

THIRD SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST
SUNDAY OF THE HOLY CROSS



Icon of the Sunday of the Holy Cross

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

Because the Great Fast was, initially, a time of catechesis for the early Church - a time when new converters received instruction in the faith in preparation for their initiation into the Church on Pascha - there is a selective pattern to our readings. They are meant to teach people more about the faith and how to live it. Each week we have readings that are meant to help people embrace a new way of living - to learn how to live like Jesus.

This weekend our readings are taken from St. Paul's letter to the Hebrews, wherein Paul talks about Jesus as the compassionate High Priest and Mark's Gospel which presents *the doctrine of the cross*.

The section we hear from Paul's letter exhorts us to *hold fast* to our profession of faith because we have a high priest who is able to sympathize with our weakness, a high priest *who was tempted in every way that we are, yet never sinned*. What Paul tells us is that Jesus was just like us but, because He believed and trusted in God, His Father, He was able to resist giving into temptations.



In Mark's Gospel we hear this very poignant statement: *if a person wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in my steps*. The real message is clear. Life will present us with challenges! These are meant to help us achieve the true meaning of our lives, namely growth in being more like Jesus, the Christ and

only-begotten Son of God.

The reading we have ends with these very poignant words: *What can a man offer in exchange for his life?* Think about *this* statement! Can you think about anything that you can exchange for the great blessing of your life? Life is truly a gift! What can you offer for the gift of your life? Nothing!

So, we see in the Person of Jesus how to live life. He did not shy away from the great challenges that were presented to Him by life. He embraced them and asked God to help Him face the challenges with *nobility* and *grace*. Because He approached these life challenges in the way that He did - namely not trying to escape them - He won *resurrection from the dead*. What is the message that you hear?

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

As I stated in the last issue of this article, the Prayer of Ephrem, THE PRAYER of the Great Fast in the Eastern Church, there are four negative objects that we must attempt to eliminate in our lives: *slothfulness, discouragement, ambition and vain talk*. These are eliminated when we make a concerted effort to develop a spirit of *humility, patience and neighborly love*.

Humility alone is capable of truth, of seeing and accepting things as they are and therefore of seeing God, His majesty, goodness and love in everything. This is why we are told that God gives grace to the humble and resists the proud.

Humility is naturally followed by *patience*. The “natural” or “fallen” man is impatient; blind to himself; and quick to judge and to condemn others. Having but a broken, incomplete and distorted knowledge of everything, he measures all things by his tastes and his ideas, being indifferent to everyone except himself. He wants life to be successful right here and now. *Patience*, however, is truly a Divine virtue. God is patient because He sees the depth of all that exists, the inner reality of things, which in our blindness we do not see. The closer we come to God, the more patient we grow and the more we reflect that infinite respect for all beings which is the proper quality of

Українська Греко-Католицька Церква

Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church



God.

The crown and fruit of all virtues, of all growth and effort, is *neighborly love* - that love which can be given by God alone and the gift which is the goal of all spiritual effort and practice.

All this is summarized and brought together in the concluding portion of the Prayer of Ephrem. In this portion we ask for the grace to be *aware of my sins* and *not to judge my brother*. For ultimately there is but one danger: **PRIDE**. Pride is the source of evil and all evil is pride. Yet it is not enough for me to see my own errors, for even this apparent virtue can be turned to pride. Spiritual writings are full of warnings against the subtle forms of pseudo-piety which, in reality, under the cover of humility and self-accusation can lead to pride. But when we “see our own errors” and “do not judge others”, when, in other terms *humility, patience and love* are but one in us, then and only then the ultimate enemy - pride - will be destroyed in us.

The PRAYER OF EPHREM is truly THE PRAYER of the Great Fast. It helps us to think about what we need to change in our lives. I exhort you to try and practice it.

Our Worship of God Through the Great Fast

I have been presenting an analysis of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. It is truly the Liturgy which is specified for the Great Fast.

