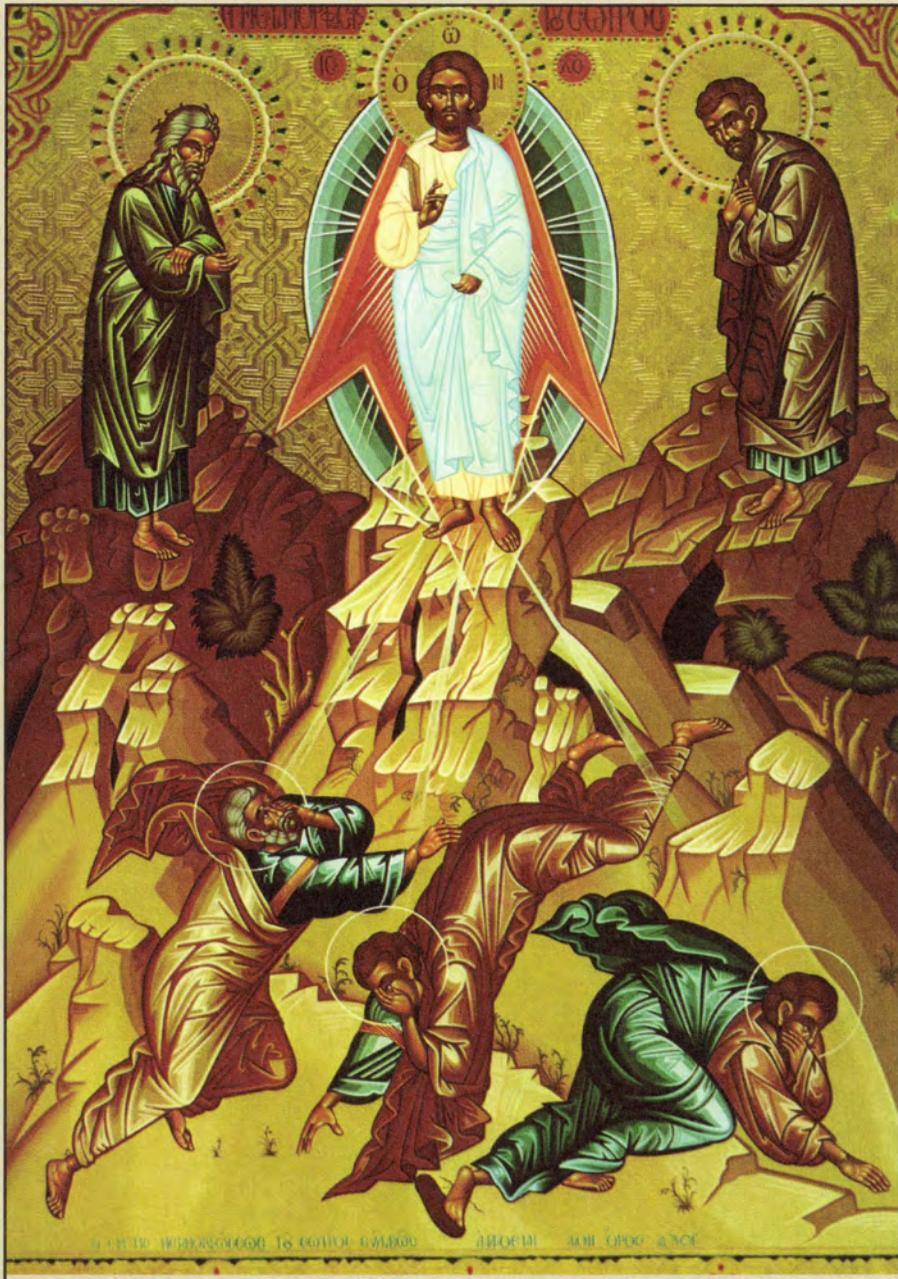


# HOLY TRANSFIGURATION



*Icon of the Holy Transfiguration -- August 6th*

## Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

This year the feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord falls on the ninth weekend after Pentecost. Because it is one of the major feasts of Our Lord, our proper prayers are taken totally from the feast. Our first reading is taken from St. Peter's second letter. Peter includes this very powerful statement in his letter:

It was not by way of cleverly concocted myths that we taught you about the coming in power of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we were eyewitnesses of his sovereign majesty. He received glory and praise from God the Father when that unique declaration came to him out of the majestic splendor: 'This is my beloved Son, on whom my favor rests'. We ourselves heard this said from heaven while we were in his company on the holy mountain.

