

NATIVITY OF THE FORERUNNER JOHN THE BAPTIST



*Icon of the Nativity of John the Baptist -- June 24*

# REFLECTIONS ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this fifth weekend after Pentecost, our readings are again taken from Paul's Letter to the Romans and St. Matthew's Gospel. We are presented with two interesting readings.

Paul tells us, "For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved".

Think about these words. Paul truly challenges us to think about what we believe. While we may come to church and genuinely participate in the services, we still must truly declare that we believe what that participation means to us. We must ask ourselves what participation in the Divine Liturgy means to us! We must think about what it is that we do when we come to Church!

For example. Do we truly believe that we join with Jesus Christ in offering our lives to the Father in thanksgiving for the gift of life? Do we understand that this is what we do in the Divine Liturgy?

Jesus offered His life back to the Father in thanksgiving for the gift of life. Do we truly join with Him in this offering? This is what the Divine Liturgy, which we use as our weekly service, is all about. We have to ask ourselves whether we truly understand this, believe this and desire to do this. I truly think that it is critical that we come to our weekly worship service with this intent.

Our second reading this weekend



deals with the miracle story of Jesus curing the two men in Gadara who were possessed with demons. I think that the story really deals with our reticence in coming to our grips with giving our whole lives to the pursuit of becoming more like Jesus Christ, which is the goal in this earthly life.

The question is: *Do we realize that that the purpose of earthly existence is to grow spiritually - to become more like Jesus Christ?* If we don't, why not? We have to ask ourselves what the meaning and purpose of this earthly existence is all about. According to the revelations of God, through the Person of Jesus, this earthly life is all about actualizing our potential to become more like Jesus - more like the person God intended us to be when He created us.

Do you believe this? If not, why not? I'm not saying that you have to believe this but, if you don't, you should ask yourself why you don't. As I see life, it is all about spiritual growth - it is all about becoming the person God intended when He created us! This is why we are here!

## SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE EUCHARIST

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As I have probably intimated in all of my reflections of the Holy Eucharist, we should never think about *when* the bread and wine that we bring to our worship is actually transformed into Christ. Further, we should not struggle to see Christ in the bread and wine. We can only believe in His presence as we *eat* and *drink* the food which He said is Him when we repeat what He did. Rather, once the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, we must know and believe we are in His presence.

If we sense that we are in His presence, then we must also realize that He is God's revelation to us about how we must behave in order to be truly "children of God." Christ is the ultimate "human being." His very life reveals to us how we are to live. **DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?**

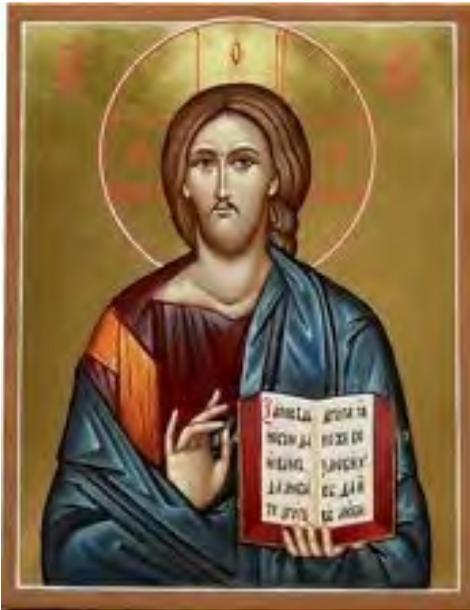
Again, we cannot prove any of this. This is a matter of BELIEF. If I believe that Christ will be present to me when I consume the transformed bread and wine, then He will be present to me. But His presence, it should be noted, is a challenge to personal change and transformation. When I partake of His transformed Body and Blood, I truly admit that He is the Person that I am called to imitate - He is the person after whom I am to model my life. I must, if I truly receive that Body and Blood of Christ, commit myself to personal change. The true fact is



that our religion is focused on achieving our personal transformation and personal change - becoming more like Our Savior Jesus Christ. This is truly why He is called our SAVIOR. His example on how to live will bring about our personal salvation, that is our very personal union with God.

What is salvation? Salvation is coming into true "communion" with our God. This is only achieved, it should be noted, by coming into true communion with others. It is never just one person who receives communion during the Divine Liturgy. It is always others. We must sense our "communion" with them so that we can come into a true communion with our God. It is all about what it means to be a member of the "human family." This is why, also, that a priest in the Eastern Church can never serve the Divine Liturgy alone. There must always be someone else with whom he celebrates. The Eucharist is an expression of our belief in the union of all human beings in God. It expresses the fact that we understand that we all share in God's life.

# ACQUIRING THE MIND OF CHRIST



In acquiring the mind of Christ, it is paramount that the utmost care be taken to preserve the precious and beautiful flowers that have budded forth from the Gospel of Jesus Christ and find their fullest manifestation within the cycle of services in the Church. It is imperative to understand that he who cares for the Liturgy and ministers unto the Lord takes care of the Lord Himself.

