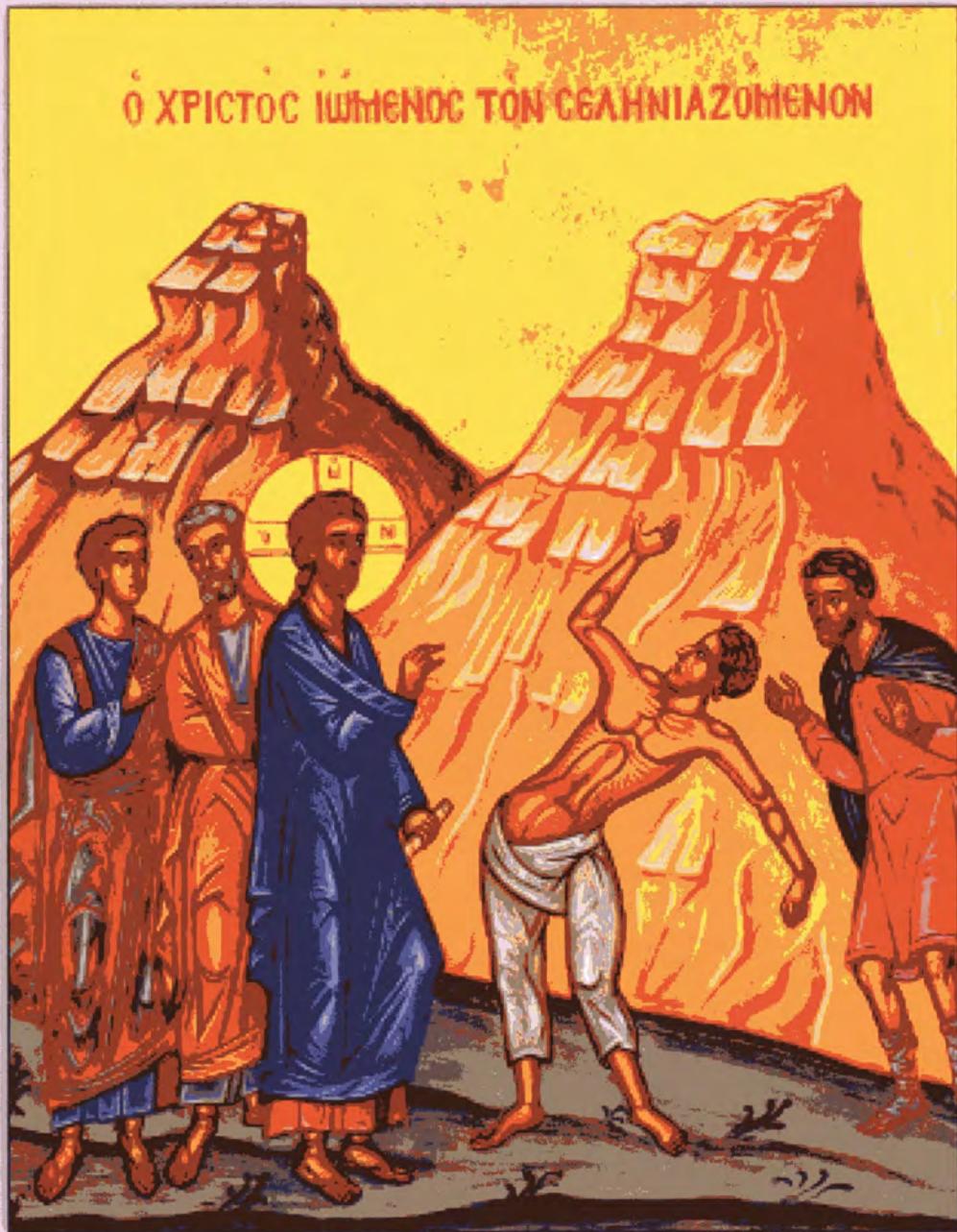


FOURTH SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST
SUNDAY OF ST. JOHN CLIMACUS



Icon of Healing the Boy with a Demon

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

On this fourth weekend of the Great Fast, we remember our Father among the saints John Climacus (*author of the Ladder of Divine Ascent*) and hear readings from Paul's Letter to the Hebrews and Mark's retelling of a miracle story wherein Jesus cured a possessed boy. You will recall that some time ago I presented all 30 steps that John had conceived in order to make our ascent to God. We truly remember him during this time since the Great Fast focuses our efforts on making our ascent to God.

