

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
SUNDAY OF ZACCHAEUS



Icon of the Encounter of Jesus with Zacchaeus

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

This weekend we begin the five-week sequence that prepares us for the Great Fast - Lent. It is a sequence that attempts to spell out the very nature of METANOIA - the spiritual work of becoming more like Jesus Christ. While the work of the coming Great Fast is meant to prepare us to truly celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is also meant to help us to engage in actions that can help us be more spiritual.

The readings this weekend are taken from Luke's Gospel and the first Letter of Paul to Timothy. Let me share my thoughts on the readings that we hear this weekend. They have much to offer us as we engage in the work of becoming more like Jesus Christ.

Paul tells Timothy why they work and struggle as they do. He writes: *our hopes are fixed on the living God who is the savior of all men, but especially of those who believe.* The big question that this poses is whether we actually are people who believe. We have the beginning of belief when we come to services. But we have to make this belief an integral part of our lives. We have to desire what this belief in God - in Jesus Christ - will help us to accomplish during this lifetime.

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the revelation of God Himself about how to live if you want to gain eternal life - if you want to become the person God intended when He created you?

The Gospel story of Zacchaeus is a story about DESIRE. Zacchaeus truly desired to see Jesus Christ and risked being ridiculed in order to see Jesus. Because he took a chance, Jesus responded to him.



Would you be willing to face ridicule in order to discover Jesus? Are you willing to take the risk and live like Jesus for the sake of eternity?

As we prepare for the Great Fast, we must first realize that the desire to know Jesus is essential and that in order to truly know Him, we must make certain changes in our lives.

This process begins with making an honest assessment of who we are and how well we live a life that is like Jesus. We have to know how we must grow and change so that we can focus our efforts during Lent.

Like Zacchaeus, we have to truly desire to know Jesus and then to imitate how He lived. Many who have gone before us have shown us that it is possible to imitate Jesus and to become a true child of God.

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

As we begin the sequence of weeks that are intended to prepare us for the Great Fast, we might ask: *Why does the Church have us fast and abstain during the period before the great feasts that we celebrate?* In a few very simple words, our discipline of fasting and abstaining is not meant to “gain favor with God” but, rather, to help us focus our attention on what we are going to celebrate.

I dislike the question: *What are you giving up for Lent?* We are not called to “give-up” anything for Lent. Rather, we are called to impose upon ourselves more discipline so that we can focus our attention on what we are preparing to celebrate.

God doesn't need our fasting! Our fasting will not change, in any way, our relationship with God! We will not get more “extra points” in heaven for engaging in any kind of discipline that prepares us to celebrate the feast that we will be preparing ourselves to celebrate. We do not gain more “favor” with God if we observe the Great Fast.

The up - and - coming Great Fast is all about engaging in actions that can help us to spiritually grow. When we fast, we become aware of the fact that we are preparing to celebrate a feast that has great meaning for us. The Lord's Resurrection tells us that we, humans, are created by God to experience eternal life. Because Jesus



as a human being rose from the dead, God has revealed to us that eternal life is prepared for those who can truly embrace the belief that life is eternal. As we look at the life of Jesus and believe that He was raised from the dead because He truly lived as God's Son, we come to realize that if we attempt to live as one of God's children, we too will have the power to experience eternal life.

While it is true that all humans have access to eternal life, it is also true that all humans, depending on their beliefs, will not experience eternal life in the same way. Humans can only experience what they believe.

Our coming Easter celebration is all about supporting our belief in the fact that human life is eternal and that we can dispose ourselves to experience this eternal life by not only believing in the eternal nature of human life but also by living in accord to this belief.

So, as we begin to prepare ourselves for a period of METANOIA, let us ask ourselves: *What do I really believe about human life and also about the life of Jesus? Is He God's revelation to us about human life?*

The Divine Liturgy and Our Worship of God

During this preparation period for the Great Fast, the Church uses five Gospels that are meant to help us understand the work of personal transformation we are called to engage in during the Fast. For many this information may come only as a reminder. For others it may help them focus their efforts during the Fast.