In between the two readings, the priest takes a candle and censer and blesses the faithful declaring: *The light of Christ enlightens every person who comes into the world.* This is a declaration of our true faith for indeed Christ is God's revelation to us with regard how we should live as human beings in order to become (1) one of His children in the true sense of the word, (2) the person He created us to be, and (3) to find true fulfillment and peace in our lives. Christ brought knowledge (light) into the world.

We must admit that this life can be quite confusing. Without some sort of help, it can become overwhelming. God therefore came Himself in the Person of Jesus to provide us with the knowledge (light) to make sense out of this life and to achieve a modicum of internal peace.

After the readings, a very ancient ritual is enacted. It is the offering of "incense." We sing: *Let my prayer ascend like incense before You and the lifting of my hands like an evening sacrifice.* We envision our prayers rising to God as the incense smoke ascends.

In early Judaism, the offering of incense was connected to reducing the order of slain animals which were



offered to God. These animals were offered to God to signify that people were willing to give the best of what they had to express to God their praise and honor. Then, the very act of the smoke arising seemed to signify that their prayers were carried on high. This was carried into Christian worship.

The prayers that are accompanied with this offering are wonderful. The priest sings: O Lord, O Lord...

- I cry to You, hear me O my Lord. Hear my voice when I call to You. Hear me, O my Lord
- Set a guard before my mouth, a watcher at the gate of my lips.
- Let me feel no impulse to do wrong, to share the godlessness of evil doers.

These petitions have great meaning and speak to how we interact with others. They ask God to help us keep our mouths shut so that we are not like evil doers who disregard how they speak to others. **FANTASTIC!**



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

PARISH EVENTS

LENTEN SOUP LUNCH



Today Sunday, March 4th

It has become one of our parish traditions to gather, on the Third Sunday of the Great Fast, to share a lunch of meatless soups. We will be calling for people who might like to make a soup for this event. If you volunteer to make a soup, we would also ask you to provide a copy of the recipe.

ADULT DISCUSSION SESSIONS

Third Session: March 18th

We will meet during the Coffee Hour to discuss the Third Article. On the 11th I'll distribute the Third Article

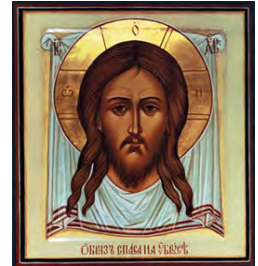
PARISH CLEAN-UP DAY

Would like to schedule before Great and Holy Week, a church clean-up day. Candles need to be washed and clutter needs to be dealt with in the kitchen and other places.

***Faith is the art of holding on to things
your reason has once accepted, in
spite of your changing moods***

CALLED TO HOLINESS

Christian spirituality in general, and the understanding of holiness in particular, is based and determined by the teaching, life and work of Christ. His



teaching and especially his life and work, cannot be properly understood without reference to the eschatological (*pertaining to last things*) expectations of Judaism. Without entering into the complexities of Jewish eschatology, we can very briefly say, that Jewish eschatology was interwoven with the idea of the coming of a Messiah, who in the *last days* of history would establish his kingdom by calling the dispersed and afflicted people of God into one place to become one body united around him. As it was expressed in the prophetic tradition of the Judaism, the start of the eschatological period will be sound by the gathering of all the nations and the descent of God's Spirit to the sons and the daughters of God. The statement in the Gospel of John about the Messiah's role is extremely important. There the writer interprets the words

(Continued on page 8)

A Prayer-A-Day For the Great Fast

SUNDAY, MARCH 4th

The Tree of the Cross clothes me with the garment of life, filling the world with boundless joy. Beholding it venerated, O my soul, let me raise my voice in faith and pray: I bow to Your Cross, O Master, and I praise Your Holy Resurrection. Help me, O my Savior, to mean these words with my whole being. Help me to understand the message that the Cross has for me. Help me to live like You Who embraced this Cross, by meeting the challenges of life as nobly as You did. I humbly ask this of You, Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit now and ever and forever. AMEN