Now we must not mistakenly think that when Peter uses the word Father in reference to God that he understood that God was Three-In-One. Rather, he realized that Jesus had referred to God as Father. When we hear this we immediately think that the Apostles understood God as we do, namely that He Is Triune.

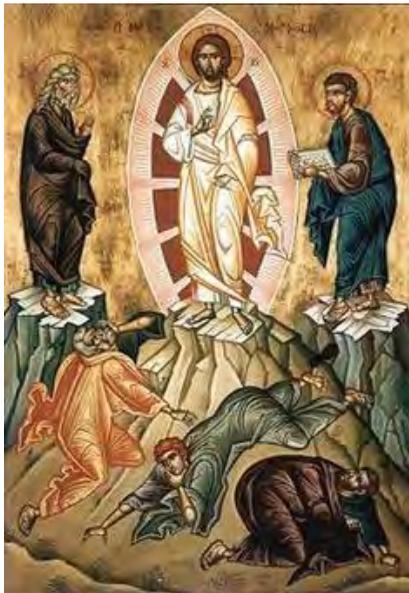
Our second reading is Matthew's account (17:1-8) of the Transfiguration. Matthew has condensed Mark (9:2-8) in some parts of this narrative and expanded it in others. (*Account also appears in Luke 9:28-36. compare these*

*accounts?*) Matthew has added a glow to the countenance of Jesus where Mark speaks of the whiteness of his garments, but he has omitted Mark's allusion to the fuller. Matthew has also omitted Mark's reference to Peter's ignorance and the fear of the disciples. He does, however, add, in 17:6-7, a deeper note of fear and reverence and presents Jesus himself as arousing the disciples. The effect of these modifications is to heighten the majesty and the mystery of the experience and to remove, as he often does, suggestions that the disciples did not really understand what was happening.

The transfiguration has no parallel in the Synoptic Gospels except the Baptism narrative, and for this reason some scholars have suggested that it is a post-resurrection narrative transferred to this point. This opinion is not widely accepted.

The external features of the narrative are derived from the Exodus narratives rather than from the resurrection narratives. The course of events in the Gospels compels us to suppose that the fullness of perception into the reality of Jesus until after His resurrection.

I'm sure that the experience of the disciples caused them to wonder about Who Jesus Was and also about human life itself. What do you think about when you hear this story repeated again?



# Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

The observance of this feast goes back to the fourth century. At that time, St. Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine the Great, built a church on Mt. Tabor in honor of the Lord's Transfiguration. At the end of the eleventh century, the Crusaders found several churches and monasteries on Mt. Tabor. In the thirteenth century, however, the Mohammedans came and destroyed them. Cyril II, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, built a new church over the ruins of the ancient church in 1860. In 1923, a magnificent basilica in honor of the Transfiguration of our Lord was built on Mt. Tabor.

This feast began to be solemnly observed in the Eastern Church under the title "The Lord's Transfiguration" from the sixth century. In Western Syria, in the eighth century, it was called "The Feast of Tabor."

Originally, the feast was observed in February. However, since this joyful feast fell during the time of the Great Fast, its celebration was not in keeping with the spirit of fasting and penance. Therefore, it was transferred to the 6th of August. Why this day? The historian Eusebius and St. John Damascene are of the opinion that the Lord's Transfiguration took place forty days before the death of Christ. Thus holy Church, in keeping with this opinion, transferred this feast from the month of February to the 6th of August, because forty days later, September 14th, is the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross - the commemoration of the passion and death of Christ.

