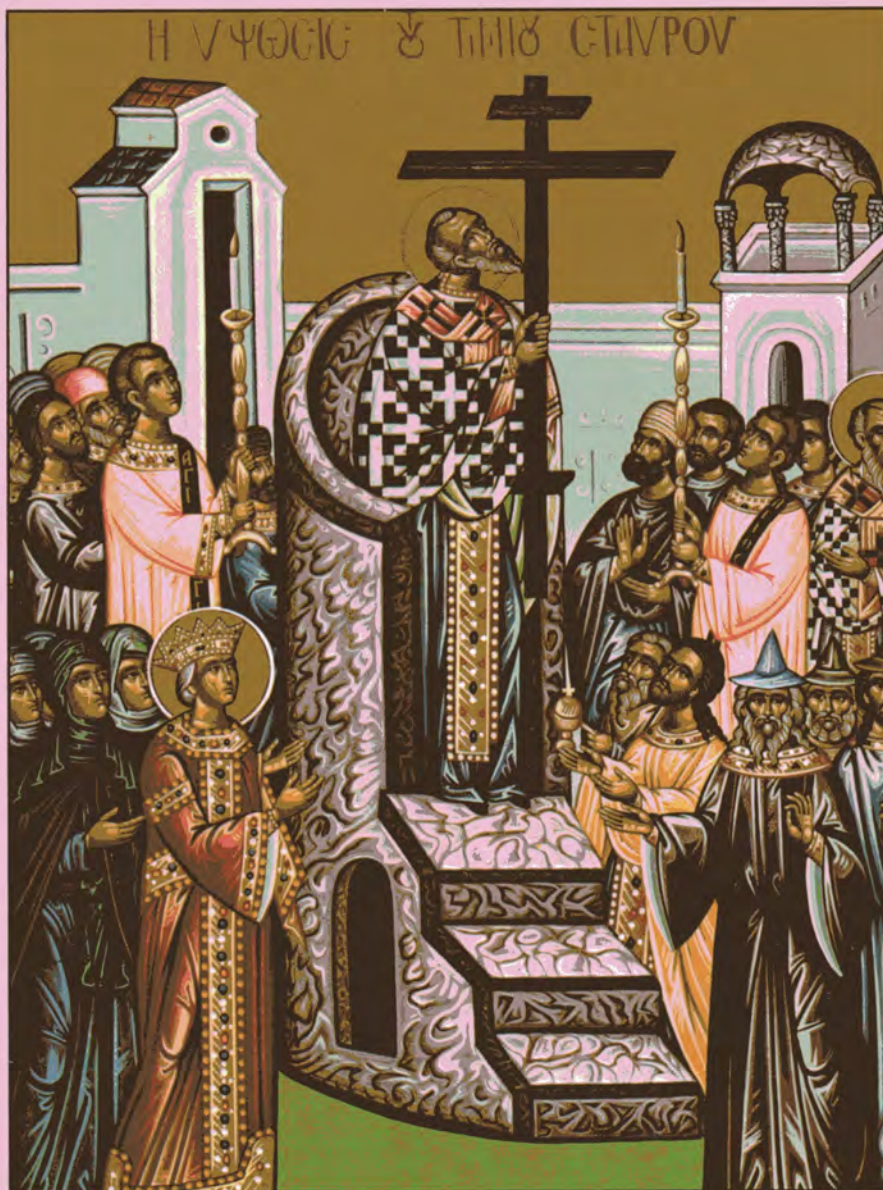


SUNDAY BEFORE THE EXALTATION
OF THE HOLY CROSS



Icon of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross -- September 14th

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

This weekend we prepare ourselves for the celebration of the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Our first reading is taken from Paul's Letter to the Galatians wherein he asserts that the Cross is the true boast of all true followers of Jesus Christ. In fact he states: "May I never boast of anything by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through it, the world has been crucified to me and I to the world." Hopefully we, who call ourselves Christian might say the same thing as Paul. The Cross of Christ is truly the symbol of those who willingly embrace the real and true challenges of life in the same way that Jesus did.

While Christians embrace, as the ultimate symbol of the Christian life, the Resurrection of Christ, the resurrection is never seen out of the context of the Crucifixion. In the Crucifixion of Christ we see how we must approach life. We see that the challenges of life have a meaning. They are the means that life is providing us to grow in the likeness of God, as seen in the Person of Jesus.