The Gospels we will use are:

STORY OF ZACCHAEUS

Necessity of Desire

PUBLICAN & PHARISEE PARABLE

Necessity of Humility

PRODIGAL SON PARABLE

A sense of being in Exile

MEATFARE - TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE

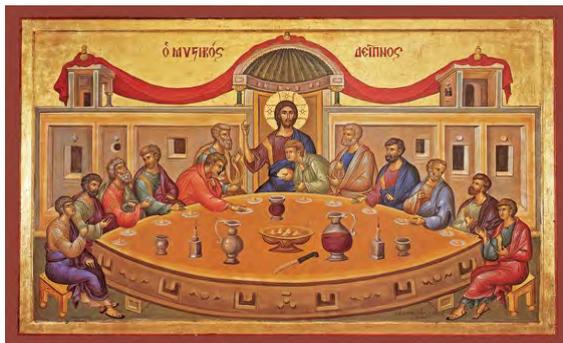
Knowing our Frailty

CHEESEFARE - THE WORK OF LENT

Necessity of Forgiveness

In the early Church, the periods before, during and after the Great Fast were “teaching periods” that prepared converts for initiation into the Church and then provided them with instructions on how to live as followers of Jesus, the Christ.

There are five weeks before the Great Fast, five weeks of the Great Fast (*Great and Holy Week is not considered a part of Lent*) and five weeks after Pascha (*Easter*) that are devoted to helping us gain a clearer understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. There are themes, which are provided through the Gospels assigned, which help us gain



a greater understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. They are weeks that also challenge us to engage in personal, spiritual change or transformation. They are meant to open our hearts and minds so that we can discover God in our lives and in our world.

As we begin this first of three five-week sequences, I would suggest to all my readers that you use the theme for the week to guide you in your spiritual practices. If you are serious about your spiritual growth and your personal salvation, why not use the “THEME OF THE WEEK” to guide your daily prayers. Just spend a little time each day thinking about the theme of the week and then questioning yourself how it is relevant to your life.

I believe that this can allow you to bring your weekend worship into your life in a relevant way and support you in your efforts to spiritually grow and become more like Jesus and, as a result, more like the Person God intended when He created you.



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

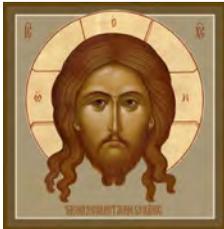
COMING EVENTS

January 28th

On the last Sunday of January, Len Mier, our deacon candidate, will present a reflection at the end of the Divine Liturgy as required by his educational program. As usual it will be video taped. I look forward to giving him this opportunity.



LENTEN PROGRAM



Would like to offer an educational program for the Great Last. I have two questions: (1) When would be the best time, Sundays after the

Divine Liturgy or Friday evenings after services; and (2) What topics would be of interest to parishioners. I would like to invite any who are interested in such a program, to give me their feedback on these two questions. You can email me, drop me a note or stop me and tell me. **THANKS.**

*Success is not final; failure is not fatal:
It is the courage to continue that counts*

CALLED TO HOLINESS

I know that anyone who has been following this article will admit, it is free-flowing and gives the impression that I'm hunting for an answer to the question: *What is the Call to Holiness?* I



would truly admit that in tackling this topic, I have gone down many paths and pursued many different topics. I have come to believe that this is the very nature of holiness.

I think the problem is that we do not have a good definition for holiness. It seems that there are a great number of different answers to the question: *What is holiness.*

The Catholic Church, in her adult catechism, defines holiness this way: *A state of goodness in which a person - with help of God's grace, the action of the Holy Spirit, and a life of prayer - is freed from sin and evil. Such a person, when gifted with holiness, must still resist temptation, repent of sins that may be committed, and realize that remaining holy is a lifelong pilgrimage with many spiritual and moral challenges. The struggles evident in the lives of the saints*

(Continued on page 8)

The Story of Christmas in the New Testament

I would continue sharing information about the story of Christmas in the New Testament. Matthew, in stark contrast to Mark's *narrative of omission* begins his account with an elaborate genealogy that places Jesus as an ancestor of King David and Abraham. Here we already see Matthew's special interest and the intended audience for his Gospel. He is writing to the Jews and presents Jesus as a King, better than David and a teacher greater than Moses.

Matthew's birth narratives focus on the role of Joseph, who is "a just man" in Matthew's words of this event. Joseph is contrasted with Herod, an unjust and wicked ruler. Matthew takes great care to show how the birth event of Jesus fulfills prophecies made in the Old Testament and makes use of these prophecies to present Jesus as a governor, the ruler of Israel, a prince, and as God's Son.

It is Matthew that tells us about the wise men that came to worship, bringing gifts fit for a king; the murderous acts of the bad king Herod; records the journey of the holy family to and back from Egypt (*in no small part to illustrate how Jesus' life*

mirrors that of the people of Israel); and of the angels who in dreams direct Joseph. Matthew, in his powerful birth account, presents Jesus, in fulfillment of the prophecies and hopes of the Hebrew Scriptures, as the King of the Jews who has been given all authority in Heaven and Earth. He is Emmanuel, God with us.