We hear this from Paul's Letter:

God, wishing to give the heirs of his promise even clearer evidence that his purpose would not change, guaranteed it by oath, so that, by two things that are unchangeable, in which he could not lie, we who have taken refuge in him might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope which is placed before us.

In effect Paul was telling the Hebrews and us that God has made a promise to us, through Jesus, that if we attempt, during this lifetime, to grow in faith and trust in God, that we will have the fullness of life and eternal life. This

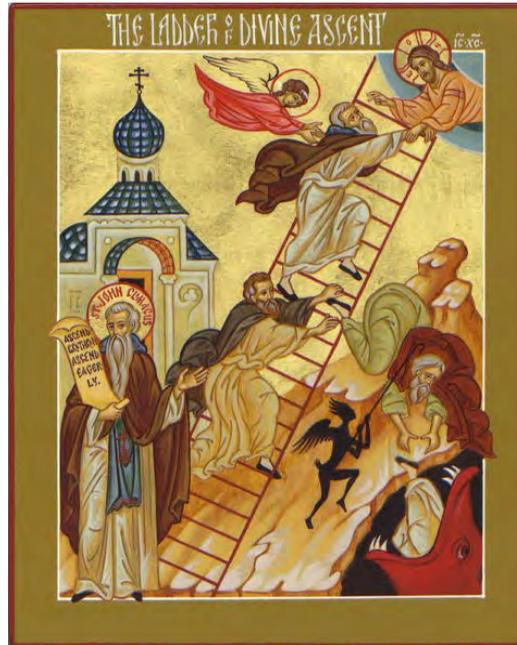
message is reinforced by the miracle story from Mark's Gospel.

The Father of the possessed boy asks Jesus to help his son after Jesus' disciples were unable to cure the boy. The father asks Jesus: *If out of the kindness of your heart you can do anything to help us, please do.* Jesus' response is: *If you can? Everything I possible to the man who trusts!* The

father then replies: *I do believe. Help my lack of trust.* This response highlights a very important thought. It is one thing to have *faith* - belief in God - and quite another thing to truly *trust* God - to trust that He will always do what is best for us. It is quite easy to pray to God for something that you want and, when

you don't receive it, to lessen your trust in Him. It is important to believe that God will always do what is best for you, even though it may not be what you want or think is best for you.

This may be difficult for some to accept. Paul assures us that God has promised us that He will be our help. It is for us to say: *Almighty God I do believe this, help my lack of trust!*



Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

There are several other prayers that are unique to our worship during the Great Fast. During the week-days, we end each service for five weeks out of the six with:

**HAVING SUFFERED YOUR PASSION
FOR US, JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD,
HAVE MERCY ON US**

This is then ended with a profound prostration. We recognize that Jesus, died on the Cross so that we might realize that He conquered Death.

During the third week of the Fast (*last week*) we pray:

**WE BOW TO YOUR CROSS, O MASTER,
AND WE PRAISE YOUR THIRD-DAY
RESURRECTION**

Again this prayer is traditionally ended with a profound prostration. This prayer truly tells us that the Cross, Christ's Death, is always placed in the context of His Resurrection and Eternal Life. As St Paul clearly states, that Christ's Death without His Resurrection makes no sense. His Death and Resurrection declares that DEATH has been abolished for all humankind.

There are some other aspects about the Great Fast that I would share with my readers. First, if you don't know, Saturdays and Sundays are not considered, liturgically, as a part of the Fast. The Divine Liturgy is not celebrated on these days. This highlights the fact that we still observe Saturdays as special. This is



from Jewish Tradition wherein Saturdays are the Sabbath. Sundays, as you know, are holy because of the Resurrection of Christ.

Second, Great and Holy Week is considered a week totally outside all other weeks and consists of eight days, declaring that Christ's Death and Resurrection has changed all things. Special prayers are offered each day of the Great Week.

Third, the Great Fast has its own liturgical book which is called the *Triodion*. It contains hymns and biblical readings for every day of the Fast beginning with the Weekend of the Publican and the Pharisee and ending with Vespers of Great and Holy Saturday. The emphasis of all the prayers is on helping converts prepare for initiation into the Church.

