in the deepest and truest sense of the word.

What does it mean to be a child of God? It means being someone who sees



this earthly life as an opportunity to grow in our likeness of Jesus, the Christ and our Savior and Lord. It means that we must desire to change and become more like Him every day.

As we see in the ritual movement of the Liturgy, if we desire to follow Jesus and become like Him, we are lead back to the very Throne of God (i.e., the altar in western conception). The Gospels and the Gifts, which are sent from Heaven, lead us back to the very Throne of God. So the Liturgy is one of the true vehicles God has given us, through Jesus, to lead us back to Him.

If we willingly and voluntarily desire to return to Him, we are conveyed there by His loving help. He never blocks our insight into closer relationship with Him. It is all a manner of choice.

So I would ask my readers, Do you truly want to enter into deeper union with God, the creator and source of your life? If you do, then join with Jesus in offering your praise and worship to the Father by offering your very life back to Him in thanksgiving for the gift of life.

That is the focus and the foundation for our Divine Liturgy. It is the ritual expression of joining ourselves with Jesus, our Savior and Brother, in offering our very selves - lives - to our God in humble and sincere. thanksgiving.



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

churchWIDE
RUMMAGE
SALE

COMING THIS FALL

Start cleaning out your closets, cupboards and storage spaces for our fall fund-raiser. PLEASE NOTE: This year our sale will not include *clothing* or *shoes!* Please do not offer items that are not clean or are not in working order. Thank You!

SPECIAL FEAST

Thursday, May 25th

While we will celebrate the Feast of the Ascension as a community on the following Sunday, please take time on Thursday to remember the feast of the Ascension. It marks the end of our Paschal celebration. Then in ten days, June 4th, we celebrate the feast of Pentecost.



GRAVE BLESSINGS

Sunday, June 4th

This year I will bless graves at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery on Pentecost @ 1:00 PM in the Mausoleum.

Then on Sunday June 11th I will bless graves at St. Hedwig's Cemetery @ 1:00 PM in the Mausoleum. If weather permits on both occasions I will bless individual graves after the Service.

CALLED TO HOLINESS

In the last issue I suggested that the call to holiness is a call to embrace a way of living that allows you to unconditionally love others. One of the primary tasks of this present life is to learn how to live in this manner. Since God absolutely and unconditionally loves us, as the heirs to His kingdom we are called to learn how to love others more completely and without any real "conditions". It seems that we humans have a great tendency to put conditions on our love for others. In doing this we don't realize how very much we limit our lives. I would ask this question: How is your life limited if you unconditionally love others? When we strive to make unconditional love the way of living, we expand our ability to experience the fullness of life. When we don't, we severely limit our ability to experience the fullness of life and love.



Jesus clearly revealed to us that the fullness of life is experienced in the process of extending unconditional love to others. We clearly see this in His suffering and death. It was precisely His willingness to unconditionally love that won Him resurrection from the dead.

If we attempt to learn how to love even when hatred is directed at us, we begin to truly

(Continued on page 6)

The only person you should try to be better than is the person you were yesterday.

FROM OUR DEACON CANDIDATE

As I am sure everyone knows, Len Mier of St. Michael's Parish is studying at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh to become a deacon. He must spend two weeks at the seminary during the summer and then complete a number of assignments through the entire year. I have imposed on him to share his work.

TOPIC: SYNOPSIS GOSPELS

Assignment: Essay that responds to this question

QUESTION: How does Mark's account of the trial of Jesus challenge the way I think about God and what it means for Jesus to be God's Son?

ESSAY 1

I think this is the most unsettling of the questions posed. Mark, in the trial narrative, gives me as the reader Jesus' identification of Himself: "I AM". It takes a lot to process this image presented.

The statement that Jesus identifies Himself and says that within him lies the fullness of life. He is united with the Divine life from which all creation springs. This awesome statement, in God rests everything, and at the present time. How his statement is not acknowledged by those who have him on trial is troublesome to me. Their only response is to condemn him because they do not understand.

As the "I AM" Jesus no longer worried about what he taught or the time with his disciples; his past was no longer relevant. Jesus also placed His trust and dependence with the Father, he had no need to worry about what was to come. He lived in the moment as was able to show me how to live. But his absolute trust Jesus showed what it meant to be the Son of the Father.

