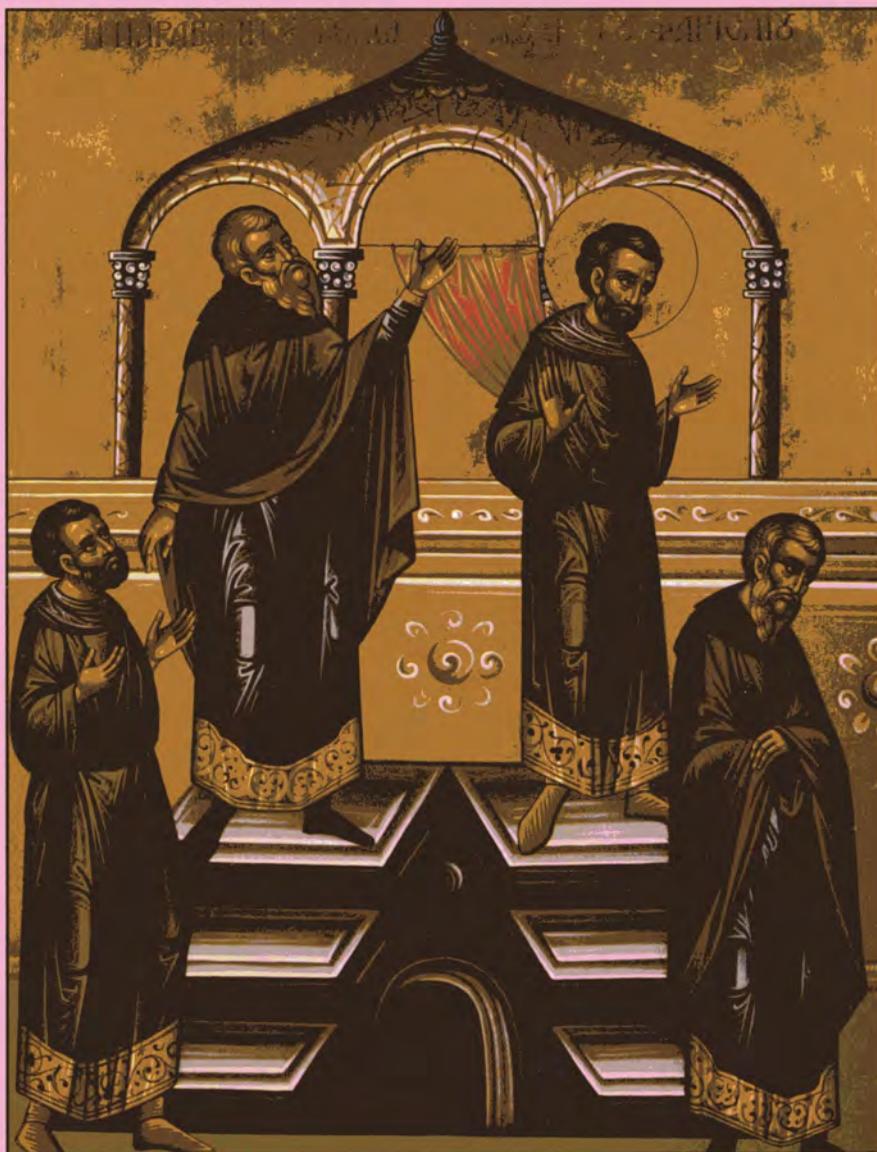


SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE



Icon of the Publican and Pharisee

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

On this second weekend of our five-week period of preparation for the Great Fast, our readings are taken from Paul's second letter to Timothy and Luke's Gospel. The message that these two readings conveys is one of the necessity for living a life that genuinely reflects the message of the Scriptures and the need for personal humility.

In Paul's letter we clearly see that true humility does not mean that we denigrate in any way our personal strengths. True humility means that we have a clear understanding of who we are.

For example, Paul's words to Timothy speak of his strengths and good qualities. He reminds Timothy, you have *observed my resolution, fidelity patience, love and endurance through persecutions and sufferings*. Paul was not bragging or attempting to make himself more than he was. In fact, Paul was indirectly telling Timothy the necessity of these personal predispositions in order to follow Jesus.