Ignorance of the Triodion is, as many scholar declare, the reason that the Great Fast has been so often reduced to a juridical "obligation" and a set of dietary laws. The meaning of the Great Fast is about personal change and transformation. It is not a "negative" time for us to "suffer through." It is a time for spiritual growth and development.

Our Worship of God Through the Great Fast

Another very beautiful prayer from the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is sung as the Gifts are brought forth from the altar area and carried through the Church and then placed on the Throne. It is called the Hymn of the Mystical Sacrifice. It reads:

Now the powers of heaven are serving with us invisibly. For behold, the King of glory enters. Behold the Mystical Sacrifice all accomplished is brought forth. Let us with faith and with love draw near, that we may become partakers of life everlasting. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Consider the content of this prayer. It states our belief that the Gifts we are invited to consume can make us partakers of life everlasting. It also shares the fact that we believe that all the powers of heaven join with us in this prayer. It is the belief of our Eastern Church that, because there is no time in the next dimension, whenever we join in worship of God all the angelic hosts and the saints join us. This prayer also identifies that these consecrated Gifts are the very “essence” of the King of Glory, Who is, of course, Jesus Christ.

There is another prayer that is said by the celebrant right before the Our Father is said which should be noted.

O God of ineffable and invisible Mysteries, with Whom are the hidden treasure of wisdom and knowledge, Who has revealed to us



the service of this ministry, and has appointed to us sinners...to offer to You gifts and sacrifices.... Do You, the same invisible King...look upon us...who stand at this Holy Altar... upon which lies Your only-begotten Son...in the dread Mysteries spread forth before us.... That,,we may be united to Your Christ...who has said: “Whosoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in Me and I in him....

Again the words of this prayer are so very powerful and descriptive.

The prayer which is said while we bow our heads describes our God in a magnificent manner.

O God, Who alone are good and of tender compassion...look with the eye of Your tender loving kindness upon all of us and preserve us....

Indeed the manner in which we address our God is so beautiful. It is our truest belief that God is a “Lover” of mankind. Why? Because He made us in His image and gave us the potential to grow in Christ’s likeness.



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

TRAINING TODAY

Members of our Parish Council will be receiving training today on the use of our new



An Automated External Defibrillator

and also on how to administer CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). This will increase the level of support and help that we can provide should any parishioner need such assistance when attending services. I would thank the Council for their efforts.

Because of this training, which will take place in our Social Hall, we will not be able to have our Social Hour after the Divine Liturgy.

NEXT WEEK - MARCH 18th

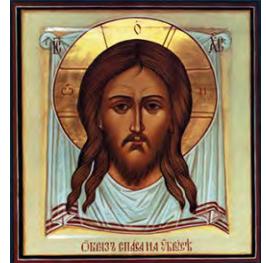
Third Adult Discussion Session

Next Sunday, immediately after a brief Coffee Hour, we will have the third Adult Discussion Session. Please remember to pick up the article on the table in our vestibule or download it from our website. This article is in the same vein as the other two.

There are two great days in a person's life - the day we are born and the day we discover why

CALLED TO HOLINESS

I believe that the call to holiness is made ever more clear as we more intensely think about the life and death of Jesus, the Christ. We are quickly coming to the



Great and Holy Week, that special week each year where we, through the Church, focus more intensely on how Jesus voluntarily endured the greatest sufferings and disappointments of His life. As if the physical torture endured was not enough, He also experienced: being unjustly accused of things He didn't do; hated by people who He only attempted to help and love; betrayed by a close friends; and deserted by many whom He loved. He displayed, by the way He endured all these things, that holiness consists in refusing to hate and feeling sorry for yourself. The unconditional love that He showed during this most trying time in His life, is evidence of His holiness. Even in the throes of death, He thought of others - He thought of the Good Thief, His Mother, and others who cried for Him as He made His way to death. He showed us true

(Continued on page 8)

A Prayer-A-Day For the Great Fast

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.

