

SUNDAY OF THE MAN BORN BLIND



Icon of the Gospel of the Man Born Blind

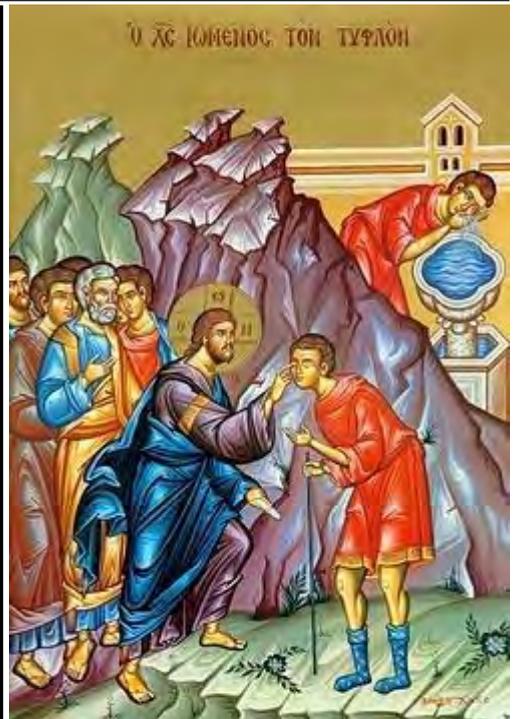
Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

On this final weekend of our Easter celebration (*on Thursday we celebrate the feast of the Ascension and the very next weekend is not included in the Easter sequence*) our readings are again taken from the *Acts of the Apostles* and *John's Gospel*. They are interesting readings.

The story presented in *Acts*, relates how St. Paul was thrown into prison because he silenced the voice of a fortune-teller. He caused her handlers to lose money by removing her so-called gift. When you hear what she was saying, you wonder why Paul would have wanted to silence her. She said: *These men are servants of the Most High God: they will make known to you a way of salvation*. A rather positive message.

The story in *John's Gospel* is also very interesting since it begins with the question from His disciples: *Rabbi, was it his sin or that of his parents that caused him to be born blind?* This question betrays one of the common beliefs at the time of Jesus, namely, that disabilities were a punishment from God for some wrong doing. Of course Jesus soundly rejects this idea and suggests that the man's disability was an opportunity for God's works to show forth in Jesus. The story ends with Jesus telling His disciples that *I am the light of the world!* This, of course, was a conclusion that John drew before He wrote his Gospel.

If we dissect these stories, we come away with true declarations of faith, namely that Jesus was and is God's real revelation to the world about how to live. God so loved His world and creation that He came Himself in the Person of Jesus to help us



understand the meaning and purpose of life.

Jesus asked the man born blind, after he was expelled from the synagogue: *Do you believe in the Son of Man?* The man asked: *Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?* Jesus' response was: *You have seen him...He is speaking to you now*. The man's response: *I do believe, Lord!*

So this weekend we must ask ourselves: Do we believe that Jesus is God's revelation to us? Do we believe He is God Himself come into the world to help us? If we do, then we need to bow down and worship Him.

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

In the last issue, I began sharing some historical information about our own Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church. I would now present some prehistory.

Migration and settlement patterns in the territories of present-day Ukraine, from prehistoric times, varied fundamentally along the lines of three geographic zones. The Black Sea coast was for centuries in the sphere of the contemporary Mediterranean maritime powers. The open steppe, funneling from the east across southern Ukraine and toward the mouth of the Danube River, formed a natural gateway to Europe for successive waves of nomadic horsemen from Central Asia. The mixed forest-steppe and forest belt of north-central and western Ukraine supported an agricultural population (most notably the Trypillya culture of the mid-5th to 3rd millennia BCE), linked by waterways to northern and central Europe. The marshlands of these zones were frequent areas of both military conflict and cultural transmission.

