

SUNDAY OF THE FATHERS OF THE FIRST COUNCIL



Icon of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

On this weekend between the end of our Easter celebration and the feast of Pentecost, the Church calls us to remember the Fathers of the very first Ecumenical Council, the Council of Nicaea (325). Our first reading, taken from the Acts of the Apostles, reports what Paul said to the presbyters of Ephesus before he left for Jerusalem. He wanted to be in Jerusalem for the Jewish feast of Pentecost. In his address to them, he reminded them that they must help the weak, recalling the words of Jesus who said: *There is more happiness in giving than receiving.* He then left, knowing that he would never see them again.



Our second reading, again taken from John's Gospel, also shares a farewell address, that of Jesus. He is quoted as saying: *Eternal life is this: To know You, the only true God, and Him Whom You sent, Jesus Christ.*

These words, traditionally called the High-Priestly Prayer of Jesus, were probably the clearly expressed belief of the early Church of what Jesus taught. Christ's words expressed his blessings on the Church that was to come forth after His glorification. It is a prayer that calls his followers to unity.

The joy of the early Church shines out in John's description of eternal life which has sapiental roots. To "know"

implies an intimate, loving union with God that continuously grows. It is a union with a "true God", not an idol. It indicates that revelation no longer is founded on a Law but on a Person, the Son Who reveals the Father.

These words attributed to Jesus, declare that Jesus achieved his life's aim, that of glorifying his Father and completing the work of our human redemption. He asks, in recompense for his suffering, that humanity may be

given the chance to achieve the fullness of life in the bosom of the Father. This was the reason for the Incarnation. This is seen in the words of Jesus Who prayed to the Father that

we humans might become one with the Father as Jesus Himself is one with the Father.

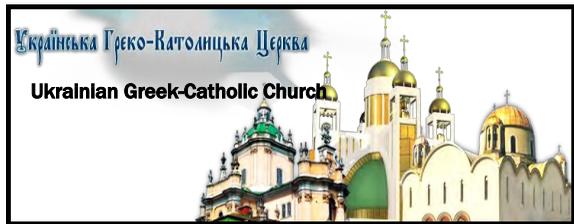
So this earthly life calls us to work to actualize our potential to be like Jesus and therefore be one with the Father. God became a human being so that we might have a model of how to live this earthly life and therefore gain this union with God. We were created to be in union with God.

Our loving God, while He gave us free will, also gave us His Son to show us how to live. He desires only that we join Him in eternal life. As any good father, God did everything in His power to make this come true.

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

I would continue sharing information about the history of our Church and the country in which it was first founded. Throughout this period of nomadic invasions, only a few of the Greek settlements on the Crimean Peninsula, notably Chersonesus, maintained a precarious existence, relying on the support of the Byzantine Empire. In the 5th and 6th centuries Slavic tribes moved from their primordial homeland north of the Carpathians. While some Slavs migrated westward and others south into the Balkans, the East Slavs occupied the forest and forest-steppe regions of what are now western and north-central Ukraine and southern Belarus. They expanded farther north and to the northeast into territories of the future Russian state centered on Moscow. The East Slavs practiced agriculture and animal husbandry, and also engaged in such domestic industries as cloth making and ceramics. They built fortified settlements, many of which later developed into important commercial and political centers. Among such early settlements was Kiev on the high right (western) bank of the Dnieper River.

The Kievan state began in the mid-9th century. The role of the Varangians or Vikings in this process, by which the state became named Rus is, among many historians, debated. It is clear, however, that the formation of Kiev is connected with the development of international trade and the new



prominence of the Dnieper route, on which Kiev is strategically sited, from the Baltic to Byzantium. Trade along this route was controlled by Varangian merchant-warriors and from their ranks came the progenitors of the Kievan princes, who were, however, soon Slavicized. In the early chronicles the Varangians were also called Russyns and this corporate name became a territorial designation for the Kievan region - the basic territory of the Rus. Later, by extension, it was applied to the entire territory ruled by members of the Kievan dynasty.