It must be stated and also emphasized that our Eastern Christian life is, by definition, a liturgical life. To fail to recognize this is to fail to find the key to the mystery of Christianity. One Professor Constantine Scouteris truly explains this unbreakable

connection between salvation and worship:

In the Tradition of the Eastern Church, doctrine and worship are inseparable. Worship is, in a certain sense doctrinal testimony, reference to the events of Revelation. Thus, “dogmas are not abstract ideas in and for themselves but revealed and saving truths and realities intended to bring mankind into communion with God.” One could say without hesitation that, according to our Eastern Christian understanding, the fullness of theological thought is found in the worship of the Church.

The Liturgy is meant to become our life, and the continual entry into the new life that is granted to us in Christ. The Church’s teachings are inseparable from the Liturgy, and all of her theological definitions that she proclaims (*such as the Creed*) are confirmed by and revealed through the Liturgy. It is primarily through this liturgical life that we begin to enter the corporate dogmatic visionary consciousness of the Church. The Church is, first of all, a worshiping community. Worship comes first and then doctrine and discipline. The Church has not grown out of dogmatic formulas, nor even Holy Scripture, but out of right worship, uniting us into one Spirit in the one Body of Christ.

We must always know and remember that our whole life is to become a Liturgy, an *Anaphora*; a constant offering up of our talents, our time, our hearts and our world to God, together with Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Our Liturgy truly expresses our *union with God*.



# St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

Pancake  
Breakfast



## PARISH ACTIVITY

In my Bulletin on June 10th I incorrectly asked about any interest in a Summer Picnic. I stand corrected since our Parish Council is planning to have a summer

## PANCAKE BREAKFAST

*August 12th*

We haven't had one for a number of years and they felt this would be a good alternative. So save the date and plan on joining other members of the Parish. More information to come.

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## ADULT DISCUSSION GROUP

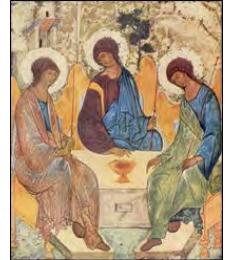
*Sunday, July 1st*

Several weeks ago I passed out two articles which I felt might be of some interest. I would like to schedule the discussion session next week after Liturgy and during part of our Coffee Hour. Len Mier will be back from school then.



## CALLED TO HOLINESS

As I know my readers probably have already surmised, the call to holiness is a call for true communion with God in Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. This tells us that



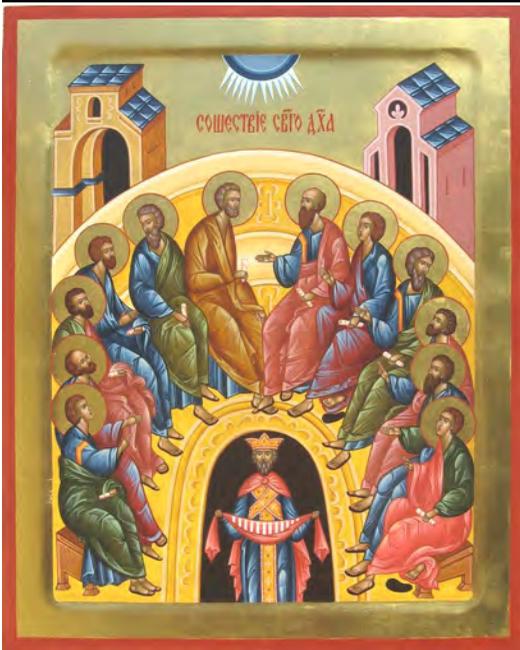
we are called to utilize the power of the Holy Spirit within us to learn how to imitate Jesus in the way that we think and live. This, as I have shared elsewhere, we cannot accomplish by ourselves. It can only be achieved through cooperation with God.

In order to cooperate with God in the process of responding to His call to holiness, we must first develop an awareness of our need to change and then develop a true desire to change. Too frequently we humans don't have sufficient insight to see that we need to change. We can only realize what we need to change through a great deal of self-reflection, examination of our lives and securing honest feedback from others that we trust. Most often we are "blind" to what needs to be changed in our lives in order to be more like Jesus and the person God intended when

*(Continued on page 8)*

*Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle.*

## THE WORLD AS GIFT AND WORD



I realize that this has been one of the more difficult articles to write and understand. I think, especially now in our modern world where humans seem to exploit the earth for their own financial gain, that we need to develop a better and more spiritual understanding of the “world” as God’s gift and Word to us. God speaks to us directly through His gift of the world. The Fathers of the Church speak of the eternal reasons of things contained within the divine reason, that is, in the *Logos* or *Word* of God, and include in their understanding of this term those continuously more sublime meanings hidden within created realities. Moreover, the Fathers

consider that with the help of the supreme Word, these inner principles are grasped by human reason, which lays hold of the reasons of things in the strict sense.