Beginning in the 7th and 6th centuries BCE, Greek colonies were founded on the northern coast of the Black Sea, on the Crimean Peninsula, and along the Sea of Azov; these Hellenic outposts later came under the hegemony of the Roman Empire. During the 1st millennium BCE the steppe hinterland was occupied successively by the Cimmerians, Scythians, and Sarmatians. These



peoples, all of Iranian stock, maintained commercial and cultural relations with the Greek colonies.

A period of great migrations began with the descent of the Goths from the Baltic region into Ukraine about 200 CE. They displaced the Sarmatians, but their own power was broken about 375 by the invading Huns from the east, who were followed in the 5th–6th centuries by the Bulgars and Avars.

Between the 7th and 9th centuries, the Ukrainian steppe formed part of the Turkic Khazar mercantile empire, which was centered on the lower Volga River. Khazar control of the steppe was breached in the late 9th century by the Magyars now known as Hungarians. The Pecheneges who followed, dominated much of southern Ukraine in the 10th and 11th centuries, and they were in turn succeeded by the Polovtsians or Cumans.

The history of the area known as Ukraine is fascinating and filled with an abundance of change. This is the background of our Church.

Understand More About the Resurrection



I have been presenting, in this article, our Church's understanding of Christ's *Descent into Hades*. As our Easter icon clearly shows, the impact of Christ's death directly deals with the destruction of Death and Hades. We are told by the Fathers that Christ preached to those in Hades. Whether all or only some responded to the call of Christ and were delivered from Hades remains an open question. If we accept the point of view of those Western church writers who maintain that Christ delivered only the Old Testament righteous, then Christ's salutary action is reduced merely to the restoration of justice. The Old Testament righteous suffered in

Hades undeservedly, not for their personal sins but because of the general sinfulness of human nature, and therefore their deliverance from hell was a "duty" that God was obliged to undertake. Such an act could scarcely constitute a miracle, earning the praise of church hymns or making the angels tremble.

Unlike the West, Christian consciousness in the East admits the opportunity for salvation not only for those who believe during their lifetime but also for those who were not given to believe but pleased God with their good works. In one of his hymns, John Damascene (*the composer of our Resurrection Matins*) develops the idea that salvation was not only for those who confessed the right faith, not only for the Old Testament righteous, but also for those heathens who distinguished themselves by a lofty morality.

This approach renders the descent into Hades exceptional in its soteriological implications. According to the Damascene, those who were not taught the true faith during their lifetime can come to believe when in Hades. By their good works and ascetic life they prepared themselves for encountering Christ. These are the same people about whom St. Paul says that, having no law, they "do by nature things contained in the law," and "the work

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St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

2018 GRAVE BLESSINGS

Advance Notice

St. Hedwig's Cemetery

May 20th - 2:00 PM

Holy Sepulchre Cemetery

May 27th - 1:00 PM



At both cemeteries we will first meet at the mausoleum where we will hold a general Panahyda and, weather permitting, then visit individual graves. I have to delay the blessing on May 20th, Pentecost, because I will be substituting for Father Petriw at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church that day. Father will be in Ukraine.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

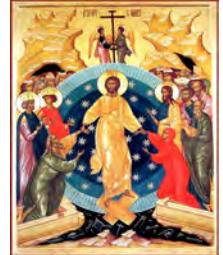
I'm planning to continue our ongoing Adult Education Program. The effort means presenting an article every few weeks and then inviting anyone who wants to discuss the article to join with an after-coffee discussion. As you know, It is my goal to be able to say before I retire that I have the best educated parish in the entire Eparchy. If there are any topics that you would like me to cover, please let me know.

***A good friend is like a four-leaf clover;
hard to find and lucky to have.***

CALLED TO HOLINESS

As I have been thinking about holiness, I have decided that perhaps true holiness is learning to live in the *present moment*.

It is only in the present moment that I can encounter God and sense my union with Him. Neither the *past* nor the *future* are real. The past was, at one time, a present moment but it no longer exists.



I have come across too many people who live in the *past* and/or the *future* and fail to comprehend the fact that the present moment is the only real thing. The past cannot be changed and therefore to regret what happened in the past is worthless since it cannot be changed. The future is not real. It may never come into existence and therefore it is not real. Only the present moment is real.