The message of the parable of the Publican and Pharisee seems quite clear, especially if we look at this statement in the parable: Jesus addressed this parable to those who *believed in their own self-righteousness while holding everyone else in contempt!* It is one thing to believe in your own self-righteousness. It is another to hold everyone else in contempt.

A truly humble person never compares himself to another person or judges another person. It is one thing to be honest about your own personal strengths. It is completely another thing to judge another person and attempt to make yourself better than them. True humility requires us to only honestly look at ourselves and not judge others.

A good definition of humility is "freedom from



pride or arrogance". True humility does not mean that I must make myself a rug of ourselves and let others walk over me.

I think that *humility* is frequently misunderstood. True humility also includes a sense that anything that we accomplish as humans is not due just to ourselves but to God's grace/help.

How does a person become truly humble? The answer is by reflecting on Christ and how He lived and then attempting to imitate Him. Without Christ true humility is impossible. If we strive to be like Christ, we will most probably also be truly humble.

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

As I have indicated, religion cannot demand that we do certain things. If it does, it is a meaningless experience for us. We have to *voluntarily* embrace experiences because of our belief that we have to work to transform ourselves into children of God. I truly believe that our Church takes a very different approach to religion. We really don't impose "obligations" on members but, rather, exhort them to embrace certain practices for the sake of their salvation.

Why? Because we believe that God gave us free will and only wants free will practices from us. If you want to grow in your faith, you have to be willing to do things that will help you to grow in your faith. "Obligations" don't, I believe, incite us to embrace a life of personal growth in faith and personal change.

Our Church asks us: *What do you want out of their earthly life? Do you want it to tell you what its purpose and meaning really is?* If you do, then you must decide for yourself what you are willing to do in order to achieve personal spiritual growth.

Because God has given us free will, He only relies on our personal desire to grow as His children. He does not judge us or punish us if we, because of our free will, choose to not embrace a life of personal growth. However, as we reflect on life, we have to ask ourselves: *What is this earthly*



life all about? We have to raise the personal question: *Why have I been given this earthly life?*

Our Church, during this period of time, presents ideas about personal change and transformation. Why? Because she believes that this earthly life is all about growing in our ability to be spiritual-physical human beings. This is the purpose of our lives and is the real purpose of earthly experience as revealed through the life of our brother Jesus. We're here to grow in our ability to be "spiritual beings" - in our ability to be more like Jesus Who is the type of human person that God intended when He created humanity.

Our Church shows us that first we need to have the *desire* to be like Christ and then have the *humility* to be more like Christ. If we pay close attention to the Church and how she calls us to worship God, we see that she also reveals to us in a careful way what we have to do in order to come to a deeper understanding of the meaning and purpose of life.

This period of time in our Church is dedicated to helping us understand the reason for this earthly existence - to grow in our likeness of Jesus.

The Divine Liturgy and Our Worship of God

For this weekend the Church gives us one very subtle prayer, a Kondak, to capture the meaning of this week of preparation. We pray today:

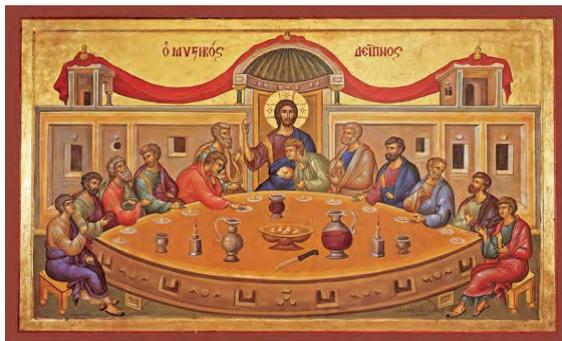
Let us bring to the Lord the sighs of the Publican, and as sinners let us approach the Lord; for He desires the salvation of all mankind. He grants forgiveness to all who repent. For us He became man while remaining God, co-eternal with the Father.

As the Kondak tells us, it is critical how we approach the Lord. We must come before Him *with humility*. We must willingly repent - that is to recognize how we must change.

It is important that as we recognize how we must change that we don't spend all of our time trying to make up for past failures but, rather, to direct our attention and our efforts to how we should change.