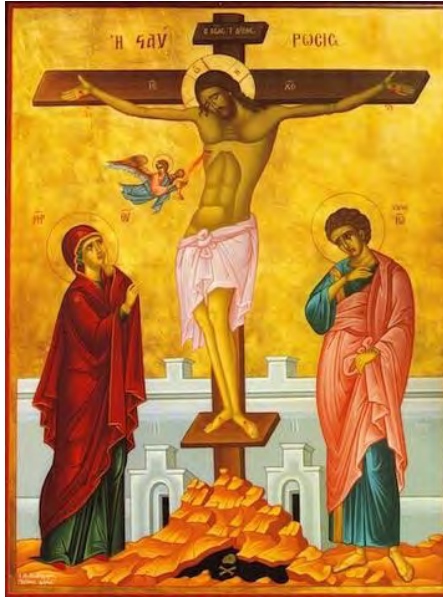
Our second reading, which is taken from John's Gospel, stresses the fact that the Crucifixion of Christ

symbolizes a "way of living." The Crucifixion of Christ presents us with a "way of living" which embraces all of the challenges of life as opportunities for spiritual growth. Jesus showed us that when we can finally see that the challenges of life present true and real opportunities for spiritual growth, we begin to see that the meaning and true purpose of life is to spiritually grow - to learn how to accept life as it is presented to us.

The Cross was the true opportunity of Jesus to tell us that if we embrace life's challenges with an open mind and heart and refuse to allow the challenges of life to distract us from being people who

TRUST IN GOD and who are willing to **FORGIVE OTHERS**, then we spiritually grow (*these are the themes that have been presented to us during the past several weeks in our readings*).

Again this requires that we begin to understand the true meaning and purpose of life. God created us and gave us a free will. The purpose of life is to grow in the likeness of Jesus, which will allow us to truly become children of God and allow us to understand why we were created.



Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

The feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, which we will celebrate on the 14th of September, is a very ancient feast. However, like the history of the finding of the holy Cross of the Lord, the history of the institution of the feast has been obscured by various legends and it is not easy to separate historical fact from pious legend.

It must be remembered that, in celebrating this feast, we are not concerned with the ordinary veneration of the holy Cross, which takes place on the third weekend of the Great Fast, but with that aspect of the feast which is expressed in the name of the feast itself, namely the Exaltation or Elevation of the Cross, that is, a special solemn rite connected with the veneration and glorification of the Holy Cross.

Historians of the Eastern Church generally agree that two particular events gave rise to the institution of this feast: the finding of the Holy Cross of the Lord in the fourth century and the recovery or return from Persian captivity in the seventh century.

The institution of the feast was first preceded by the discovery of the sacred wood of the Cross upon which Christ died. Christian tradition has transmitted to us several different legends about the finding of the cross, three of which are attributed to St. Helena (+330), the mother of Emperor Constantine the Great. The finding of the Holy Cross is



Historians who mention the finding of the Holy Cross say nothing about its first exaltation immediately after its discovery, nor does pious tradition give any account of it. The Greek Church celebrates the finding of the Holy Cross on the 6th of March. In the Prologue, this church feast has the title: "The Finding of the Venerable Cross which was discovered by Blessed Helena". The Latin Church celebrated this event on the 3rd of May, but after the reform of the feast days, during the reign of Pope John XXIII in 1960, this festival was excluded from the Church Calendar.

This has, for centuries, been a part of the Eastern Church's calendar of feast days. As Eastern Catholic Christians we still maintain the calendar of the Greek Church. We have not eliminated this feast from our yearly celebrations but, rather, embrace this feast as very important to our yearly celebrations. In fact, this feast calls us to FAST as if it were Great and Good Friday. Why? Because it recalls in a special way the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. We are reminded again what He revealed to us by His crucifixion.

The Divine Liturgy and Our Worship of God

I don't know how many realize that what we do together is meant to bring Jesus Christ into our presence. The Divine Liturgy is, first and foremost, the way that we have been granted by God to be in Jesus' presence. When He was about to die He gave His followers a way to always have Him in their presence. He took bread and say that His body was present to those who were willing to believe that the bread was His body. He then took a cup of wine and told His followers that the wine was, in the world of faith, also His Blood. This was the way that He guaranteed His followers that He would be in their midst.