Although I can say that I am, it has little resemblance to Jesus' profound statement. In His "I AM" He tells the world

that He is as the Father is. His statement is made for me to realize that once I strip away all the world around myself, I must think about God in very basic terms. To think of God as eternally present and with me, I am challenged to live in the present moment if I am to live with God. Doing this is a challenging way to think about God. When

I strip away the things of the past and not worry about the future, I will just be in God. If I have faith in being, in God, I live in the moment and God's will become clear.

I would challenge my readers to think about this very same question to which Len had to respond. If you don't remember what Mark wrote about the trial, go to Mark 15:55-64 and read the account. The response is not to do a critical analysis of the text but to provide your own emotional and spiritual response.

The High Priest asked Jesus: "Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?" Jesus said, "I AM, and you will see me sitting at the right hand of God, and returning to earth in the clouds of heaven".

As you think about Jesus' response, what does that mean to you? The Jews had a deep sense of what they expected the Messiah to be. Do you think of Jesus as your Messiah?

The High Priest also asked Him: "Are you the Son of God?" What does that mean to you? How do you think the early Christians would have responded to this question? The same as us?



A POTPOURRI OF RELIGIOUS IDEAS

I have decided that this article would be dedicated to a variety of topics during the coming weeks. The first week I would like to share some thoughts about PRAYER.

Prayer is the search for God. It is also an encounter with God, and, going beyond this encounter, it can result in communion with God. It is an activity, a state and also a situation, that is a situation both with respect to God and to the created world. It arises from the awareness that the world in which we live is not simply two dimensional, imprisoned in the categories of time and space. Prayer is born of the discovery that the world has depths; that we are not only surrounded by visible things but also by invisible things. And this invisible world is both the presence of God and our own deepest truth. Visible and invisible are simultaneously present. They complete each other in a mysterious way - the presence of eternity in time and the future in the present and also the presence of each temporal moment in eternity, past, present and future all-at-once. Living only in the visible world is living on the surface. It ignores or sets aside not only the existence of God but the depths of created being. It is condemning ourselves to perceiving only the world's surface. But if we look deeper we discover at the heart of things a point of balance which is their finality.

Indeed the heart of man is open to the invisible. Not the invisible of psychology but the invisible infinite, God's creative word, God Himself.

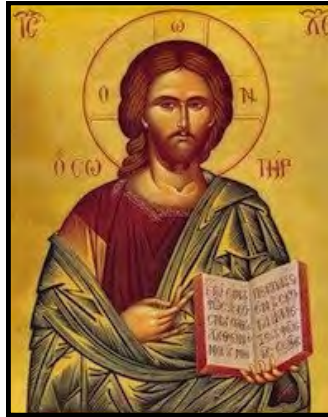
St. John Chrysostom said "When you discover the door of your heart you discover the gate of heaven."

So prayer is the relationship between man the visible and the invisible. This is why we can say that prayer is a search, an exploration of this invisible world which God alone knows and He alone can reveal to us.

All this can be said because when we actually decide to pray, we decide that an invisible world exists and that within that invisible world there is a Being which is beyond all comprehension. Prayer is the declaration we make to ourselves about the existence of an invisible Being Who is the source of all creation.

Further, Christianity says that this Being not only is the source of all things and keeps all things in existence, but this Being chose, out of love for His creation, to join Himself intimately to His creation - to become a human.

God, we believe, chose to become a human being so that He might share with us (1) the true meaning and purpose of this visible existence and (2) the way to live in order to gain all of the benefits of living in this visible world. Having created us with "free will," He could only attempt to "show us", through the Person of Jesus, how to make the most of our existence within this visible world. He could not force us to live in any particular manner. He could only reveal a way of living that can result in gaining the fullness of life and understand why we are here.



Schedule of Services

SIXTH PASCHAL WEEK

Sunday May 21 - Weekend of the Man Born Blind
10:00 AM - Walter Kizel; Lesia Wendory

Monday May 22 - Basiliscus, Martyr
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Tuesday May 23 - Michael of Synnada, Bishop-Confessor
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday May 24 - Simeon, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Thursday May 25 - Ascension of our Lord
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Friday May 26 - 3rd Finding of St. John the Baptizer's Head
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday May 27 - Therapont, Bishop-Martyr
No Service Scheduled

SEVENTH PASCHAL WEEK

Sunday May 28 - Weekend of the Fathers of Nicaea
10:00 AM + John Kushner; Anna Bliss

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

experience the fullness of life - we begin to truly experience what it means to be a child of God - we begin to understand how much God loves us. We must always remember that we cannot experience God's unconditional love for us if we are unwilling or unable to extend this same kind of love to others. In simple terms, we can only receive what we are willing to give.