One of the big questions that this all raises is: *Why did God freely choose to become incarnate as a human being?* Have you ever thought about this?

Because God wants all of us to grow in our likeness of Him, as truly expressed in the Person of Jesus, He came Himself, that is He became a human being to show us how to live in order to gain the most out of the experience of earthly existence. There is a purpose for earthly existence, namely to learn how to live as a being



that can unconditionally love others as himself.

In our Liturgy we proclaim before we approach the Chalice: *Let us truly approach now with fear of God and with love*. This is to remind us that we must desire to unconditionally love other as we love ourselves. We must realize that what we receive is truly an expression of communal love (*bread is made by crushing individual grains wheat into flour and wine is made by crushing individual grapes into one juice*). We only begin to understand ourselves, life, God and creation when we see that we are joined to all of creation, especially other humans.

I know that in our modern society it is difficult to understand that we must love all others, even those who might drain our resources. God has called us to be ONE HUMAN FAMILY and our salvation comes to us when we are able to help others, regardless of their understanding of the meaning and purpose of life.

How do you see life?



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Sunday January 28th
Immediately after the
Divine Liturgy

REFLECTIONS

Sunday January 28th

Our deacon candidate, Len Mier, will be presenting a reflection on the Gospel this weekend as a part of his seminary training. It will be video taped.



OUR 2018 LENTEN PROGRAM

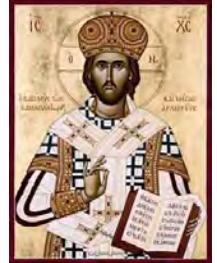
Beginning Sunday February 18th

Len Mier and I will be conducting a Lenten Educational Program during this year's Great Fast. It will consist of five sessions that will take place immediately after the Divine Liturgy each week. This year we those who want to attend will receive an article the week before each session to read and come prepared to not only ask questions but provide reflections and feedback on the topic.

Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated

CALLED TO HOLINESS

In the last issue of this article, I began exploring the idea of holiness. Most people who grow up in the Church have heard the word *holy* more than enough. It's so ubiquitous in churches it becomes almost invisible. Nearly everything in a church is called holy from the books that are read, to the icons. Churches are filled with "holy" things. So many things are designated as holy, that the word itself is often undetected, unexamined, and misunderstood. Holiness is a word that becomes like the air that is breathed. It is often unnoticed, but without it there would be no life.



When people speak of "holiness" in the church there is a vast semantic landscape behind the word. It comes into the Christian tradition from three words: sanctus, in Latin; ἅγιος (hagios), in Greek; and קֹדֶשׁ (qodesh), in Hebrew. These words are all related to one another, as well as our English word for holiness, but need to be examined individually to gain a better sense of what is meant when Christians today speak of holiness. Since both the Latin and Greek words

(Continued on page 8)

The Story of Christmas in the New Testament

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. In Luke's Gospel, the angel appears to Mary (not to Joseph), and it is Elizabeth, and then later Mary, for which words of praise and blessings are recorded. Luke, in his human focus, records the "homeless" status of Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem, and the special care given to the baby Jesus as he is born and how a lowly feeding trough becomes a crib.

As if to further emphasize this consistent focus of the poor and the rejected of society, the angels appear to shepherds in Luke's account, not to the rich, privileged and powerful wise men as in Matthew's account. It is the ordinary shepherds that witness this glorious event and became the first messengers of God's peace and goodwill towards men on earth.

The beautiful birth narrative of Jesus in Luke's Gospel illustrates the complete kenotic act of God in Jesus, born amongst the poor and rejected, bringing good tidings of peace and goodwill to all.

The Gospel of John, probably the

last of the Gospels to be produced, records the birth of Jesus in heavenly, if not spiritual terms and language. This Gospel, written by the disciple that experienced such love from Jesus that he identifies himself as the one

loved by Jesus, presents his narrative of the birth of Jesus as a second *Genesis account*. For John, this birth started in Heaven: Jesus, the Word was in the beginning and was God. All that is created was created through Him. John then describes the birth of Jesus with powerful language: "...and the Word became flesh

and dwelt amongst us". John, writing to Greek-speaking Gentiles across the Roman Empire, explains that in Jesus, the Word becomes flesh and chooses to dwell with us and thus we all have been witnesses of His glory which is full of grace and truth.