The early Church truly believed this and, therefore, they repeated what He did at the Last Supper because they truly wanted Him to be with them. They truly believed that when they repeated His actions that He was with them. The apostles on the road to Emmaus said that when the person that was with them repeated the actions of the Last Supper, namely stating that the bread and wine was His body and blood, they felt they were in His presence.

Do you feel, after we as a church, (*that is a community of believers in Jesus Christ*), that you are truly in His presence? That is the feeling that we should be striving to achieve - to somehow believe and feel that when we pray over bread and wine, He is in our presence. I realize, of course, that



this takes faith. We have to “want to believe” that Christ is in our presence. This awareness must come from a very deep desire to personally know Jesus who we believe to be the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

So I would challenge my readers with these questions: Why do you come to the Divine Liturgy? What is the Divine Liturgy all about? What do you feel is achieved by coming to the Divine Liturgy? What does the Divine Liturgy mean to you? Do you feel in any way closer to God because of your participation in the Divine Liturgy?

I know that these are serious questions! I make no apologies for asking them. It is my sincere hope that if you are coming to the Divine Liturgy, it means something other than fulfilling an obligation, by law, so that you won't be punished when you die and be assigned to hell. I totally and completely reject that idea. I truly believe that if you don't come to the Divine Liturgy you miss a real and true opportunity to know more about God and enter into an ever deepening relationship with Him.

I hope to provoke your thoughts!



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

churchWIDE
RUMMAGE
SALE

ITS ALMOST HERE

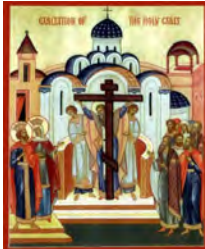
Our Rummage Sale is quickly approaching. It is a good fundraiser for the Parish and, especially since we are currently making improvements to our church building. (We must remember that our buildings are more than 50 years old and feeling their age).

This coming week we will probably be working each and every day to prepare for the sale which is next weekend. Any help and support you can give us will be truly appreciated.

FEAST DAY

Thursday, September 14th

This coming Thursday is one of the important solemn feast days of our Church. It is the feast of the **EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS**. It is truly important because it celebrates the finding of the **HOLY CROSS** of Christ. It is so important that the weekends before and after the feast that our Church calls is to remember this feast. It has become for the Eastern Church a feast that is like the Holy and Great Friday. We celebrate before and after the actual feast. It is all about us recognizing the message of Christ's crucifixion.



CALLED TO HOLINESS

I believe that the *Call to Holiness*, as I have repeatedly stated, is a call to come to a real understanding of the meaning and purpose of this earthly life. I do think that the answer to this question of "purpose" has a logical and reasonable answer.



The purpose of life is to "grow in the likeness of Jesus" and, therefore, to grow in our true understanding of the meaning and purpose of life. God's plan for us is to provide us with sufficient opportunities to grow in this likeness.

God, we believe, created us in His Image. We have the potential to grow in His likeness. It is, however, our free choice to do this. Free Will is truly one of the portions of God's "image" that we have been granted. Being human means to have a "free will." Why? Because God has a "free will." His decisions are not dictated to Him. Rather, He gave us free will, like unto Himself, so that we might have the opportunity to grow in His likeness.

God created humans to be like unto Jesus.

FROM OUR DEACON CANDIDATE

INTRODUCTION TO DOGMATICS

By Len Mier

This essay is an adult education lesson describing what is known as “the Fall of Adam and Eve” and in what way(s) has this fall impacted and continues to impact humanity and the cosmos?

Now the snake was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He asked the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You shall not eat from any of the trees in the garden?’” The woman answered the snake: “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, ‘You shall not eat it or even touch it, or else you will die.’” But the snake said to the woman: “You certainly will not die! God knows well that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, who know good and evil.” The woman saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes, and the tree was desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loin clothes for themselves.

From our childhood we remember this passage from the book of Genesis. It occurs immediately following the narration of creation. We call this the story of the fall and use it as the explanation of how Man sinned against God. This is a good tool when we explain the fall in the simplest of terms. Man disobeyed God! We did

something disobedient and paradise was taken away from us as punishment. As adult people of faith we need to look beyond the basics of this narrative and examine what it means and how it affects our personal relationship with God, and neighbor. We also must look how this fall affects Man and his relationship to the cosmos, the sum total of creation, and what God did to correct it.