By the end of the 10th century, the Kievan domain covered a vast area from the edge of the open steppe in Ukraine as far north as Lake Ladoga and the upper Volga basin. Like other medieval states, it did not develop central political institutions but remained a loose aggregation of principalities ruling what was a dynastic clan enterprise. Kiev reached its apogee in the reigns of Volodymyr the Great and his son Yaroslav I, the Wise.

It is within this context that our Church came into existence. It is a fascinating history. **More to come.**

Understand More About the Resurrection



I ended this article with the statement from Saint John Damascene that damnation is extended only to those who were taught Christian faith but did not believe. But if a person were deprived of teaching, if he in his real life did not encounter the preaching of the gospel and did not have an opportunity to respond to it, can he be damned for it? This question disturbed ancient authors such as Clement of Alexandria and brought about many more questions.

For example, Is it at all possible that the fate of a person can be changed after his death? Is death that border beyond which some unchangeable static existence

comes? Does the development of the human person not stop after death? Is it impossible for one to actively repent in hell? Is it impossible to rectify the evil deeds one commits by appropriate good works?

It may, some Fathers believed, be possible for one to repent through a “change of heart,”: a review of one’s values. One of the testimonies to this is the rich man of the Gospel. He realized the gravity of his situation as soon as he found himself in hell. Indeed, in his lifetime he was focused on earthly pursuits and forgot God, but once in hell he realized that God was his only hope for salvation. Besides, according to the teachings of the Eastern Church, the fate of a person after death can be changed through the prayer of the Church. Thus existence after death has its own dynamics.

It is our belief that after death the development of the human person does not cease, for existence after death is not a transfer from a dynamic into a static being, but rather a continuation on a new level of that road which a person followed in his or her lifetime. Life, which is dynamic, is said to be eternal. It does not cease being dynamic after death. It is did, then we could not call it life.

As the last stage in Christ’s divine descent (*katabasis*) and self-emptying (*kenosis*),

(Continued on page 9)



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.

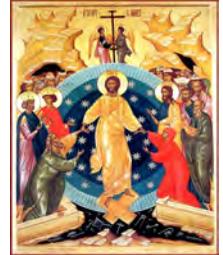
MISSION DAYS

As you may know, we celebrated the feast of the Lord's ASCENSION this past week. Our Synod of Bishops has asked that the 10 days between this feast and Pentecost be observed as Mission Days - days of special prayers and also actions. Being a Christian requires that we bear witness to God's Incarnation in the person of Jesus by the way we treat others.

Life's too mysterious to take too serious

CALLED TO HOLINESS

As I expressed in the last issue of this article, living in the *present moment* is essential if we are to achieve any degree of holiness. Why? Because it is in the present moment that we encounter God. The only real experience we have is in the present moment. Although we may have encountered God in the past, at that time it was the present. Neither the past nor the future are real.

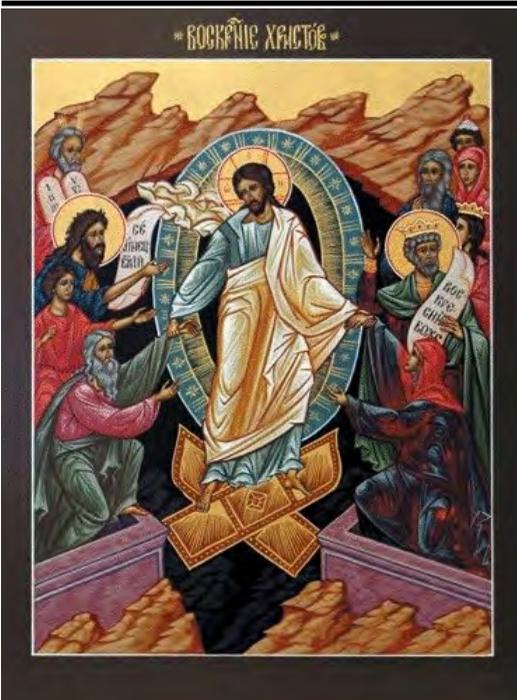


It is only in the present moment that we can offer praise and worship to God. Think about it! So, if we learn how to truly live in the present moment we will be able to actualize our potential to be like Jesus.