It is only in the present moment that I can experience the presence of God; embrace the beauty of life; know myself as the temple of God; know and experience love; and be filled with the wonder of life. It is only in the present moment that I can come to know who I am and offer thanksgiving to God for who I am.

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The World as Gift and Word



In the last issue, I shared with you that we humans are called to freely return to God the gifts He gives us as a means of demonstrating that we recognize that all things come to us from Him. It is God's wish, it is our belief, that the human person spends himself in the effort to place his own valuable stamp upon the gifts received and thereby makes of them human gifts as well. In effect this means that God gives us life and existence and we, through our efforts, are called to enhance this life - that is by actualizing our potential to be more like Jesus - and to offer back to Him, God, an enhanced life. An enhanced life is a life wherein we

have, through our personal, voluntary efforts, grown in our likeness of Jesus.

Through the gift of the world, God wishes to make Himself known to the human person in His love. Therefore the human person, too, must rise above the gifts he has received and come to God himself Who gave them. As a sign of one person's love for another, the gift has imprinted upon it the destination that the one who receives it must go beyond. In a way, the gift is what the person who offers it renounces for love of the person to whom it is offered.

This holds true, also, in our human relations. If we are offered love from a spouse or friend, we must enhance that love and return it to the person who gave it to us. Love given, requires, if it is accepted as love, for a return of love.

When someone does not understand this, the gift is often taken away against his will, so that he may come to realize that the giver is greater than the gift. Over the world and over our lives, the cross is raised in this way. When, of our own will, we no longer see God through the cross, leaving the world and our own life behind in the love for God, then he makes himself transparent to us through the cross against our will.

Learning how to live in this manner is, of course, one of the primary goals of human life. God gives us a free will, however, and so we can decide to not return His love, resulting in a great loss for us.

HOW DO YOU UNDERSTAND THIS?

Mysticism - A Characteristic of Our Church

I ended the last issue of this article by stating that Clement, one of the Fathers of the Church, saw the purpose of life as the perfecting of the image of God in which was created: a perfecting in which the image grows into the likeness. The image of God is, of course, Jesus Christ.

Whether of not Origen knew his great predecessor in Alexandria, Clement, his understanding of and contribution to mystical theology is very similar. There is the same shift of emphasis from literal martyrdom to a spiritual martyrdom of asceticism (*severe self-discipline and avoidance of all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons*). Even more than Clement, Origen places Scripture and its understanding at the center of the spiritual life and the influence of Plato is also very palpable. But Origen systematically expounded Scripture in a way that Clement did not, and most of his contributions to the Christian mystical tradition are related to his interpretation of Scripture. Pre-eminent in this is the way he expounds the Song of Songs in relation to the mystical life. This celebration of human love had already been interpreted by the Jews as referring to the love between God and Israel, and by the time of Hippolytus the Christian transposition of this to the love between Christ and the Church had been made. For Origen, this interpretation remains of fundamental importance but it is joined by an interpretation of the Song of Songs as concerned with the love between Christ and the individual Christian soul. Origen suggests two ways of seeing the Song of Songs as celebrating the consummation in union of the love between Christ and the soul. He sees the Song of Songs as the highest and greatest of the songs of the Old Testament which begin with Moses' song after the crossing of the Red Sea, interpreted



as celebrating baptism: 'mystical union with God is therefore the fulfillment of what has already been initiated in baptism. Otherwise, Origen sees the Son of Songs as the last of the three books of Wisdom, and he draws a parallel between the three books of Wisdom and the three stages of philosophy: Proverbs to Ethics, Ecclesiastes to Physics, and the Song of Songs to Metaphysics.

All the Fathers of the Church were deeply steeped in philosophy, especially Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophy.

Hope this makes sense!