From the East, the feast of the Transfiguration reached the West somewhere around the seventh or eighth century. Here it came into practice slowly; it



Was observed at different times and even in the twelfth century was not universally kept. In 1457, Pope Callistus III extended this feast throughout the Western Church and commanded that it be observed on the 6th of August in memory of a victory over the Turks near Bilhorod. This victory took place on the 22nd of July, 1456, but news of the victory did not reach Rome until the 6th of August. The Armenians observe the Lord's Transfiguration on the 7th Sunday after the Descent of the Holy Spirit.

The feast of the Transfiguration is one of the twelve principal feasts of our Church, having a one day pre-feast and a seven day post-feast. It falls during that time when the fruits of the earth reach maturity. From the earliest times in the Eastern Church, on this day fruit is blessed in thanksgiving to God for the first-fruits of the earth. This custom was adopted by the Christian Church from the Old Testament which prescribed that fruit be brought to the Temple of the Lord. In the book of Exodus we read: "You shall carry the first-fruits of the corn of your ground to the house of the Lord your God." In the Book of Leviticus we read: "When you shall have entered the land which I shall give you, and shall reap your corn, you shall bring sheaves of ears, the first-fruits of your harvest to the priest.

***We bless fruit as is our tradition!***

# The Divine Liturgy and Our Worship of God

There is a complete sequence of proper prayers for the Divine Liturgy of the Transfiguration. These include: special Antiphons, a special Entrance Hymn, a Tropar and Kondak, a special Prokimen, Alleluia Verses, Hymn to the Mother of God, and Communion hymn. You will note that for all major feasts of Our Lord, these same parts are special. We do well to listen closely to the Tropar and Kondak since they give us the substance of the feast.

## TROPAR

You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God, revealing as much of Your glory to Your Disciples as they could behold. Through the prayers of the Mother of God, let Your everlasting light also shine upon us sinners. O Giver of Light, glory be to You.

## KONDAK

You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God, and Your Disciples beheld as much as they could of Your glory, so that when they would see You crucified, they would understand that You suffered willingly; and they would preach to the world that You are truly the reflection of the Father.

In both of these special prayers, we hear that the “Disciples beheld as much as they could” of Christ’s glory and that the experience was meant to help the disciples later preach the glory of Jesus, the Crucified One. This experience was meant to give the Disciples “insight” into the Person of Jesus.



What insight does our celebration of this major feast give to us? Obviously we have the luxury of the Church’s dogmas to help us focus our understanding. This feast, indeed, reveals that the life-force within each human is, in some mysterious way, a participation in the life-force of God Himself. By infusing His life into all created things, God brings and sustains all things in existence and, of course, tells us that human life IS ETERNAL.

This feast, if we properly observe it, also reveals something about us. It is by Divine Guidance that we bless fruit on this day because at the core of every kind of fruit is a SEED which allows the fruit to grow and mature. God’s LIFE SEED is planted in all living things.

Another thought comes to mind. The Kondak states that the experience of the Lord’s Transfiguration allowed the disciples to understand that Jesus willingly suffered - that Jesus embraced the challenges of His life with an openness to the lesson that each challenge presented. This definitely has a message for us. Life’s challenges are meant to help us spiritually grow - Jesus, the man, grew from His willingness to face His life’s challenges with hope and trust in God. I wonder if this makes any sense to you who are reading this article?



# St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



## 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.

### RUMMAGE SALE DATES

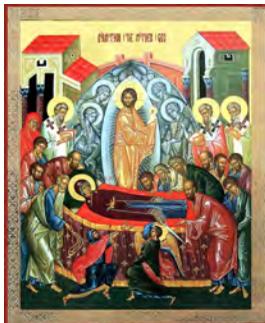
September 15-16, 2017

You can start bringing your items to church

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## PREPARING FOR THE FEAST

As you may already know if you are using our Parish calendar, our preparation for the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God has already begun. It is a tradition of our Church that a 14 day fast be used to prepare ourselves for the celebration of this important feast. This feast tells us that it is our belief that the Mother of God was taken into the next world by Christ and that her body did not experience decay. It is meant to also remind us that there is life after physical death. It is always our choice how we prepare to celebrate these feasts.