Luke's Gospel is an attempt, in his own words, to put in a place "an orderly account" of the birth, ministry, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Luke wrote his Gospel primarily for a Gentile audience

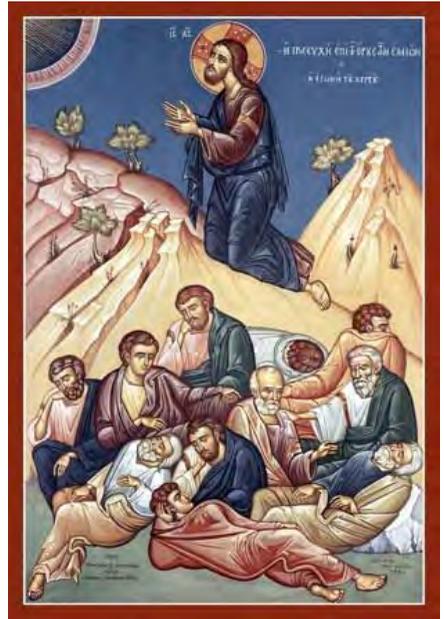
and focuses on the traditionally marginalized and neglected groups in First Century Mediterranean societies. Thus Luke's Gospel is full of references to women, children, the sick, the poor and rejected people groups like the Samaritans.

This special and caring focus on the neglected and rejected also features in Luke's account of the birth of Jesus. Luke's birth narrative is the longest out of all of the four Gospels and gives special attention to the role of the Holy Spirit and to the women in the story. Here the angel appears to Mary (not to Joseph).

Still more to come!

The Courage to Pray

I have been sharing thoughts about the importance of “encounter with God” in prayer and the role that “relationship” plays in this necessary encounter. The recognition of the existence of God is critical. We know nothing and nobody except through a relationship. If we are disconnected nothing exists for us. But there is a danger in not knowing anything or anybody except in relation to ourselves. This is to de-center the universe. In referring everything to ourselves we deform it and make it as small and mean as we are, with our small mean cravings. So when we begin to recognize the existence of the other, we must be prepared to set ourselves aside to some extent, to go beyond ourselves and to admit the other’s needs and his rights to independence and freedom, outside us. We must accept his irreducible *otherness*. Whatever we do, however well we know him, however close we are, and this is even truer of man and God than man and man, there remains a central mystery which we can never solve. In the Book of Revelation there is the marvelous passage where John says that those who go into the Kingdom are given a white stone with a name written on it which only they and God know. This name is not the label we are given and called in this world. Our true name, our eternal name exactly fits us, our whole being.... It defines and expresses us perfectly. It is know by God alone and he tells us what it is. No one else can know it because it expresses our unique relationship with our creator. How often human relationships come to grief because one person wants to reveal himself beyond what is possible or the other person wants to probe into a territory which is sacred to God alone. It is a vain wish



and cannot be fulfilled. It is like a child trying to find the source of a spring, the point where the water begins, that point just before which there is no water. In this case it is only possible to destroy, not to discover.

All this is meant to express that we cannot, if we wish to have a genuine relationship with God, go into prayer thinking that we really know Who He Is. We must allow Him to reveal Himself to us and put aside our preconceived notions of Who He Is. Remember, we cannot make Him into our image and likeness!

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday January 14 – Weekend of Zacchaeus - Tone 7
10:00 AM + Special Intention

WEEK OF THE PUBLICAN & PHARISEE - TONE 8

Monday January 15 - Paul & John, Venerables
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, January 16 - Veneration of the Chains of Peter
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday January 17 - Anthony the Great, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Thursday January 18 - Athanasius & Cyril, Archbishops
No Service Scheduled

Friday January 19 - Macarius, Venerable
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday January 20 - Euthymius the Great, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Sunday January 21 – Weekend of the Publican & Pharisee - Tone 8
10:00 AM + Special Intention

(Continued from page 5 - Call to Holiness)

are instructive when trying to explain and describe holiness.

Holiness, as it relates to Christians, means conforming to the will of God in all things. Personal holiness is a work of gradual development. It is carried on under many hindrances, hence the frequent admonitions to watchfulness, prayer and perseverance. It is something that is accomplished in cooperation with God. It is not something that a person can achieve on his own.

Holiness, however, doesn't seem to mean that a person has gained so much control over his life that he never does anything that can be construed as "wrong."