It seems, however, that many people have a propensity to live constantly in the past or the future. The people I've encountered that live in the past seem to have constant regrets for the things that happened and, unfortunately, they typically don't learn from their past experiences and can't seem to let go of the past. This makes for very difficult living in the present.

I would now ask, if you are reading this article *(Continued on page 8)*

The World as Gift and Word



As I expressed in the last issue of this article, through the gift of the world, God wishes to make Himself known to the human person in His love. Look around you. The world is God's gift to us. Unfortunately we humans are truly damaging this gift. We do not take care of our world and we are, for the sake of making more money, gradually destroying it.

In this sense all things found in the middle between God and the human person call out for the cross. By detaching himself from them, the human person discovers God Who is infinitely more than all his gifts. The cross through which the human person detaches

Himself from these gifts and the tomb wherein he forgets about them and they disappear, lead the human person to the resurrection. Indeed, as St. Maximus the Confessor said, all things are intended to lead the human person to the resurrection, that is, to eternal life: "All visible things call for the cross, that is, the habitation to quench the affection for them of those who through senses are led to them. And all intelligible ones have need of the grave, that is, the total stability of those who through mind are led to them." (*I would admit that Maximus' ideas are rather dense*). When this movement toward them has been removed, "the Word alone springs up existing by himself as being raised from the dead, circumscribing all that have their origin in Him."

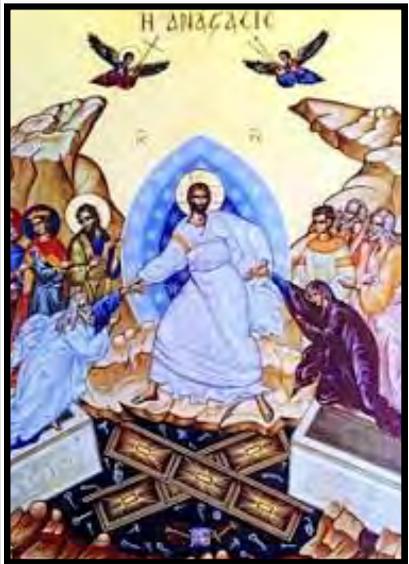
I think what Maximus is attempting to convey is that we humans know of the reality of death. We cannot escape it. And so we hope, as we realize that we must endure death, that there is resurrection.

Maximus goes on to say, the personal Logos who transcends the inner principles/reasons of things comes to be seen directly and seen moreover as the source that circumscribes these reasons, himself infinitely more comprehensive than they in just the same way as when we ourselves achieve communion with another human subject, the gifts bestowed by him are life behind while we rejoice in that richness of his that is much greater than these gifts. Think about this and ask yourself, *What does this mean?*

Mysticism - A Characteristic of Our Church

I ended the last issue of this article by stating that there are three stages in the soul's ascent to God, which are parallel to the three states of philosophy are Ethics, Physics and Metaphysics. These three stages become canonized by Evagrius and the monastic tradition dependent upon him. The three terms in this form can be traced back to Clement as easily as Origen's triad: the soul is first purified by the practice of the virtues and struggle against temptation, then it learns to contemplate the world, as God made it, and to realize its transience and finally the soul comes to the vision of God and union with him.

Another contribution Origen makes to the mystical tradition is his development of the notion of the spiritual senses. It is not clear that originally the notion of the spiritual senses was not much more than an attempt to explain such passages as Psalm 34 which states "Taste and see how gracious the Lord is." As bodily taste and sight can hardly be in question, recourse has to be had to *spiritual* sight and taste. But this leads on to the idea that, as the body has five senses, so analogously the soul has senses with which it perceives reality in the spiritual realm. These senses are dulled by sin, and can only be awakened by grace (God's help). It is often suggested that, as the bodily senses are mortified, so the spiritual senses come to life. The sensuous language of the Song of Songs (*If you have never read it, get your Bible and in the Old Testament you will find the Song of Songs - full of perfumes and gentle caressing (and sometimes not-so-gentle caressing), the soft sound of the voice of the Beloved and the sense of his presence - is interpreted in terms of the soul's growing awareness of the spiritual realm where Christ is to be found. This suggests that 'mystical experience'*



is less some kind of inward 'altered state of consciousness' (as some later tradition suggests) than access to another realm, the paradise the martyrs beheld, the paradise to which St. Paul was caught up.