## CALLED TO HOLINESS

The call to holiness is a call to utilize the power of our intelligence to come to a deeper understanding of the meaning and the purpose of our life. The call to holiness is a call to believe that we have not been created for no reason and are only an accident.



Once we begin to truly understand the meaning and purpose of our life, we begin to realize our own *value* and *worth* in the eyes of God. This way of thinking helps us to realize that God loves us so much that He took the chance from all eternity to grant humans, the greatest of all His creation, the ability to voluntarily return His love or to reject His love.

Just think about what you just read. Our God, Who is almighty, loves us so very much that He gave us free will with the belief that if we knew how much He loves us, we would freely return His love. This is partially due to the fact that He realizes the power of love, true love. True love is creative. True love requires the one loving to extend love to others.

It is our conception of God as Three-In-One, requires this understanding of love. The very life of the Trinity is love, the Father loving the Son completely, therefore giving life to the Spirit. Much like a child

*(Continued on page 8)*

***Things change. And friends leave.  
Life doesn't stop for anybody.***

# FROM OUR DEACON CANDIDATE

## TOPIC: Synoptic Gospels

By Len Mier  
A Sermon

### THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Every year the Church celebrates this great feast of the Transfiguration of Christ, one of the twelve great feasts of Our Church. A feast that reveals to us something about our own salvation, we are presented with the transfiguration account as told in St. Matthew's Gospel.

I find it not to be overlook that Matthew begins with the phrase, "After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves." What happened six days prior? Matthew seems to want us to be aware of a specific frame of time. Numbers played a role in Jewish understanding of the cosmos. Why is it important that Matthew tells us six days passed? What does this miraculous event mean for us in our lives?

We have to look back to the previous chapter of Matthew's gospel to find our why this mention of six days is important to the telling of the transfiguration account and why it is important to our own understanding about Jesus. Let us look back in the gospel of Matthew to hear Jesus asking the twelve a question that Christians still ask themselves today: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" We need to remind ourselves that Matthew was writing to an audience that was primarily of Jewish origin. For them the term "Son of Man" had messianic overtones. For them the messiah was to be a person who restored the earthly kingdom of the people of Israel. The

answers varied from the twelve. So Jesus probes His disciples further. Having lived with them and taught them in word and deed, Jesus goes on to ask them more specifically: "But who do you say that I am?" to which Peter gives his confession "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

As if starting a timer Matthew starts counting. Where else do we encounter this time frame? It is the same time frame as the writer of the creation narrative in the Book of Genesis. One the first day of creation, we hear the revelation that God makes His presence known to this world He is creating by showing His presence with that of light, "Let there be light, and there was light." This idea of six days of creation I think spoke to the mind of the early Jewish followers of Christ. A great revelation of light is God's presence made manifest. We see the creation narrative moving in time through to the sixth day. The last day of creation ius the summit of all that God wanted to create. This first creation ends with "Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness."

Peter saying, "You are the Messiah" about Jesus is as great a revelation to the other disciples who were probably expecting the Messiah to be the warrior king, giving Divine order and displacing the chaos of their world, just as the creative revelation of God's divine light displaced the darkness of chaos. They start to realize at this moment that Jesus was not the warrior political kingdom restorer Messiah mainstream Judaism of the day wanted. We see that

*(Continued on page 7)*



## FROM OUR DEACON CANDIDATE

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*(Continued from page 6)*

Matthew now progresses full force toward this event of the transfiguration. All the gospel accounts take Peter, who made the profound confession, along with James and his brother John, to this event. It is here on the height of creation that this miraculous event takes place.

Matthew tells us Jesus was transfigured before them and that appearing with Him are Moses, the first law giver, and Elisha, the greatest of Israel's prophets. The evangelist tells us Jesus' face shone like the sun and His clothes became white as light, and we hear the voice of the Father reaffirming Peter's confession to the three, "This is my beloved Son." Our icon of this great feast gives us a glimpse of what this event looks like to the believer. If we compare it to the icon of the Lord's resurrection we can see that the transfigured Jesus is depicted with the same glorious mandorla, the uncreated eternal light of the resurrected Christ.