Humans frequently fool themselves into thinking that they can limit their love for others and yet, at the same time, experience the complete love of God. So, it would seem that if we truly want to experience God's love, we have to be willing to love others.

Humans also frequently fail to realize that if I limit my ability to love anyone, I diminish my actual capacity to love. Which means that I can only give "diminished" love to those that I may truly desire to love.

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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>
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Gaining a Deeper Understanding of the New Testament

The existence of eye-witnesses to Jesus marked the first years of Christianity. As the apostles dispersed, and after their death, the preservation of the memory of Jesus' deeds and words became a problem. Moreover, catechetical needs required the organization of extant oral testimonies into compact units. This gave rise to the pre-Gospel collections of material and ultimately to the Gospels themselves. These written documents were no substitute for oral witness, as we hear from Papias, who, early in the 2nd century, was still seeking oral testimony even though he knew of written records. Other exigencies, such as the threat of heresy or of persecution, produced additional New Testament (NT) works.

Once the followers of Jesus had various Christian writings, what factor determined which ones were to be preserved and were to be considered as uniquely sacred? We know that some 1st century writings were not preserved and other early works that were preserved were not accepted as a part of the NT canon or collection.

The following factors were important. *First*, apostolic origin, real or putative, was very important, particularly when it came to acceptance. The canonicity of Hebrews and Revelation was debated precisely because it was doubted whether they were written by Paul and John respectively. Today, we understand that such apostolic origin is to be taken in the very broad sense that "authorship" has in biblical

discussion. Often this means no more than that an apostle had a traditional connection with a given work. By the stricter standards current today, it may be legitimately questioned whether a single NT work comes directly from any one of the Twelve.

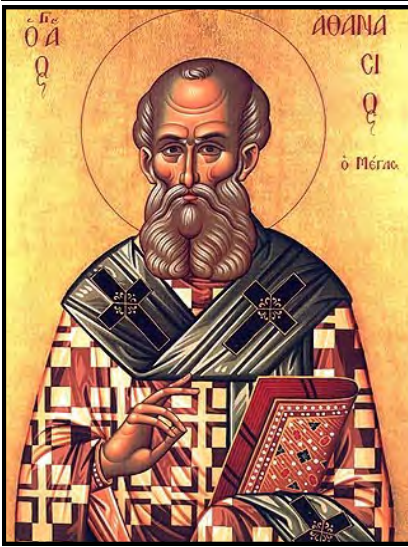
Second, most of the NT works were addressed to particular Christian communities, and the history and importance of the community involved had much to do with the preservation and even with the ultimate acceptance of these works. It seems that no work emerging directly from the Palestinian community has been preserved, although some of the sources of the Gospels and Acts were probably Palestinian. The probable reason for this loss lies mainly, it is believed, in the disruption of the Palestinian Christian community during the Jewish-Roman war (66-70).

Syria seems to have fared better, for apparently Syrian communities were addressed in Matthew, James and Jude. The churches of Greece and Asia Minor seem to have preserved the largest portion of NT material (i.e., the Pauline, the Johannine, and perhaps the Lucan writings). The church of Rome preserved Mark, Romans and perhaps Hebrews and the Lucan writings.

It is essential, I believe that we have a solid understanding of the NT since it is our SACRED WRITINGS. There are a lot of different theories. The ones I present are accepted by the Catholic Church!



Learning Our Faith From the Greek Fathers of the Church



I have been sharing in this article, the various arguments of the great saint Athanasius against Arius, the first priest who was condemned as a heretic because of his ideas about Christ. I already shared with my readers the first of three arguments that Saint Athanasius mounted against Arius. The third is this.

The essential oneness of the Father and Son indicates that whatever is predicated of the Father must be predicated of the Son. There is one true exception. The Son cannot be called the Father. That is the title of Father. That is, if the Father is sovereign as an attribute of deity, the Son possesses that same attribute. If the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord. If the Father is Light, the Son is Light. Thus

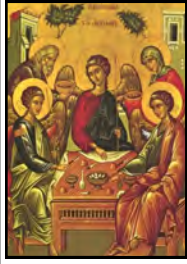
since they are one, and the godhead itself is one, the same things are predicated of the Son as of the Father, except the title of 'Father'".