MONDAY, MARCH 12th

O Christ my God, from this week forward I recall all that you did for me through Your death and resurrection. I know that you willingly suffered death on the Cross to abolish Death. You call me to believe that You, as God, willed that I should know that Death has been destroyed and that I have eternal life. I believe that You are the life-force that brings and sustains me in existence. This tells me of Your love for me and, in deep humility, I offer my thanks to You for the great gift of eternal life. You have granted me eternal life because You have given me life. Help me to understand this. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

TUESDAY, MARCH 13th

O Christ my God, as I venerate Your Cross this week, I am struck by the nobility and grace You displayed in meeting the greatest challenge of Your life. You were not bitter or resentful about that which was forced upon You. You voluntarily embraced it. You endured the humiliation and suffering inflicted upon you with trust in God and with love for others. You forgave those who tortured and betrayed You. You loved those who suffered and died with You. You lived in accord with what You believed and taught. You provided me with a true example of how I must meet the challenges of my own life to gain eternal life. I thank You together with Your Father and Holy Spirit for this, always and ever forever. AMEN.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14th

O Jesus Christ, You showed me, through your suffering and death on the Cross, how to live my life and face life's challenges. You understood that by voluntarily embracing the Cross which was forced upon You, that You would teach Your greatest lesson, namely, that life's challenges are given to us to help us grow in our likeness of You, the Image of God. How can I sufficiently thank You for this wonderful lesson? Help me to learn from You how to embrace the challenges of my life. Help me to truly believe, as You did, that the challenges of life are meant to help us grow in our hope and trust in Our Heavenly Father. I thank You with Your Father and Holy Spirit, always and ever forever. AMEN.

A Prayer-A-Day For the Great Fast

THURSDAY, MARCH 15th

O gracious Lord, like the foolish servant I have hidden the talent given to me and buried it in the ground. I have not used the God-given talent I received to witness to the great mercy You have shown me by Your suffering and death. In Your forbearance, I beg You to have pity on me so that I too may cry to You: O gracious Lord, save me and grant me the help to truly become Your follower. I know that Your compassion is without limits and that You are merciful. Therefore forget me not and help me to live in Your presence so that with thanksgiving and rejoicing I may also cry to You: save me O gracious Lord. I praise You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

FRIDAY, MARCH 16th

O gracious Lord, as the potter molds the clay, You, through the power of the Holy Spirit, fashioned me, giving me flesh and bones, breath and life. I confess that I have not always offered thanks for this gift. I confess to You, O Savior, that I have sinned at times, forgetting that You became a human to show me how to live this life, thereby offering honor and praise to You and gain the fullness of life. Because I have failed at times to imitate You, I am like the man who fell among thieves and the darkness of my own thoughts. They have covered my body with wounds and I lie beaten and bruised. I beg You, Who I call Father Son and Holy Spirit, Your healing. AMEN.

SATURDAY, MARCH 17th

O Lord, no longer does the flaming sword guard the gate of Eden, for a marvelous quenching is come upon it through Your Cross. The sting has been taken from death and victory from Hades. And You, my Savior, have appeared unto those in Hades, saying: Enter you again into Paradise. You accomplished this, O Lord, through Your voluntary death on the Cross which, I truly know, was because of Your great love for all mankind. May I truly be thankful for Your great love. I beg You, O Lord, to hear my cry and let me prayer come unto You. I know that I cannot accomplish personal change without Your help. Make my desire to change real, I beg You, Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

SUNDAY, MARCH 18th

O gracious Lord, Your handmaid, Mary of Egypt, preserved with exactness, Your image. For she took up her cross, in imitation of You, O Lord, and followed you by her deeds. She taught us to overlook the flesh because it passes away and to attend to the soul, since it is immortal. Because of the way she lived, her spirit now rejoices with the angels. O Master, give me the courage to take an example from Mary of Egypt and give myself to imitating You, my Master and God. Like her, help me to present my spirit, body and soul to You in thanksgiving for all that You have done for me. I ask this of You Who I call, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now, always and forever. AMEN.

Schedule of Services

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

FIFTH WEEK OF THE GREAT FAST - TONE 7

Monday, March 12 - Theophane, Venerable-Confessor
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, March 13 - Translation of Nicephorus' Relics
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, March 14 - Benedict, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Thursday, March 15 - Agapius, Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Friday, March 16 - Sabinus & Papas, Martyrs
7:00 PM - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Saturday March 17 - Alexis, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Sunday, March 18 - Fifth Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 8
10:00 AM + Mary Jane Pipta
11:30 AM - Third Adult Discussion Session

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

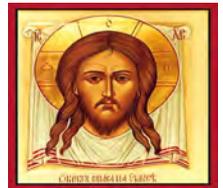
Greg & Esther Petrovich
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)
holiness.