Is Matthew trying to tell us that this transfiguration happening six days past proclamation by Peter, that Jesus is the Messiah, the culmination of a new creation in Christ? Yes, I think Matthew is revealing to us a completion of the new creation, the fact that Jesus is the perfection of creation and that the resurrected Jesus will be the first born of this new creation.

Now comes the difficulty with reading about this miraculous event, what does this miraculous event mean for us in our lives?

In order for this passage of scripture to be relevant to a modern Eastern Christian we have to go beyond basking

in the glow of light from the miracles of the manifestation of Jesus on the mountain. I think that we must take away from the account of the transfiguration, that in baptism we too have become a new creation, if we truly take on Christ. His presence with Moses, the first law giver, He is also a new law giver. Giving us the law, "Love one another as I have loved you." His presence with Elijah, He is also the new and greatest of prophets, in that He shows to us truly what God's will is. In accepting this new creation for ourselves we need to see that the spark of Divine light is within us., We need to nurture and grow this Divine light dwelling within us, until it busts forth from us. We need to make manifest this Divine light for not only those close to us to see but make it shine for the whole world to see in us.

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This weekend we are all called to think about the meaning that this great feast has for us. The feasts of our Church are meant to help us gain great insights into the meaning of our human lives. Although they may focus on Jesus or Mary, they are integrated into our religious life as a means of helping us gain greater insights into this earthly existence. We must always remember that Jesus, Mary and those who followed Jesus, reveal by their lives something very important about human life itself. So we should not get "stuck" in just thinking about the story of the feast but, rather, think about what it reveals to us about our own lives. Our religion is meant to help us live our present life in a manner that truly helps us to spiritually grow.

# 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 August 6 - Ninth Weekend after Pentecost - Tone 8**  
**10:00 AM + Adrian Bluj; Wife Luba and Family**

## **TENTH WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - TONE 1**

**Monday August 7 - Domitius, Venerable Martyr**  
**8:00 AM - Special Intention**

Tuesday August 8 - Emilian, Bishop-Confessor  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Wednesday August 9 - Matthias, Apostle**  
**8:00 AM - Special Intention**

Thursday August 10 - Lawrence, Archdeacon-Martyr  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Friday August 11 - Euplus, Martyr**  
**8:00 AM - Special Intention**

Saturday August 12 - Photius & Anicetus, Martyrs  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Sunday August 13 - Tenth Weekend after Pentecost - Tone 1**  
**10:00 AM + Noah Patrick Semak - 6th Anniversary**  
**+ Glenna Semak; Robert & Jane Semak**

*(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)*

ordinarily is the expression of the love between the father and mother, so too the love between Father and Son is expressed in the Person of the Holy Spirit. Of course while all Three Divine Persons have existed from all eternity, it is the power of LOVE that calls them all into existence. The Trinity is the model of the love that must exist between humans. If true love exists, then it is creative, bringing families and communities into existence. A family or a community (church) that does not have love between its members, is truly not a family or a church. "Let us truly love one another so that we can profess belief in Father, Son and Holy Spirit," a prayer from our very Liturgy.

Given this, we see that all of God's interactions with us are dictated by LOVE. Somewhere along the way, the human element of the Church has distorted this. The bottom line is that GOD UNCONDITIONALLY LOVES US!



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

## Gaining a Deeper Understanding of the New Testament

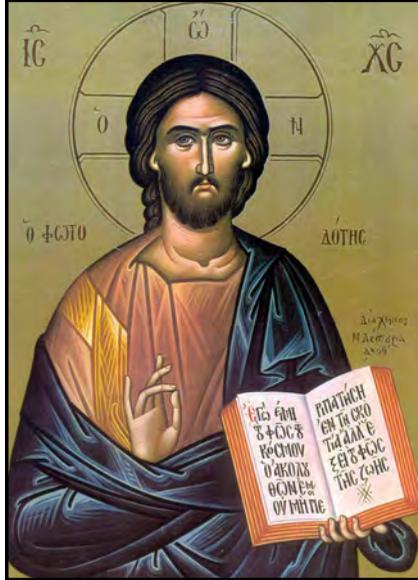
The epistle of *James* was known by Origen's time, but we do not know when it began to receive canonical status. It is not in the Muratorian list, and Eusebius places it among the disputed books. The Latin Claromontanus list includes it, but the African Canon of 360 does not. In the later part of the 4th century it won acceptance in the West through Jerome, Augustine and the councils of Hippo and Carthage. In the Greek church of the same period it found a place in the canons of Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius and Gregory Nazianzen. This makes it evident that various Fathers of the Church were the first to list the books that they felt were truly inspired and therefore to be contained within the Canon of the New Testament.