While this may seem simplistic at first, it is a very important point in attempting, as the Fathers did, to come to an understanding of God. As we see God, He is triune in nature, that is He is One God that has three very distinct Persons. This, of course, is a mystery and we are not supposed to understand how this is possible. It is a matter of FAITH. We know that our God became a human being, the Person of Jesus, to reveal Himself to us and to reveal how we should live as humans. This belief also indicates to us that He relates to us in several different ways.

He relates to us as Father, the source of Life. He reveals to us as Son, the revealer of how we should live as humans in order to achieve the fullness of life. He relates to us as Spirit, that force within us that allows us to freely choose how we relate to Him. While this is a mystery, we believe that God is Three-In-One. It is not for us to attempt to conceptualize what this means, but rather to believe that it is true.

We know this to be true. He actually became a human being in order to reveal to us the meaning and purpose of life and to show us how to live this life in order to accomplish all that life is intended to give to us. Life is structured in such a way that it helps us to realize its meaning and purpose. In simple terms, life is intended to help us to "mellow out" and to truly become a person who knows how to live in order to become a true child of God. This, as you might expect, means to become a SPIRITUAL PERSON - to become a person who understands how important it is to love our neighbors and enemies as ourselves.

The mystery of the Trinity also reveals to us that God is, through the humanity of His Son, directly connected to us. While we are not equal to God, we share His life and He has called us to be the heirs to His Kingdom. This means that we must do everything in our power to being about His Kingdom in the here and now. This means living as a spiritual being!



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНИЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 63 No 21 WEEKEND OF THE MAN BORN BLIND May 20-21, 2017

The Spirituality of the Christian East

As I shared in the last issue of this article, Christian teaching asserts with courage the possibility of a “union” of man with God. In Eastern Christianity this is referred to as “Theosis” or Divinization. There are many varied references to divinization in the writings of the Church Fathers. I would like to begin to share some of these references so that you might realize that Theosis has a very real foundation in the Church.

In the second century, Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons (c. 130–202) said that God “became what we are in order to make us what he is himself.” Irenaeus also wrote, “If the Word became a man, it was so men may become gods.” He added: Do we cast blame on God because we were not made gods from the beginning, but were at first created merely as men, and then later as gods? Although God has adopted this course out of his pure benevolence, that no one may charge him with discrimination or stinginess, he declares, “I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are sons of the Most High.” For it was necessary at first that nature be exhibited, then after that what was mortal would be conquered and swallowed up in immortality.

At about the same time, Clement of Alexandria, (c. 150–215), wrote: “Yea, I say, the Word of God became a man so that you might learn from a man how to become a god.” Clement further stated that “If one knows himself, he will know God, and knowing God will become like God. His is beauty, true beauty, for it is God, and that man becomes a god, since God wills it. So Heraclitus was right when he said, ‘Men are gods, and gods are men.’” Clement of Alexandria also stated that “he who obeys the Lord and follows the prophecy given through him, becomes a god while still moving about in the flesh the flesh.



Justin Martyr (c. 100–165) insisted that in the beginning men “were made like God, free from suffering and death,” and that they are thus “deemed worthy of becoming gods and of having power to become sons of the highest”.

In the coming weeks I will continue sharing what the Fathers have said about divinization or Theosis. It is, perhaps, the most important spiritual concept in our Church. It truly places a very different emphasis on the meaning and purpose of life than is seen in Western spirituality.

More to come

Faith Now Touches Christ

The Lord's resurrection brought us joy; so should His Ascension, as we recall the event that exalted our lowly nature beyond the angels and highest created powers to the Father's side. These divine actions provide a sure foundation; through them God's grace works marvelously to keep our faith firm, our hope confident, and love ardent, even though the visible events as such are now part of history.

Even the blessed Apostles, despite the signs they saw and the sermons they heard, were fearful when the Lord suffered, and did not accept His Resurrection unhesitatingly. So much did His Ascension influence them, however, that all fear was turned to joy. Their minds contemplated the divine Christ at the

Father's side; no earthly trial could distract them from the fact that Christ had not left the Father when He descended nor left the disciples when He returned.

Therefore, beloved, the Son of Man who is Son of God has in an ineffable way become more present to us in his Godhead now that He has departed from us in His humanity. Faith now reaches to the Son, who is equal to the Father, and no longer needs the bodily presence of Jesus, in which He is less than the Father. For though His incarnate nature continues to exist, faith is summoned to touch the only-begotten Son, not with bodily sense but with spiritual understanding.

St. Leo the Great

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