So, at this point in this article, I think I will begin to explore more closely the notion of holiness.



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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)

A Theme For Prayer During the Coming Week

Since I suggested in another article in the Bulletin that we might want to use the weekly theme the Church uses for our worship to focus our prayer life, I thought I would discontinue my article on the Gospels and share a reflection on the theme for the week.

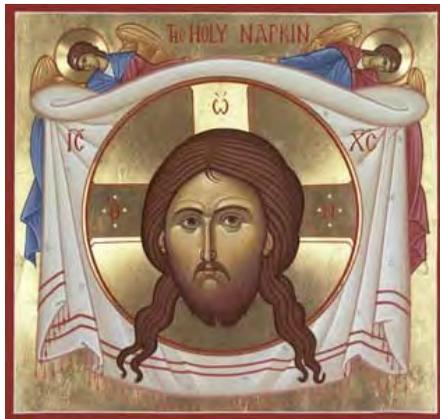
THE WEEKEND OF ZACCHAEUS

The first theme that the Church presents to us is **DESIRE TO SEE GOD**. Humans *follow* their desires. One can even say that humans *are* their desires. This basic psychological truth about human nature is acknowledged by the Gospel: Christ says: *Where your treasure is there shall your heart be*. A strong desire overcomes the natural limitations of man. When he passionately desires something he does things of which “normally” he is truly incapable. Being *short* he overcomes and transcends himself. The only question is whether we desire the right things, whether the power of desire in us is aimed at the right goal.

So as you pray, ask yourself: *What do I really desire from this life? What is my greatest desire? Do I really desire a relationship with God? Do I truly desire to make the personal changes I need to make in order to be more like Jesus Christ?*

METANOIA calls us to focus our deepest desires on become more united to Jesus Christ so that we might have a true relationship with God. METANOIA calls us to become more united to Jesus Christ by becoming determined to live by the **LAW OF THE SPIRIT** that He taught which is summed up by this simple statement: **LOVE YOUR NEIGHBORS AS YOURSELVES**. When we grow in our ability to do this, we are drawn into a real relationship with Jesus through the Spirit of God that is within us. When we become truly able to love unconditionally those we see and interact with on a daily basis, we begin to truly have a relationship with Jesus and, therefore, with God. Other humans become the vehicle by which we have a genuine relationship with God.

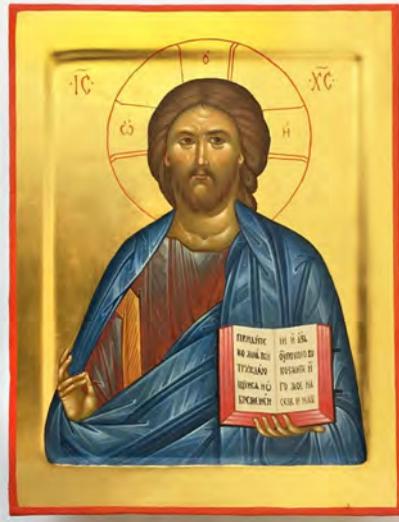
This theme provides a lot for us to think about and reflect upon as we grow in our desire to know the true meaning and purpose of life. Perhaps it indirectly suggests that the true meaning and purpose of life is to have a real desire to have a genuine relationship with God. Why not see what thoughts come to mind when you reflect upon this theme.



Learning our Faith from the Greek Fathers of the Church

I have been sharing information about the debate that ensued between Cyril and Nestorius with reference to the Mother of God - the *Theotokos*. Cyril was upset by Nestorius' use of the word *christotokos*. He will agree that *christotokos* is deficient on a number of fronts as a description of the mother of Jesus. Before tackling Nestorius' theological language, however, Cyril found fault with Nestorius' methodology.

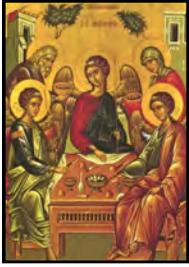
As far as Cyril was concerned, Nestorius was fundamentally a theological innovator. Cyril was convinced that Nestorius had ignored the previous theological reflection of the Church in the construction of his theological proposal regarding the relationship of Christ's deity and humanity. Nestorius does not, Cyril wrote, "welcome the tradition of all the initiates throughout the world," that is, the tradition passed on to new Christians at the time of their baptism. Cyril argued, "he innovates as seems fit to him." He "denies that the holy virgin is the Mother of God, and calls her Christ-Mother instead, or Mother-of-the-Man. Cyril had problems with the theology these titles seem to present. In addition, Cyril is deeply



offended that a Christian bishop would take it upon himself to invent new theological language that seems to ignore or bypass the language the church had traditionally used to describe the great mystery of the Son's incarnation.