The evidence for the early knowledge of *Jude* is better than for *James*. *Jude* was known by the author of 2 Peter, by Polycarp, and by Clement of Alexandria. It appears in the Muratorian Fragment. However, Origen was aware that there were doubts about it, and Eusebius placed it among the disputed books. Its acceptance in the latter part of the 4th century followed a pattern similar to that of *James*. But *Jude* did not receive final acceptance by the Syrian church, and one of the canonical lists adopted by Trullo II (692) indicates uncertainty about its status.

The two shorter *Johannine epistles* were not cited frequently by Christian

writers, probably because of their relatively insignificant contents. Toward the end of the 2nd century, Irenaeus cites 2 John, but there is no evidence for the circulation of 3 John in the 2nd century. The Muratorian Fragment lists two Johannine letters (1 and 2). Origen accepted a short epistle by John and said that perhaps John left two more epistles,

although their true authenticity was denied by some and that all together they totaled no more than 100 lines. A century later, Eusebius listed 2-3 John among the disputed books, and a continuing dispute about these epistles is witnessed in the North African Canon of 360. Ultimately, like the other disputed catholic epistles, they were accepted in the Latin and Greek churches in the late 4th century, but not



fully in the Syrian church.

Of all the catholic epistles, 2 Peter has the poorest record of acceptance. There is no clear reference to the epistle before the time of Origen who says that Peter left "one acknowledged epistle and possibly two, although this is doubtful." Disputes about 2 Peter are recorded by Eusebius and are implicit in the North African Canon of 360. Jerome accepted it, although he knew there were doubts. It was accepted at the same time as were the other disputed catholic epistles.

**The history of our Sacred Literature, I believe, is truly fascinating.**

# Learning Our Faith From the Greek Fathers of the Church

Gregory asks: What if the difference between the Father and the Son, between the unbegotten and the begotten, “is outside the essence”? On a human level, for instance, I can be a father within certain relationships, but my fatherhood is not part of the essence of what it means to be a human being. If it were, as Gregory observes, I would end up being my father’s father, since I would be “the same with him in essence.” Gregory comments that in order to investigate the “nature of the essence of God” might leave issues concerning personality or individuality “absolutely unaffected.” We perhaps are on the right track here, particularly because if we describe God’s nature itself as begotten and unbegotten, we end up with “contradictory essences, which is impossible.

What, however, if the names “Father” and “Son” describe a relationship, a relationship existing eternally in the nature of God?

Father is not a name either of an essence or of an action.... But it is the name of the relation in which the Father stands to the Son, and the Son to the Father. For as with us these names make known a genuine and intimate relation, so in the case before us too they denote an identity of nature between him that is begotten and him that begets.

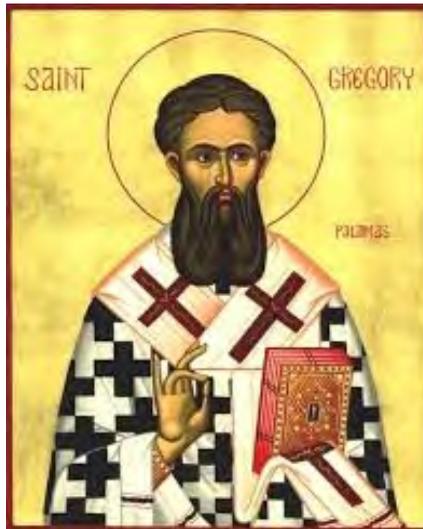
Both Father and Son share a common

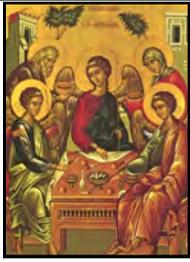
essence. They are the same substance *homoousios* (Gk.ὁμοούσιος). Simultaneously they are eternally distinct in the relationship of Father and Son, unbegotten and begotten. As Gregory puts it, “there never was a time when he was without the Word, or when he was not the Father, or when he was not true, or not wise, or not powerful, or devoid of life, or of splendor, or of goodness.”