Holiness, then, can be considered, in the most simplistic of terms, an ability to unconditionally love and forgive others. Love and forgiveness are truly the most important qualities and characteristics of God as we Christians conceive Him. It should be noted that other religions may think of God in a totally different way.

Our God, the Christian God, is, according to the Eastern Church, a God of love. Each and every liturgical service we serve ends with the declaration that our God is a **LOVER OF MANKIND**. I believe that it is critical that we continue to think of Him as a "Lover of mankind." He is here to help us spiritually grow and truly become His "Children".



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

Learning our Faith from the Greek Fathers of the Church

I have been attempting to present how Cyril of Alexandria refuted the teachings of Nestorius, who was later declared a heretic, - someone who did not present the truth about Who Jesus Christ IS.

Cyril realized that at least one reason Nestorius was reluctant to speak of a genuine union of the Son with human nature was that one could easily understand such a union to imply a mixing, a blending or confusing of the divine and human natures. Cyril readily agrees that one has to preserve the real and true distinction between these two natures. Jesus as God and Jesus as Man is separate and quite distinct and there is not mixture of these two important and separate “natures” - the type of being that they are. Jesus is truly God, and has the nature of God, and truly Man, having the nature of man and there is no “mixture” of these two natures, creating some sort of new type of creature. Cyril states:

But who would be so misguided and stupid as to think that the divine nature of the Word had

changed into something which formerly it was not? Or that the flesh was changed by some kind of transformation into the nature of the Word himself? This is impossible. We say that there is one Son, and that he has one nature even when he is considered as having assumed flesh endowed with a rational soul. As I have already said, he has made the human element his own. And this is the way, not otherwise, that we must consider that the same one is at once God and man.



CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

Hopefully you, my readers, can see how very important it was and is that we make this distinction. While Jesus was and is truly God, He is also truly Man and His divine nature, His position as the Second Person of the Trinity, did not dictate how He acted as a human being. Why do I say this? Because if His divine nature dictated how He acted, then He could not be God’s revelation to us about how we should live if we want the fullness of life. God became a human to reveal to us how we need to act if we desire to come to the fullness of life.

The Courage to Pray

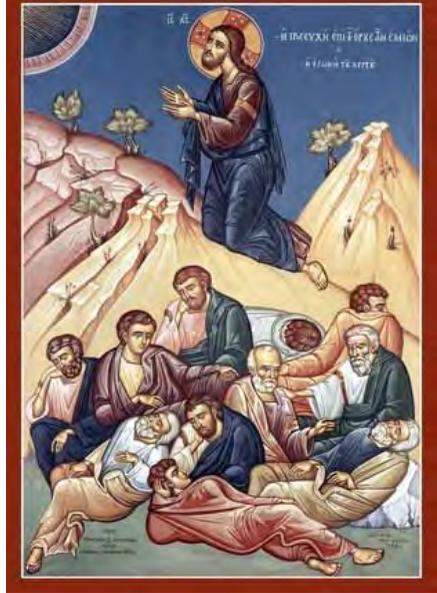
Prayer is an end to isolation. It is living our daily life with someone – with Him Who alone can deliver us from solitude. For He is the only one we can find in our own heart, the only one to whom we can tell everything that is in us. He is ever present. Intimately! Prayer makes us aware of His presence, which we might not realize if we did not pay attention.

It is a living presence. The presence of Him from whom we receive everything. We depend on Him fundamentally. We discover His presence within us as we become aware of our total dependence on Him. That is why prayer must be an attitude of humility. Not self regarding humility intent on considering our poverty and weakness. But a God-regarding humility joyful because of His closeness.

Perhaps one of the hindrances we encounter to our prayer is that as Americans we are highly independent and are encouraged to be highly self-sufficient. However in order to have a true relationship with God we must develop the attitude that we are totally dependent upon Him. Why do I say this? Because we are dependent upon Him for life itself. We can have a true relationship with God when we understand this dependence and allow ourselves to experience it. This may be difficult for many!