MONDAY, MARCH 5th

O mighty Cross of the Lord, manifest yourself. Show me the divine vision of your beauty and grant me worthily to venerate you. For I speak to you and embrace you as though you were alive. Let heaven and earth give praise with one accord, for the all-blessed Cross is now set forth before me, on which Christ's Body was nailed when He offered His life to the Father. Let me venerate it with great rejoicing in my soul. Your Cross, O Lord, is holy, and brings healing to those who are in sickness through their sins. Venerating Your Cross, I fall before it, O Lord, and ask Your mercy. I humbly ask this of You, Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit now and ever and forever. AMEN

TUESDAY, MARCH 6th

O Lord, no sooner had the wood of Your Cross been set up, then the foundations of death were shaken. Hell swallowed Your Cross eagerly, but it let You, O Christ, go with trembling and fear. For You, O Lord have shown me Your salvation. O holy One, I glorify You, O Son of God, and ask Your mercy. As I reflect on Your Cross, I ask: What shall I offer You, O Christ? For You have given me Your Precious Cross to venerate, on which Your holy Blood was shed, to which Your flesh was fixed by nails. With love I kiss it and give thanks to You. I humbly offer my thanks to You, Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit now and ever and forever. AMEN

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7th

O Christ, You crushed death by Your Precious Cross and brought me to the land of immortality, granting me the joy of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let me cry aloud with joy and sing triumphantly to You as I greet the Cross of Christ, my Lord and Savior. Your Cross is truly a fountain of holiness for me and all humans. Let me humbly bow before Your Cross and venerate it saying: O Christ-God, glory be to You. Indeed the words of the Psalmist are fulfilled for see, I worship at the footstool of Your most pure feet, O Lord all-powerful, and venerate Your Life-giving Cross, the thrice-blessed Wood. I humbly thank You, my loving God, Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit now and ever and forever. AMEN

A Prayer-A-Day For the Great Fast

THURSDAY, MARCH 8th

I kiss Your Cross, O Christ, which You voluntarily bore upon Your shoulders and on which You allowed Yourself to be lifted-up and crucified in the flesh. From the example You gave me by the way You endured Your Crucifixion, O Master, I believe You have shown me how to meet the challenges of my life. From the example of how you nobly embraced Your Voluntary Death on the Cross, I have received the strength and courage to overcome my failings and focus my efforts to grow in Your likeness – to attempt how to live more like You. For this gift I thank You, O my Savior and Lord. I humbly offer my thanks to You and Our Father and The Holy Spirit both now and ever and forever. AMEN

FRIDAY, MARCH 9th

Pilate set up three crosses on Golgotha, two for thieves and one for the Giver of Life. Seeing Him, hell cried to those below: 'O my ministers and powers! Who is this that has fixed a nail in my heart? A wooden spear has pierced me suddenly and I am torn apart. Inwardly I suffer! Anguish has seized my senses! My spirit trembles and I am constrained to cast out Adam and his posterity. A tree brought them to my realm, but now the Tree of the Cross brings them back again to Paradise. This loving mystery, O God, You lovingly accomplished for the sake of my salvation. I offer to You my thanksgiving and praise for Your love and render praise to You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

SATURDAY, MARCH 10th

Rejoice, O Cross, thrice-blessed and divine Wood, a light to those in darkness. Shining on the four corners of the earth, you prepared me for the dawn of Christ's Resurrection. Grant to me that I may come to Pascha. The Wood, anointed with life, the Cross of Christ, fills all things with the perfume of divine grace. Let me smell its God-given fragrance, venerating it with faith forever. Let all the trees of the forest dance and sing, as they behold their fellow-tree, the Cross, receiving veneration. For Christ, as holy David prophesied, is exalted on high. Help me to truly venerate Your Holy Cross, O Lord, and to offer praise, honor and glory to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. AMEN.