John's Gospel focuses on the Divine attributes of Jesus. John purposefully leaves out any mention of Mary, Joseph and all the other characters that Matthew and Luke mention in their birth narratives. John clearly communicates that this birth is the most significant event in the history of the world. John focuses on Jesus being One Sent By God.



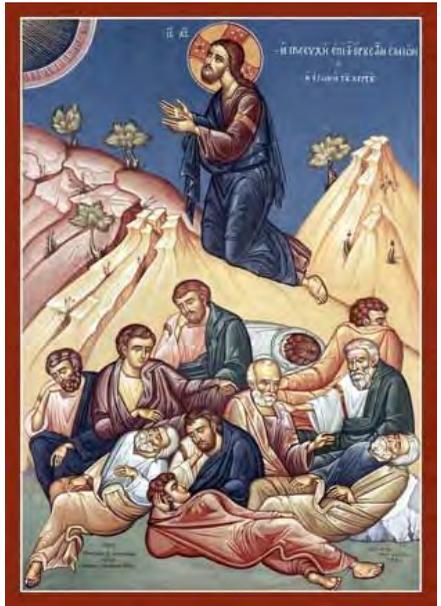
The Courage to Pray

Christ speaks of the clear vision we need to see things as they are. If there is something wrong with our eyes we project shadows onto things or see, instead, the distorted shapes which our poor eyes form in our imagination. But clear vision is not enough. We must choose the right standpoint. We must find the right distance, from which we can see an object whole. Isn't this essential when we are looking at a work of art? A painting or a statue needs to be seen from not too close and not too far away. There is the best standpoint, from which we see it as the artist intended, from which we can see the whole and are not overwhelmed by its parts. The same is true of human relationships. We must find the right distance, not in time and space but in inner freedom; freedom which is a bond but not a chain.

This is true with regard our relationship with God. We must make sure that we are not imagining the **God We Want** instead of encountering the **God Who Is**. I find that we humans so often want the God we imagine instead of the **God Who Is**. This is why so many people want the God they think is a part of their religion to be the **ONLY TRUE GOD**. Think about it. So often people declare that they have the only true God and, therefore, insinuate that the God of other religions is wrong – a false God. This is also why so many want to declare that our religion is the only true religion.

If you really learn about our religion, you will find that we don't declare that we, and we alone, know who the true God is. Our religion tells us that we can only know who God is not.

In truth, God is completely beyond the comprehension of humankind. We can only know that He unconditionally loves His creation



and that somehow we are made in His image and likeness. Although we are made in His image and have the ability to grow in His likeness, this doesn't mean that He is like us - we are created to be like Him.

So we must attempt to discover Him through and in prayer. This means that we have to do a whole lot of listening and keep checking that we are not trying to make Him in our image. This, of course, is the work of prayer.

The courage to pray requires us to put aside our personal images of God and encounter the God Who IS.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

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

WEEK OF THE PRODIGAL SON - TONE 1

Monday January 22 - Timothy, Apostle - Anastasius, Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, January 23 - Clement of Ancyra, Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday January 24 - Xenia, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Thursday January 25 - Gregory the Theologian, Bishop
No Service Scheduled

**Friday January 26 - Xenophon & Mary, Venerables
8:00 AM - Special Intention**

Saturday January 27 - Translation of John Chrysostom's Relics
No Service Scheduled

**Sunday January 28 – Weekend of the Prodigal Son - Tone 1
10:00 AM + Special Intention**

(Continued from page 5 - Call to Holiness)

are foundationally used as translations of the Hebrew word *qodesh*, examining the Hebrew word is an appropriate starting place in this exploration. The word is used in the Hebrew bible with astonishing frequency. It is used to describe anything that is to be brought into the cultic life of the worshiping community. Any object, sacrifice, space, time, or person who is to participate in worship is to be *qodesh*. At its root the word is associated with the concept of a *sanctuary*, understood as “a place in which the LORD is normally present when ritual and moral purity are practiced.” The word is also associated with the action and nature of God. If a thing is called *holy*, it means that it is somehow elevated beyond its normal context and somehow becomes a participant in the divine life or action. Holy and holiness then designate a connectedness to God.