The whole reason for creation was that, God in His freedom, willed the world to come into existence to share his love. In doing this He made Man in His image and likeness, which meant Man was given freedom. The freedom to love God or reject God. There was only one way for Man to truly exercise this freedom. Adam simply exercised his freedom by saying NO, because he could. This is no different than a children or teenagers trying to establish their own freedom in relation to their parents. This simple no to God’s direct instructions in the garden was Adam’s exercise of his free will. It placed him at odds with God, separating him from his creator and sustainer, bringing evil, sin and death into the world.

We can ask, why God didn’t exclude the idea of freedom for Man. If He did not make Man free there would be no

(Continued on page 7)



FROM OUR DEACON CANDIDATE

(Continued from page 6)

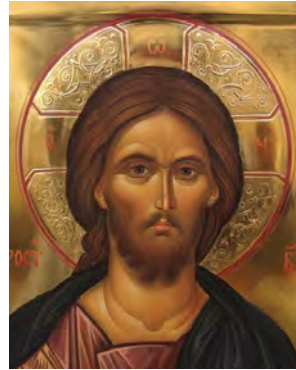
cause for Man to fall. The answer is quite simple: God did not stack the deck in His favor. It is no act of love to force a relationship on someone who does not want it. Man must be free to choose God and love God, or reject Him. In his freedom Man chose to separate himself from God. God did not separate Himself from Man, as we see in the person of Jesus Christ.

This fall has impacted Man and his relationship with God in many ways; a few prominent ones I would like to discuss.

The first things that happened, Man transferred the center of the cosmos from God to himself, thinking he would be god. From this point forward in time Man makes himself the point of reference for all the cosmos. Man believed that he could dominate nature. In reality it just set him against nature because it could not be controlled by him but only controlled by God.

In his lack of ability to control nature, man fears nature and began to deify nature, bringing about the idea and realization of idolatry. Nature began to take on a superiority over man since Man could not and still cannot control it. Because man could not control nature, his relationship with all creation changed. This is because nature is in harmony with God and not man. It can be said that Man and all creation by the fall have become ruled by the laws of nature itself. This law of nature brings forth a biological definition of life which only gives Man the impression of what actual life is.

Another impact of the fall on Man is death. Man believe he possesses life but as we know, all creation from the start of time, is set to its



own dissolution. This life we possess is a biological life, it always comes to an end. It is a consequence of being created. God being uncreated is eternal and not subject to the laws of creation. The illusion that we have life by linking real life to the notion of biological life is a consequence of the fall. When we as Christians talk about life it is real life or eternal life. This eternal life is life as expressed as communion with the creator. This life is linked directly with the eternal God in the person of Jesus Christ and his resurrection. In this communion with the uncreated God we are given the ability to overcome the laws of nature.

The final consequence of the fall I wish to discuss is that God's love for us is so great, and that it was Man's rejection of God and not God's turning away *(Continued on page 8)*

Schedule of Services

Sunday September 10 - Weekend before the Exaltation - Tone 8
10:00 AM + For the Parish Family

15th WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - TONE 1

Monday September 11 - Theodora, Venerable
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Tuesday, September 12 - Autonomous, Bishop-Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday September 13 - Dedication of the Resurrection Church
No Service Scheduled

Thursday September 14 - Exaltation of the Holy Cross
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Friday September 15 - Nicetas, Great-Martyr
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday September 16 - Saturday after the Exaltation
No Service Scheduled

Sunday September 17 - Weekend after the Exaltation - Tone 1
10:00 AM + For the Parish Family

Continued from page 7 - Dogmatics)

away from Man. God never removed His love for His creation. He made Himself present to Man in the incarnation. The incarnation is the union of God and Man in Jesus Christ, the uncreated Son of God, who is a person not subject to the laws of nature in the same way we are.

OUR NEW PARISH COUNCIL

Last week, in connection with the New Calendar of the Church Year, our Parish Council met and elected members to fulfill Positions on the Council. They are:

Gordon Malaniak, President
Rafic Vawter, Vice-President
Mary LaDouceur, Treasurer
Janet Dicky, Secretary

I would again thank all those who have served on the Parish Council for their support and help.