SUNDAY, MARCH 11th

Seeing the Cross of Christ, let me venerate it and rejoice in faith. With love let me greet the Lord Who, by His free choice, was crucified upon it. Let me ask Him to grant me the grace and strength to adore His Holy Passion and to attain the Resurrection. O honored Cross, you are the firm foundation of the Church, the strength of kings, the glory and defense of monks. Venerating the Cross, I am filled with light in heart and soul. Through the divine grace of the Lord, Who was nailed upon it, I know that I am loved and, therefore, strive to face the challenges of my own life with the same dignity that Jesus did. I pray for Your help, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

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

Schedule of Services

Sunday, March 4 - Third Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 6
10:00 AM +

THIRD WEEK OF THE GREAT FAST - TONE 7

Monday, March 5 - Conon, Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, March 6 - 42 Martyrs of Ammorium
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, March 7 - Mid-Lent - Basil & Others, Martyrs
No Service Scheduled

Thursday, March 8 - Theophylact, Bishop-Martyr
No Service Scheduled

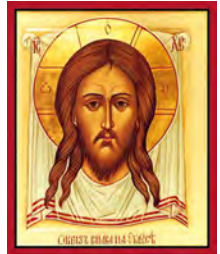
Friday, March 9 - 40 Martyrs of Sebaste
7:00 PM - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Saturday March 10 - Condratus, Cyprian, Anectus & Criscent, Martyrs
No Service Scheduled

Sunday March 11 - Fourth Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 7
10:00 AM + Wasyl Kaminsky; Luba Bluj

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)
of the Jewish High priest by affirming
that "he prophesied that Jesus should
die...not for the nation only but to
gather into one the children of God
who are scattered abroad."

Throughout the Gospels Christ
identifies himself with this Messiah. We see this in
the various Messianic titles he chose for himself, or
at least as witnessed by the most primitive Christian
tradition (i.e., *Son of man*, *Son of God*). We see it
as well in the parables of the kingdom, which
summarize his teaching, proclaiming that his
coming initiates the new world of the kingdom of
God, in the Lord's Prayer, but also in his conscious
acts.



(To be continued)

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

Learning our Faith from the Greek Fathers of the Church

Some of my readers have honestly shared with me that this article is, at times, very difficult to understand. I shared with them my reasons for sharing this information. First, I would like my readers to understand that the Church has come to her beliefs through great struggle and debate. Priests and bishops, in an attempt to find words to express Who Jesus Is, often disagreed. Why? Because they realized the real importance of finding the right words to express the mystery of Who He Is. Our whole understanding of life and relationship with God depends on how we conceive this Person Jesus.

The second reason is to encourage my readers to think about Who Jesus Is! If we get involved in truly trying to understand Who He Is, we will then want to become more like Him. I escribe to the truth that *the unexamined faith is of little value to us*. It is only when we wrestle with the meaning of the truths of our faith will we come to value them and employ them in helping us to spiritually grow.

The third reason is to gain some deeper sense of what our Church truly

believes, becoming an intelligent Christian who understands the faith and why we have the beliefs that we do.

For example, I believe that it is important to know that our belief that God is Triune - Three Distinct Persons in One Godhead - came about as the Church tried to understand Who Jesus Is. When the Church came to the conclusion that Jesus Is truly God and truly man, She could then understand that Jesus Is God's revelation to us about how we are called to live this present life and to achieve the Fullness of Life.

The Church also had to find a way to preserve the belief that there is but ONE GOD, which was the break-through in religious thought that was achieved by

Judaism, and still understand that this ONE GOD became incarnate. No simple task but an achievement, we believe, that was guided by God's own Spirit. The beliefs about God that Christianity holds is marvelous since it connects us to our Creator in a manner unlike other religious thought.

What do you think?



CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

The Courage to Pray

I believe there are Gospel passages which can truly make our hearts burn - which can give light to our intelligence and shake up our will. They can give life and strength to our whole physical and moral being. We have to open our hearts to gain their messages. There are Gospel passages wherein God and his image in us coincide. These passages should be noted. They serve as a beginning point for our transformation into the person we are called to be. We must be faithful to these revelations. If we do this these passages increase in number and the demands of the gospel will become fuller and more precise, slowly dispersing the fog of unknowing and allowing us to see the image of the person we should be. Then we can begin standing before God in truth.

Often our prayer is false because we try to present ourselves to God not as we are, but as we imagine He wants us to be. We come to Him in our Sunday best or in borrowed finery. It is important that before we start to pray we should take time to recollect ourselves, to reflect and become aware of who we are at this present moment. Then we can say as the Psalmist, 'My heart is ready, Lord, my heart is ready,' and 'As hare pants for cooling streams, so my soul longs for Thee, O God.'