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

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

A Theme For Prayer During the Coming Week

On this second week dedicated to preparing us for the Great Fast, the theme we are given to meditate on is

PERSONAL HUMILITY

What does this mean to you? What does it mean to be humble? While we may not be prone to boast about our own personal ability, we may, in a very subtle way be prone to judge others - to think about others in an disparaging manner.

One thing actually come to mind. Our society is rampant in its judgment of people on Social Assistance. There is a rampant tendency to judge the poor as people who are lazy and "taking advantage of the system." When we do this, we truly provide that we are not humble. True humility requires us to also not to judge others. True humility deals only with our own personal disposition to look honestly at ourselves. True humility keeps us from looking at others and judging them in anyway, desiring only to think about ourselves and how we present ourselves to others.

I think that our society - our county - and all that is going on in it, deflects our attempts at humility. We can very easily get caught up in the things of our society and, instead building a

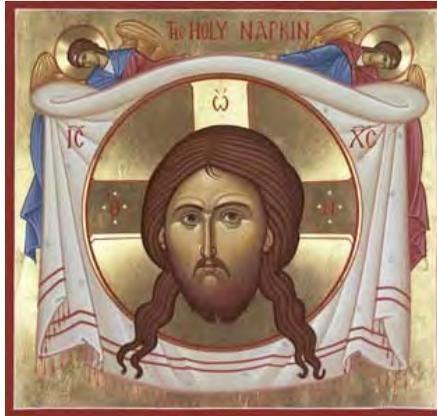
base for personal humility, become judgment of others. It's a difficult balance, I know. It truly raises the questions: *What is the meaning an purpose of life? Why are we here? What is life supposed to teach us? How do we balance our religious and spiritual values with those of our society?*

These are legitimate questions which must be answered if we are to grow as followers of Jesus. I always ask myself this serious question: *How would Jesus deal with the situations in our modern world? How would He respond to those things to which we are asked to respond?* It is truly important, I believe, that we desire to respond to the things that we have to face in our modern society

like we think that Jesus would respond to them.

What immediately comes to mind is the story of how Jesus responded to the issue that He was confronted with regarding the *woman caught in adultery*. How did He respond?

Our theme for prayer this coming week is HUMILITY. What does it mean? Am I humble? What do I have to do in order to be humble? What does all of this mean for me?



Learning our Faith from the Greek Fathers of the Church

This continues the arguments posed by Cyril against Nestorius who was later declared a heretic by the Church.

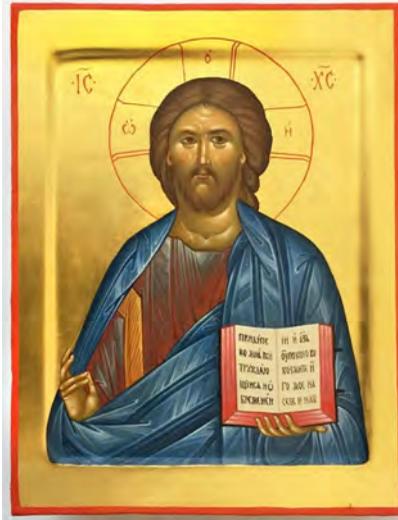
Cyril writes, does not the title *Emmanuel* clearly communicate that in the incarnation God is with us? And in the incarnational economy or dispensation, God is present in a human being in an utterly unique way. God's Spirit had filled and guided great prophets such as Moses, but not in the intimate manner and union manifested in Christ. Neither Moses nor Joshua were called "God with us" or "Emmanuel".

How, then, should we speak of God as born of a woman? This is a particularly difficult question to ask, Cyril comments, in light of God's immutable nature. Because God cannot cease being God or blend the divine nature with anything else, whatever the incarnation is, whatever John meant by "the Word becoming flesh" *cannot mean that the Word has changed into a human being (flesh)*. Neither is the incarnation a "mixture or blending" of divine and human natures into a third sort of being. Within these incarnational boundaries, how can we best describe

this indescribable union?