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

WEEK OF THE MAN BORN BLIND

Sunday, May 6 - Weekend of the Samaritan Woman
10:00 AM + Ann

Monday, May 7 - Appearance of the Sign of the Cross
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, May 8 - John, Apostle & Evangelist
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Wednesday, May 9 - Simon the Zelot, Apostle
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Thursday, May 10 - The Ascension of Our Lord
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Friday, May 11 - Cyril & Methodius, Apostles to the Slavs
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday, May 12 - Epiphanius &* Germanus, Bishops
No Service Scheduled

WEEK OF THE FATHERS OF THE 1st COUNCIL

Sunday, May 13 - Weekend of the Fathers of the 1st Council
————Mother's Day————
10:00 AM - Living & Deceased Mothers of the Parish Family

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

Although it is true that I can learn from the past by reflecting on those things that I have experienced, it is critical that I don't dwell in the past but rather use the insights I have gained from reflecting on my past memories to be more fully present to the present moment.

One of the things we don't often think about is that for God all things are the present moment. Time does not exist for God. All things are eternally present to Him. So, it is in the present moment that we have the opportunity to truly experience and come into contact with God.

More to come!



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

Understanding More About the Resurrection

(Continued from page 4 - Resurrection)

of the law is written in their hearts.” Those who live by the law of natural morality but do not share the true faith can hope, by virtue of their righteousness, that in a face-to-face encounter with God, they will recognize in him the One they “ignorantly worshipped.”

Does this have anything to do with those who died outside the Christian faith after the descent of Christ into Hades? It does not if we accept the Western teaching that the descent into Hades was a “one-time” event and that the recollection of Christ did not survive in Hades. But it does if we proceed from the assumption that after Christ Hades was no longer like the Old Testament *sheol*, but a place of divine presence. Indeed as one author states, all events in the life of Christ, which happen in time, have timeless, abiding significance. Therefore, the so-called “preaching in Hades”, which is the faith of the Church, is a revelation of Christ to those who in their earthly life could not see or know Christ. There are no grounds for limiting this event to the Old Testament saints alone, as Western theology does. Rather, the power of this preaching should be extended to all time for those who during their life on earth did not and could not know Christ but meet him in the afterlife.

According to Eastern theology, all



people, whether believers or non-believers, appear before god after their death. Therefore, even for those who did not believe during their lifetime, there is hope that after death they will recognize God as their Savior and Redeemer, if their previous life on earth prepared them for this recognition.

The hymn of John Damascene clearly states that the virtuous heathens were not “taught” the true faith. This is a clear allusion to the words of Christ: “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” and “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but that believeth not shall be damned.” Damnation is extended only to those who were taught Christian faith but did not believe.

I believe that the Eastern approach to the Descent into Hades, makes a lot more sense. Do You?

Some Thoughts About the Eucharist

In the last issue I was attempting to highlight the Byzantine perspective of the Eucharist. As a result of the iconoclastic controversy - that heresy that said that icons were like idols and therefore should not be permitted in our churches - Byzantine Eucharistic theology retained and re-emphasized the mystery and hiddenness of this central liturgical action of the Church. *(It must be remembered that Western Christianity did not go through this struggle).* But it also reaffirmed that the Eucharist was essentially a meal which could be partaken of only through eating and drinking, because God had assumed the fullness of our humanity, with all its psychic and physical functions, in order to lead it to resurrection.

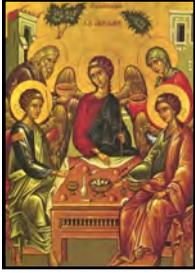
We must remember that God created us, and other living things, that we must eat and drink in order to survive and grow. Jesus used this necessary human function to guarantee that He would remain present to His Church for all times.

Byzantine theologians had an opportunity to make the same point in connection with their anti-Latin polemics against the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist. The discussion on the *azymes*, which started in the eleventh century, was generally entangled in arguments of purely symbolic nature *(the Greeks maintained, for example, that the Eucharistic bread had to be leavened*



in order to symbolize the animated humanity of Christ, while the Latin use of azymes implied Appollinarianism, i.e., the denial that Jesus had a human soul), but the controversy also recognized that the Byzantines understood the Eucharistic bread to be necessarily *consubstantial* with humanity, while Latin medieval piety emphasized its *supersubstantiality*, its otherworldliness. The use of ordinary bread, identical with the bread used as everyday food, was the sign of true Incarnation: “What is the daily bread of the Lord’s prayer,” asks Nicetas Stethatos, “if it is not consubstantial with us? And the bread consubstantial with us is none other than the Body of Christ, who became consubstantial with us through the flesh of His humanity.”