Having charged Nestorius with theological innovation, Cyril proceeded to evaluate critically the theological implications of Nestorius' theology. Nestorius erred by undercutting "the mystery of the fleshy economy of the Only begotten." In other words, the titles Nestorius suggests as helpfully describing the incarnate Son actually twist or distort what is taking place in the incarnation. Whereas the Arians dragged "down the Word born of God the Father from the heights of divinity even before the incarnation", Nestorius and his followers "wage war against the Word even in His incarnation." The term *christotokos*, Cyril insists, simply cannot preserve the wonder and mystery of the incarnate Son.

This all reminds us that the words the Church has chosen to express the mystery of God taking on human form in the Person of Jesus are important.



THE EASTERN HERALD

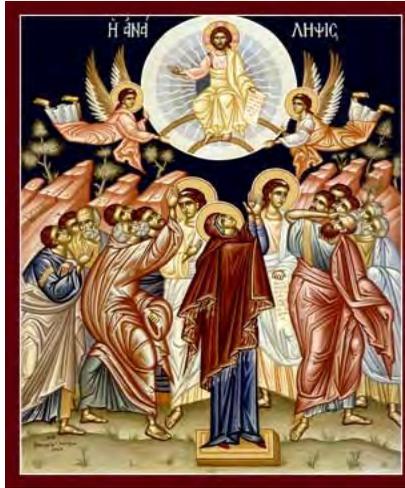
СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 64 No 2 Weekend Of Zacchaeus January 13-14, 2018

The Spirituality of the Christian East

I ended the last installment of this article with a very essential question: *Do I really want to become a spiritual person?* It is my guess that in order to answer this question I must truly believe that I have been given this earthly life to become a spiritual person. Why have I been given this earthly life? There is a meaning and purpose to this life and it is not to go through some sort of test where I will either achieve or fail. This life only gives me opportunities to grow. It is not about winning or losing, it is about growth or non-growth since I have an eternity to spiritually grow. The more progress I make in spiritual growth during this present lifetime, the more I will experience the joy of being one of God's children.

Because of God's great and truly unconditional love for us, He gives us an eternal lifetime to grow. If we are to benefit from the opportunities that



Life's Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

God gives us to grow, however, we must make the most of each and every opportunity we are given.

I believe that it is extremely important that we don't try to put off until another lifetime what we can accomplish during this present lifetime. While we have an eternity to grow as spiritual beings, it is important that we make the most

of each and every lifetime to grow. Why? Because as we grow as spiritual beings we will come to know how very much we are loved by our Father-Creator and experience the joy of being His child.

I suspect that this might sound very abstract to some. But think about this: Each lifetime that we have for all eternity gives us a chance to experience, in ever greater ways, the love that our Heavenly Father has for us. Why not try to experience as much of His love as you can NOW.

Unconditional Mercy

Let us reflect a bit more deeply on this episode. Zacchaeus has heard Jesus talked about as a prophet who is different from the others, so he wants to see him. There is certainly something more than sheer curiosity on Zacchaeus' part. He has a real interest, though not yet a desire, to convert. Jesus looks up into the tree at him - from many hints in the Gospels, it seems that Jesus' eyes had a miraculous power and spoke more than His words. He calls Zacchaeus by name. We might expect that before proclaiming forgiveness, Jesus would have required the five conditions that are normally demanded to obtain the remission of sin: examination of conscience, repentance, a firm resolve not to sin again, a confession of sin, and penance. But none of that happens! Jesus urgently wants to spend time with Zacchaeus - to enter his home, stay for a while, have a meal, and perhaps spend the night. Jesus compromises Himself openly and dangerously because he risks becoming ritually unclean and causing scandal. Yet He meets

with a sinner at his home and does not impose any preliminary conditions. He does not ask Zacchaeus to purify himself in terms of the Mosaic law; he does not ask him to leave his disreputable profession or to do restitution or penance. Zacchaeus, however, is able to read in Jesus' gaze the same love that Jesus elsewhere directed to the rich young man (Mark 10:21). That gaze fills him with extraordinary joy. He welcomes this presence that lavishes Him with love; he lets himself be swept away by this love. Because of this love, he feels himself come back to life and become a human being again. Having been loved first, and freely, Zacchaeus feels the urge to turn toward others, toward those he has defrauded, and he learns to respect and love them. This is how God's mercy operates. Let us never forget it!

Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap.

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