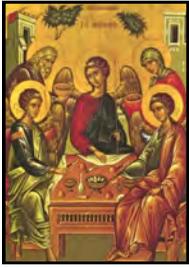
Cyril responds by writing that the Word "did not disdain the poverty of human nature" precisely because "he wished to make that flesh which was held in the grip of death evidently superior to death." Cyril adds, "He thought it good to be made man and

in his own person to reveal our human nature honored in the dignities of the divinity." It was God the Word who entered the world, joined God's divine nature to human nature and, through such an appropriation and then truly communicated salvation to that nature. Cyril illustrates his point by referring to Paul's words in Philippians 2.



The Word, in an astonishing emptying, has assumed the "form of a slave". He as God in an appearance like ours... This is what we mean when we say that he became flesh, and for the same reasons we affirm that the holy virgin is the Mother of God.

Because humans find this mystery beyond understanding, they tend to dismiss Mary as the Mother of God. Just as God could join divine and human natures through the Person of His Son, so too can Mary be the Mother of God without question.



THE EASTERN HERALD

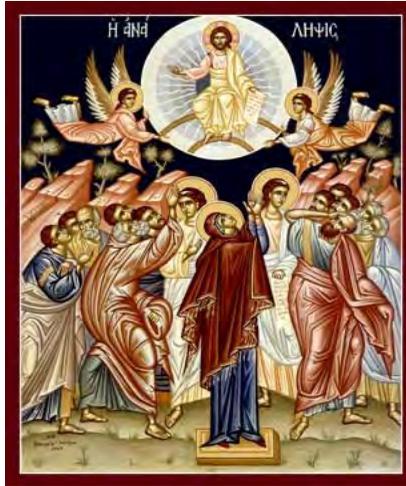
СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 64 No 3 Weekend Of the Publican & Pharisee January 20-21, 2018

The Spirituality of the Christian East

When I truly think about Eastern spirituality I am immediately drawn into the mystery of God as a Trinity of Persons. Every prayer that we say ends with praise for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit - ends up with an acknowledgement that God is a “community” of Persons that is joined by the power of love. Further, that loving community of Persons has voluntarily willed to join creation and humanity to itself by the act of the Incarnation of the Son—the Second Person of the Trinity. This was accomplished by Him becoming a human. Because the Son has a glorified human nature, it is revealed to us that we are uniquely connected to Him and, therefore, also connected to this Triune Community of Love.

It is my understanding of Eastern Spirituality that it is, first and foremost, a voluntary process we are called to engage in that can allow us to gain greater insight into what it



Life's Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

means to be joined to God through the Person of Jesus.

This process begins by us trying to discern how Jesus thought and lived. In order to do this, we must find time to think about, reflect upon and come to a deeper and real understanding of this God-Man Jesus.

Last week our Church challenged us to “desire” to know Who

Jesus Is. Have we taken the time to do that? If not, why not?

I think that Eastern Spirituality also challenges us to think about whether we truly desire to spiritually grow and be followers of Jesus. I truly believe that God will not judge us if we wish to grow during this earthly existence. But I also believe that it is a “waste of time” then, to live this earthly life. It is given to us for a purpose. What is your response to the meaning and purpose of this life? I pray that it is for personal growth!

Pride vs. Humility

This parable represents to us two chariots on the race course, each with two charioteers in it. In one of the chariots it places righteousness with pride, in the other sin and humility. You see the chariot of sin outstrip that of righteousness, not by its own strength but by the excellence of humility combined with it, but the other is defeated not by righteousness, but by the weight and swelling of pride.

For as humility by its own elasticity rises above the weight of pride, and leaping up reaches to God, so pride by its great weight easily depresses righteousness. Although therefore you are earnest and constant in well doing, yet think you may boast yourself, you are altogether devoid of the fruits of prayer. But you that bears a thousand loads of guilt on your conscience, and only think this thing of yourself that you are the

lowest of all men, shall gain much confidence before God.

And He then goes on to assign the reason of His sentence. For everyone who exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. The word humility has various meanings. There is the humility of virtue, as, a humble and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. There is also a humility arising from sorrows, as, He has humbled my life upon the earth. There is a humility derived from sin, and the pride and insatiability of riches. For can anything be more low and debased than those who grovel in riches and power, and count them great things?

St. John Chrysostom

Visit www.ecpubs.com for more publications.