What is interesting is that when we recognize our dependence upon God, He grants us the freedom to understand that He has given us the greatest gift, that of *free will*. He did not create slaves. He created humans who, because of the human nature of Jesus, are sons and daughters of God - adopted children of God.

Some of the saints have said that when they truly pray they feel a part of them gets lost. themselves. Doesn't everyone feel this who



prays, asked one saint? He who does not pray belongs to himself. He is his own territory. He enjoys his independence. He is responsible for himself and he tries to reach his goal by his own efforts. He who prays knows that he needs another.

Salvation is truly, in every sense of the word, a cooperative activity between us and God. We need His help and He willingly gives it to us if we approach Him with a real understanding that we are dependent upon Him. We also need Him to make sense out of this earthly existence.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 64 No 10 Fourth Weekend Of the Great Fast March 10-11, 2018

The Spirituality of the Christian East

I have been sharing with my readers the seven characteristics of our Eastern Spirituality. I have shared that it is:

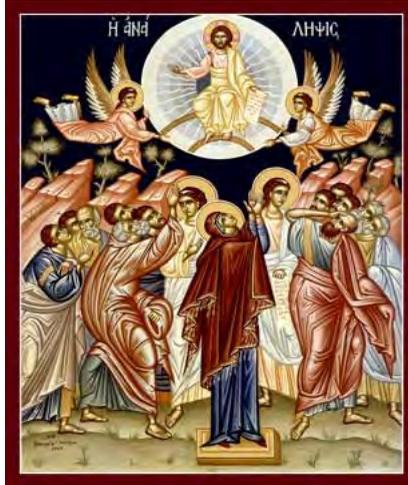
**TRINITARIAN
INCARNATIONAL
EUCCHARISTIC
SCRIPTURAL**

The fifth characteristic is that it is

ECCLESIAL

This means that it is intimately connected to a particular expression of the Christian faith - to a particular Christian Church. Each Particular Church within the Christian Communion has an unique approach to expressing its worship of God. Our Church has a special approach to prayer and traditions that enhance our understanding of the Revelation of God through Jesus. It is important to note that while the spirituality of one Church may be different from another, that does not mean that one is right and the other wrong.

I find that all too often humans want the Church they choose to



Life's Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

attend to be the *true* Church and all others false. (*An aside. I have found that frequently Western Catholics find it difficult to believe that our Church is Catholic because we don't do things the same way*). There is not just one, Catholic Spirituality! Spirituality has to be based on the way that we worship. The Eastern Catholic Church worships and

prays in a much different manner than the Western Catholic Church.

Simple examples. During the Great Fast we frequently integrate into our prayer *Profound Prostrations*. For us it is critical to become totally involved in prayer in mind, body and spirit. These *Prostrations* involve our bodies in prayer in an unique way.

When we make the sign of the cross on our bodies, we hold our fingers in a unique way (*i.e., three together and two in our palms*). This is a part of our Church's traditions.

Journeying to Pascha

Jesus continues today his work of healing and exorcism, and that is appropriate for this time of Lent, because Lent is a time for healing and exorcism. It is a time for us to heal the wounds of our souls – self-inflicted wounds due to our complacency and laziness and self-indulgence. It is time to get rid of those demons of our own sinful habits and anything that keeps us away from God and from living that abundant life that Christ came to give us.

We start to make our way toward Jerusalem. At the end of today's Gospel already there is the prediction of the passion, the death and the resurrection of Christ, giving a little hint in the Gospel that the course of Lent is moving now towards Jerusalem. We have gone through several weeks now of spiritual preparations, Scripture texts, prayers and activities. Now our focus

is starting to turn towards Jerusalem. That will be made more explicit in next Sunday's Gospel, but we are already getting a hint of it now.

There are only three weeks now until Easter, two weeks until Palm Sunday, when we are really liturgically accompanying Christ into the mystery of His Passion.

So it is coming soon, and we have to start turning towards Jerusalem. We have to get focused, we have to get recollected, we have to really revive our Lenten prayer and fasting so that we can make the rest of this journey and be fruitful and overcome the demons and find healing for the wounds of our souls – and go with Christ to his Passion and, through the mystery of His Cross, come to that great, transfiguring, glorious celebration of His Resurrection.