Our Church has a very definite 'mystical' side to it. Consider our worship. It is truly mystical in the sense that it constantly reminds us that there is a 'fourth dimension' to creation - the spiritual dimension - a dimension that is only seen through the eyes of faith. Can we prove anything that we believe? Yet we believe!

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Rev. Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Pastor

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LITURGY SCHEDULE

Sundays @ 10:00 AM
Ukrainian & English

Weekdays @ 8:00 AM
English

SACRAMENTS

Penance
By Appointment

Baptism & Matrimony
*In most instances membership
required for six months*

Funerals
*Membership of an immediate
family member required*

Parish Life Council

Bob & Corinne Boyko
734.451.1893

John & Janet Dicky
313.563.5509

Daria Drobny
313.791-0292

Robert Krokosky
248.431.9554

Leo & Mary LaDouceur
313.278.7378

Gordon Malaniak
734.564.9817

Leonard Mier
313.584-6795

Greg & Esther Petrovich
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday, May 13 - Weekend of the Fathers of the 1st Council

— *Mother's Day* —

10:00 AM - Living & Deceased Mothers of the Parish Family

7th Paschal Week

Monday, May 14 - Isidore, Martyr

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Tuesday, May 15 - Pachomius the Great, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, May 16 - Theodore, Venerable

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Thursday, May 17 - Anjdronicus & Others, Apostles
No Service Scheduled

Friday, May 18 - Theodotus & Others, Martyrs

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday, May 19 - Patrick, Bishop-Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Sunday, May 20 - Weekend of Pentecost

10:00 AM - Special Intention

2:00 PM - Grave Blessings at St. Hedwig's Cemetery

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

yourself this question: *Do I live in the present moment or do I dwell on the past and are anxious about the future?* Make sure that you answer this question honestly since your answer can be the beginning of your true spiritual development. Always remember, you can't change the past and the future may never be yours since you can't guarantee or control your future.

In reading the lives of many saints, I discovered that they all seem to have achieved the ability to live in the present moment and in the present moment discovered God. It is all about living in a way that makes real sense.



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Some Thoughts About the Eucharist

As members of Christ we are one with Him in all things. By adoption we are the children of the Father. By grace we are united to Him in His eternal priesthood. We are called to add our voice, not only to the priest's but to Christ's own voice. We called to join Jesus in offering our lives back to the Father in Thanksgiving.

In the East the Church does not view Christ's sacrifice as something of the past. Christ's blood was shed at a definite time in human history; but the offering of His precious blood takes place in eternity. In the Epistle to the Hebrews – on which the shape of our Eucharistic Prayer is based – Christ's sacrifice is described liturgically. He enters the heavenly "sanctuary" carrying, not the blood of bulls or goats, but His own blood. There He remains in the presence of the Father on our behalf, ever making intercession for us. The sacrifice of Christ, then, is an *eternal liturgy*. The offering was slain in the past, but the oblation continues in eternity. In the Eucharist we are connected to our High Priest in His eternal Liturgy. The worship style in Byzantine Churches reflects our faith that we are sacramentally one with the risen Christ in glory. All the senses take part in our worship to image this heavenly Liturgy. We see icons, vestments, candles; we smell incense and perfumes; we taste blessed foods and use physical gestures such as bowing, prostrating



and crossing ourselves repeatedly to express our wonder at this foretaste of the eternal kingdom. The Eucharistic Liturgy is the highpoint of our worship life, but not the extent of it. Weekly and annual cycles of feasts and fasts are foreign to our commercially driven lifestyle, but they remain in Byzantine Churches to anchor us in the kingdom of God. It is not unusual to find vespers served in parishes on Saturday evening or matins on Sunday morning to lead us into the Liturgy. Active parishes open their members to the riches of the liturgical life. We are members of the Body of Christ, the Communion (*koinonia*) of the Holy Spirit.