An aside: *Azymes* (plural of *azyme*) is an archaic English word for the Jewish matzah, derived from the Greek word ἄζυμος *ázymos*, “unleavened”, or “unfermented” bread.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

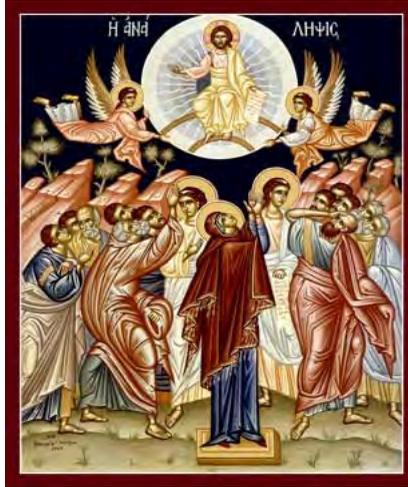
The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchy, Ph.D.
Vol. 64 No 18 Weekend of the Man Born Blind May 5-6, 2018

The Spirituality of the Christian East

I ended this article in the last issue by saying that there is a single vision of the spiritual life in our Byzantine tradition and that this vision stems from the great evangelical perspective articulated by St. Peter in his first Epistle, namely that we are called “to become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pt 1:4) not just to be “saved” from sin. We see ourselves

as invited to live the very life of God, to become intimately related to God, to be physically united to Christ and to have the Holy Spirit dwell within us.

The Church Fathers saw this as the reason for Christ’s coming. “God became man so that man might become divine” (St. Athanasius). This process – called *theosis* in Greek and sometimes translated as divinization or deification – begins when we receive in faith the Holy Mysteries. In baptism we are made one with the risen Christ in His victory over sin and



Life's Journey Is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

death as we reenact His burial and resurrection. This reliving takes place when we are buried (*immersed*) in the water and are raised from it. We immediately receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, “the first of God’s gifts” (Rom 8:23), in chrismation. In receiving the Eucharist we recognize that our mortal bodies are united to the Body and Blood of Christ as a

token of the life to come, when they shall be united to Him in glory forever. Just as infants are fully formed in miniature, in potency you might say, so are we through these mysteries. But we are not complete: we must become what we are by living out the new life that is ours. In Eastern Christianity this is generally seen to take place when we live a “public” life of worship and communion and a “secret” life of prayer, fasting, and sharing.

Our spirituality is an actualization of our potential to be like Christ.

A Link to Baptism

The cure of the blind man also symbolizes mankind's means for its recovery from its blindness. It symbolizes the Sacrament of Baptism. Baptism is called holy enlightenment. Those who have been recently baptized are called the newly enlightened. This gospel from Saint John was read in the ancient Church on Holy Saturday when Catechumens were baptized. As this man is cured of his blindness when he washes in the waters of the pool of Siloam, as Jesus tells him to do, so are we brought out of darkness into a new life when we are baptized as Christ instructed us to be. Jesus restores His creation, mankind, with the potential to become what it was meant to be before the fall of Adam.

We also hear in the reading that after this man was cured many of those who knew him before did not recognize him. He is still the same man

but something has significantly changed about him. He is no longer blind. So when we are illuminated we are also new persons, though our outward appearance might be the same. To symbolize this newness a white garment is put on us to show the purity with which we start this new existence. We must, however, become different and unrecognizable in our inward and outward actions also. We must manifest our new existence to those around us through these actions. We must radiate this new found light to others by the way we live our lives. We must say to the world, "I am he who was blind but now my eyes are opened." Credit must be given to Him who has cured us of our darkness by living our lives according to the lessons of the illumination we have received and the continued guidance we get with the reception of the Holy Spirit.