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

St. Michael the Archangel
Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church
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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

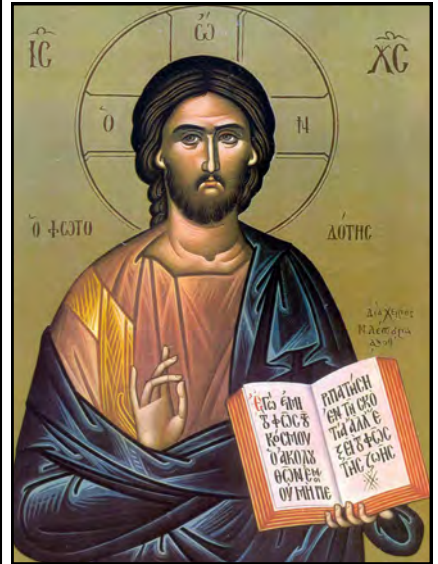
Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

Gaining a Deeper Understanding of the New Testament

Enduring Problems In Canonicity

As I have presented, the early Church's judgment on the canonicity of book was often determined by traditions about authorship. The fact that today we accept the canon that emerged from such judgments does not mean that we are bound to accept the reasoning behind the judgments. In fact, all modern scholars agree the Fathers were often quite wrong about the authorship of biblical books. Authorship us a historical question to be settled by scientific criteria of style and content; it is not a religious question in the same way that recognition of inspiration is. Thus, the Church has wisely refrained from dogmatic statement about the authorship of sacred books. The decrees of the Pontifical Biblical Commission between 1905 and 1915, which dealt with authorship, were not dogmatic but precautionary, and subsequently Catholic scholars have been given complete freedom with regard to these decrees. Within 50 years after they were issued, these decrees were no longer in harmony with the consensus of scholars about authorship - a good indication of the complexities of the problem and the danger of taking official positions on it.

In evaluating the question of biblical authorship, we must recognize that pseudonymity (attributing a book to someone else, usually someone of renown) was truly more acceptable in ancient literary circles than it is today. It is a *fact* that divine inspiration does not preclude pseudonymity; for Moses simply did not write all that is attributed to him in Deuteronomy, David did not write all the Psalms attributed to him, and Solomon did not write Ecclesiastes and Wisdom, internal claims notwithstanding. We should therefore not be reluctant to apply the



principal of pseudonymity to the New Testament (NT) where there are good reasons for doing so. The instances of Matthew and 2 Peter seem clear; the instances of the Pastorals, 1 Peter, James and Jude are debatable (Hebrews is not really pseudonymous but has been wrongly attributed to Paul in tradition).

Christians that take a "fundamental" approach to the Scriptures, especially the NT do not and will not take this very realistic approach to the NT. Such an approach, however, does not lessen the impact and important of the NT.

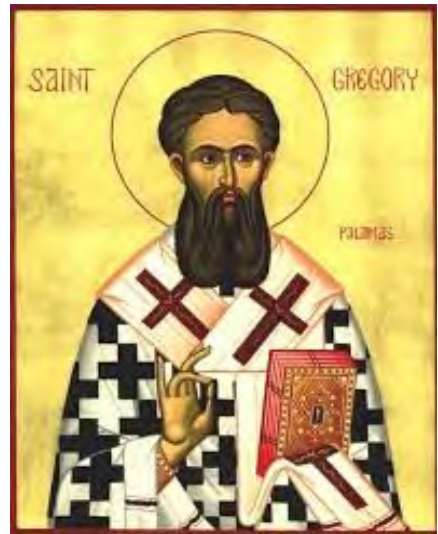
Learning Our Faith From the Greek Fathers of the Church

I have already shared with my readers the first 10 characteristics of Christ as articulated by St. Gregory. I would continue sharing these.