United in the holy mysteries we are also called to express this communion by the support we give one another. Hospitality has been a hallmark of the Eastern mind with the story of Abraham inspiring all his offspring – Christians, Jews and Muslims – to “entertain angels” in the hope of receiving God. The Trinity Icon depicts the hospitality of Abraham to angels.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

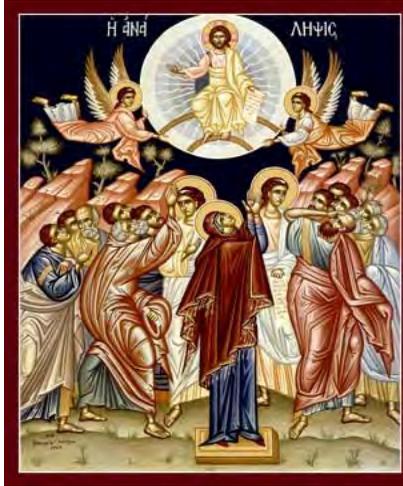
The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 64 No 19 Weekend of the Fathers of the 1st Council May 12-13, 2018

The Spirituality of the Christian East

Our Eastern spirituality is all about directing our efforts to actualizing the potential God has placed within us to be more like Jesus. We have the revelation and the ability to use our free will to live more like our brother Jesus, unconditionally loving others, refraining from judging others, forgiving others and doing unto them as we want to have done unto us. We have the power, as humans, to live in the manner. It is all a matter of our free will.

For example, people only judge others in order to make themselves feel good about themselves. If you feel good about who you are, you do not have to judge others.

Further, if you do not have to be “right” about everything, then it doesn’t matter if others think differently than you. Again, there is no benefit to you as a person if you judge feel you have to judge others. What



Life's Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

does it accomplish? Nothing. It only means that you do not have a true understanding of your own beliefs.

Why do we, at times, not treat others as we want to be treated? Does it really make a person feel better about himself? I hope not since that would indicate a real and true psychological problem. Just because you have not been treated in the

way that you want by others, doesn't mean that you should treat them as they treated you. It only means that you are no better than they are and not at all attuned to the Jesus message.

Our spirituality call us to be sure of what we believe and how we should treat others, regardless of how we are treated. When we live in this manner, then we are living like Jesus. When we grow in our faith and spirituality, then we treat others as we know Jesus would treat them and pay no attention to how they treat us.

Knowledge of the True God Nurtures Us to Eternal Life

Are we saying that knowledge is eternal life? Are we saying that to know the one true and living God will suffice to give us complete security for the future without need of anything else? Then how is "faith apart from works dead?" When we speak of faith, we mean the true knowledge of God and nothing else, since knowledge comes by faith. The prophet Isaiah tells us this: "If you do not believe, neither shall you understand." But he is not talking about a knowledge that consists in barren speculations, which is entirely worthless. For one of the holy disciples said, "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe and shudder." What then shall we say to this? How is it that Christ speaks the truth when He says that eternal life is the knowledge of God the Father, the one true God, and with Him of the Son? I think, indeed, we must answer that the saying of the Savior is completely true. For this knowledge is life, laboring as it were in birth of the whole meaning of the mystery and

granting to us participation in the mystery of the Eucharist, whereby we are joined to the living and life-giving Word. And for this reason, I think, Paul says that the Gentiles are made fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of Christ, inasmuch as they partake in His Blessed Body and Blood. And our members may in this sense be conceived of as being members of Christ. This knowledge, then, which also brings to us the Eucharist by the Spirit, is life. For it dwells in our hearts, reshaping those who receive it into son-ship with Him and molding them into incorruption and piety toward God through life, according to the Gospel. Our Lord Jesus Christ, then, knowing that the knowledge of the one true God brings to us and promotes our union with the blessings of which we have spoken, says that it is eternal life. It is the mother and nurse of eternal life, being in its power and nature pregnant with those things that cause life and lead to life.

St. Cyril of Alexandria