As you can tell, the Church’s dogma of the Trinity, which was and is guided by God’s own Spirit, is a difficult idea to conceive and so people like Gregory spent a great deal of time trying to find ways to describe the idea of God. Of course this is why other religions like Islam and Judaism find it impossible to accept this Christian idea of God. This idea of God had to be formulated in order to see Jesus, a man by all

appearances, as also God. When the Church decided that Jesus was both God and Man, she had to reformulate the existing idea of God. The existing idea was, of course, from Judaism. In Yahweh there, the Jewish idea of God, there is only ONE PERSON, the Creator.

The beauty of the Christian idea of God is that it connects humankind to God, through Jesus, in an unique and intimate manner. The Christian concept of God bears greater witness to the idea that humans are made in God’s image and unto His likeness.





# THE EASTERN HERALD

## СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.

Vol. 63 No 33

Ninth Weekend After Pentecost

August 5-6, 2017

### The Spirituality of the Christian East

The teaching that man must be holy and perfect like God Himself through the accomplishment of the will of God is the central teaching of the Eastern Church. This teaching has been stated in many different ways in the Eastern Church's spiritual tradition. St. Maximus the Confessor said it this way: "Man is called to become by divine grace all that God Himself is by nature." This means very simply that God wills and helps His creatures to be like He is, and that is the purpose of life. As God is holy, perfect, pure, merciful, patient, kind, free, self-determining, ever-existing, and always, for eternity, the absolute superabundant realization of everything good in inexhaustible fullness and richness... so man must be this way as well, ever growing and developing in divine perfection and virtue for all eternity by the will and power of God Himself. The perfection of man is his growth in the unending perfection of God.

If you read Maximus' words closely, you realize that God does not expect us to become like Him in just this life-time.

Rather, humans will be engaged in the process of becoming like God for all eternity. God has granted us eternal life so that we might continuously have the opportunities needed to grow in His likeness, something needed since we have been created in His image.

Christian spirituality is centered in Christ. **Jesus Christ** is the divine Son of God who was born as a man of the Virgin Mary in order to give man eternal life in communion with God, His Father.

In Jesus Christ "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" In Him is the "fullness" of "grace and truth" and "all the fullness of God." When one sees and knows Jesus, one sees and knows God the Father. When one is in communion with Jesus,

one is in abiding union with God.

These various ideas are found in St. Paul's Letters to the Colossians, Romans and Ephesians and in St. John's Gospel. The goal of human life is to be continually "in Christ."

**THINK ABOUT THIS!**



Life's Journey is an Ascension  
to the Heavenly Father

### *It Is Good For Us To Be Here*

Upon Mount Tabor, Jesus revealed to His disciples a heavenly mystery. While living among them He had spoken of the kingdom and of His second coming in glory, but to banish from their hearts any possible doubt concerning the kingdom and to confirm their faith in what lay in the future by its prefiguration in the present, He gave them on Mount Tabor a wonderful vision of His glory, a foreshadowing of the kingdom of heaven.

It was as if he said to them: "As time goes by you may be in danger of losing your faith. To save you from this I tell you now that some standing here listening to me will not taste death until they have seen the Son of Man coming in the glory of His Father." Moreover, in order to assure us that Christ could

command such power when He wished, the evangelist continues: Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter, James and John, and led them up a high mountain where they were alone. There, before their eyes, He was transfigured. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as light. Then the disciples saw Moses and Elijah appear, and they were talking to Jesus.

These are the divine wonders we celebrate today; this is the saving revelation given us upon the mountain; this is the festival of Christ that has drawn us here.

*St. Anastasius of Sinai, Bishop*

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