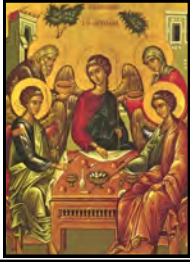
11. **Righteousness.** The Son is a righteous judge “both for those who are under the law and for those who are under grace, for soul and body, so that the former should rule, and the latter obey, and the higher have supremacy over the lower”.
12. **Sanctification.** The Son is “purity, that the pure may be contained by purity.”
13. **Redemption.** The Son has set us free, for we “were held captive under sin.” He gave “himself a ransom for us, the sacrifice to make expiation for the world.”
14. **Resurrection.** The Son is resurrection in a twofold sense: he has himself risen from the dead, and he “brings to life again us who were slain by sin.”
15. **Man.** The Son’s body enables He who was “incomprehensible” in his divine nature to “be apprehended by embodied creatures.” In addition, through the incarnation the Son sanctifies humanity, “as it were a leaven to the whole lamb,” Gregory explains:

By uniting to himself that which was condemned [the Son] may release it from all condemnation, becoming for all people all things that we are, except sin - body, soul, mind, and all through which death reaches - and thus he became man, who is the combination of all these; God in visible form, because he retained that which is perceived by mind alone. He is son of man, both on account of Adam, and of the Virgin from whom he came: from the one as a forefather, from the other as his mother, both in accordance with the law of generation, and apart from it.

Finally, at the end of the fourth oration,



Gregory groups together a series of titles and names, most from the Gospel of John and Hebrews: the way (*because he leads us through himself*), the door (*as letting us in*), the shepherd (*as making us dwell in a place of green pastures, and bringing us up by waters of rest*), the sheep (*as the victim*), the lamb (*as being perfect*), the high priest (*as the offeror*) and Melchizedek (*as without mother in that nature which is above us, and without father in ours; and without genealogy above...and, moreover, as king of Salem, which means peace, and king of righteousness*).



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

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

Vol. 63 No 37

14th Weekend After Pentecost

September 9-10, 2017

The Spirituality of the Christian East

Clement of Alexandria and Origen introduced the terms of asceticism and ascetic. Little by little in the East they gained a monastic coloring. Monasteries are called *askitria*, places for physical training. The *askitis* (the ascetic) is the monk who strives to obtain perfection by observing all the rules of restraint or temperance through cleansing from the passion. Origen calls zealous Christians ascetics; they are disciplining themselves to mortify the passions and develop good habits that lead to perfection.

Honestly, this is one of the major problems of the Eastern Church. A lot of our practices and our attitudes are based on “monasticism.” The major contributors to our Church have been monks. People living in the world and not separated from the world, are not monks. We must draw from this most blessed heritage what can be used while living in this world. Monastic practices are not wrong! They can help a person move to a higher level of understanding of the mysteries of life. The problem is that we must make Christianity work while living in a very complex world.

The ideas put forth by monasticism are truly wonderful but we must interpret and adapt the insights of monasticism to living in our complex, and multi-puralistic world. This takes, in my estimation, COMMON SENSE.

First and foremost It is important, I believe, to see our religion as truly REASONABLE and highly



Life's Journey is an As-

RATIONAL. Our religion is not meant to be magical or superstitious (*although I know that many have, because they have not embraced adult notions of religion, may embrace the ideas of religions as magical*). Humans need things to be magical, I have come to believe and seek the “magical” side of religion. We humans want religion to tell us that we can magically bypass the challenges of life. WOW!

The Holy Cross

For it was not a mere man who died for us, as I said before, but the Son of God, God made man. Further; if the lamb under Moses drove the destroyer far away, did not much rather the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, deliver us from our sins? If any disbelieve the power of the Crucified, let him ask the devils; if any believe not words, let him believe what he sees. Many have been crucified throughout the world, but by none of these are the devils scared; but when they see even the Sign of the Cross of Christ, who was crucified for us, they shudder. For those men died for their own sins, but Christ for the sins of others; for He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Take for a witness Pilate himself, who gave sentence upon Him, saying, I find no fault in this Man: and when he gave Him up, and had washed his hands, he said, I am innocent of the blood of this just person.

Jesus then really suffered for all men; for the Cross was no illusion, otherwise our redemption is an illusion also. His death was not a mere show, for then is our salvation also a fable. If His death was but a show, they were true who said, We remember what that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I rise again. His Passion then was real: for He was really crucified, and we are not ashamed of it. He was crucified, and we deny it not, nay, I rather glory to speak of it. I confess the Cross, because I know of the Resurrection. For if, after being crucified, He had remained as He was, I had not perchance confessed it, but now that the Resurrection has followed the Cross, I am not ashamed to declare it. Amen.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

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