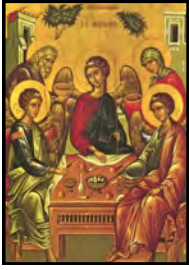
Too often we drag ourselves into God's presence simply by the effort of our wills. We are doing a duty with no heart in it. We force ourselves to appear to be what we know we are deep down but do not at the moment feel. The living waters have sunk in dry sands. We should tell this to God Who is the truth and say: 'Lord I come to You with a dry heart, but I am forcing myself to stand before You because of a truly deep conviction. I love and worship You with my



being, but, unfortunately, today this deepest being has failed to surface'. This type of honesty before God is very important since He knows our hearts and lives.

Sometimes we find that we do not even present ourselves to God out of deep conviction, but out of an almost superstitious fear. 'If I do not pray perhaps God will withdraw His protection from me.' We must always remember that God truly loves us unconditionally and only calls us to be honest with Him and not fear that He will punish us.

We must ask ourselves, how do I come to prayer?



THE EASTERN HERALD СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 64 No 9 Third Weekend Of the Great Fast March 3-4, 2018

The Spirituality of the Christian East

I have been presenting characteristics of our Eastern Spirituality. I have shared that it is

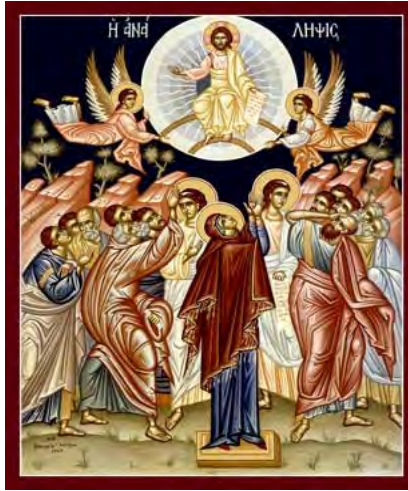
**TRINITARIAN
INCARNATIONAL
EUCCHARISTIC**

The next characteristic of our spirituality is that it is

SCRIPTURAL

We read in scripture “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not condemned. He who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” [John 3:16-18].

We draw heavily upon Scripture, that is the New Testament (NT), to frame our spirituality. We keep turning to it in order to understand how we are called to live in this



Life's Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

world in order to achieve the meaning and purpose of our lives. We know that if we follow what the NT presents, we will become more like Jesus and truly become the *children of God*.

One of the primary elements of spirituality, as we see it manifest in Jesus Christ, is the *voluntary choice* to grow in our likeness of Jesus. Truly nothing is

forced upon us. It must become our voluntary desire to embrace the Jesus way of living. God, because He chose to create us in His image - in the image of Jesus - wants us to freely return His love and freely embrace a way of living that will result in us achieving the “FULLNESS OF LIFE.” He desires that we have internal peace and the feeling of contentment. He respects our free will and therefore will not force us to live like Jesus. It must be that we freely respond to His love by living like Jesus, the Christ.

The Cross, Our Victory

Have you seen the wonderful victory? Have you seen the splendid deeds of the Cross? ... Who can tell the Lord's mighty deeds? By death we were made immortal: these are the glorious deeds of the Cross.

Have you understood the victory? Have you grasped how it was wrought? Learn now, how this victory was gained without any sweat or toil of ours. No weapons of ours were stained with blood; our feet did not stand in the front line of battle; we suffered no wounds; witnessed no tumults; and yet we obtained the victory.

The battle was the Lord's, the crown is ours. Since then victory is ours, let us imitate the soldiers, and with joyful voices sing the songs of victory.

Let us praise the Lord and say, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"

The Cross did all these wonderful things for us: the Cross is a war memorial erected against the demons, a sword against sin, the sword with which Christ slew the serpent.

The Cross is the Father's will, the glory of the Only-begotten, the Spirit's exultation, the beauty of the angels, the guardian of the Church. Paul glories in the Cross; it is the rampart of the saints, it is the light of the whole world.

St. John Chrysostom