What the Fathers attempted to do through their writings is to give us an insight into the reason God created the world and how creation is meant to help us achieve spiritual growth. Creation has a meaning that is directly connected with human, spiritual growth. I suspect, however, few people ever think about our earth and universe as directly connected with our salvation. The Church Fathers recognized a connection between, on the one hand, the reasons of things and the knowledge of them through the agency of a strictly analytical power of reason, and, on the other hand, the meanings of things and the understanding of these through the agency of a correct judgment that is more direct and intuitive. For even the analytical knowledge of created things opens up new vistas within the discovery of new meanings inherent to these same things. The world thus shows that it truly is an inexhaustible “light”, as is suggested by the Romanian word for “world” (*lume*) in its derivation from the Latin *lumen* (“light”).

So the world itself, if we truly understand its relationship to human salvation, sheds “light” or meaning of the process of human salvation. The world is not here to be consumed by us humans but, rather to help us to spiritually grow.

***God made us caretakes of the world!***

## THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY - WHO IS GOD?

As I shared at the end of the last issue of this article, Jesus gave His disciples two ways to remember him. He gave them the prayer “Our Father”, and then, on the night before he suffered, he asked His disciples to remember Him by gathering together to break bread and share wine, receiving them as His Body and Blood.

This seems very significant for any attempt to develop a Christian understanding of God. Had Jesus presented Himself as a philosopher, then we would naturally have to look to Him for teaching on the nature of God and His relationship to the world, the nature of divine providence and so on. Had Jesus presented himself primarily as a moral teacher, then we would not be surprised if his notion of God turned on how God is a source of moral values, moral commandments and so on. And in the tradition of Western philosophy, going right back to Plato, we can see the way God has been invoked as the first cause, the ultimate explanation of everything, or as One who underwrites our moral values, either by issuing divine commandments for us to observe, or as himself the “Form of the Good”, or as the One who as Creator understands in a fundamental way human nature, so that from that understanding there can be derived a set of moral values, or a natural law.

All this might well be very important, and certainly a great deal of human thought has been devoted to understanding how God is the ultimate meaning of the universe or the ultimate source of moral values. But the ways Jesus wanted his disciples to remember Him seem to suggest a different way of approaching the mystery of God. The Lord’s



Prayer first and foremost teaches us that God is the One to whom we pray; he is not some ultimate principle or final value, but one to whom we can address our prayers, one with whom we can enter into a relationship. We call him ‘Father’; we are his children, truly his sons and daughters.

The Lord’s Prayer is sung at all the services of our Church. It has a central place in the Divine Liturgy: introducing the receiving of Holy Communion in the Body and Blood of Christ, and preceded by the eucharistic prayer, the *anaphora* (‘offering’ prayer) in which we directly address God.

# SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

**Sunday, June 24 - 5th Weekend After Pentecost - Tone 4**

*Birth of John the Baptizer*

**10:00 AM - Special Intention**

## 6th WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - TONE 5

**Monday June 25 - Febronia, Venerable Martyr**

**8:00 AM - Special Intention**

Tuesday June 26 - David of Thessalonica, Venerable

*No Service Schedule*

**Wednesday, June 27 - Sampson, Venerable**

**8:00 AM - Special Intention**

Thursday, June 28 - Translation of relics of Cyrus & John

*No Service Scheduled*

**Friday, June 29 - Peter & Paul, Preeminent Apostles**

**8:00 AM - Special Intention**

Saturday, June 30 - Synaxis of the Twelve Apostles

*No Service Scheduled*

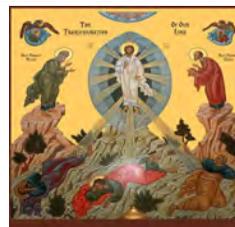
**Sunday, July 1 - 6th Weekend After Pentecost - Tone 5**

**10:00 AM - Special Intention**

*(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)*

when He called us into existence.

The problem all humans face, it seems, is that we don't like change and fear what our lives might be like if we change. I have watched people continue in their suffering and ignorance about their lives because they didn't want to take the actions needed to change. We tend to hang on to old ways of living and thinking and, most of the time, feel that what we have in life is good enough for us. Of course this prevents us from spiritual growth which, according to Jesus, is the main purpose of this earthly existence. There is no one of us who has achieved sufficient spiritual growth that we don't need to work on further growth.



St. Michael the Archangel  
Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church  
6340 Chase Road  
Dearborn, MI 48126

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

Rectory: (313) 582-1424  
Cell: (313) 580-4412  
WRuchgy@gmail.com

### LITURGY SCHEDULE

**Sundays @ 10:00 AM**

Ukrainian & English

**Weekdays @ 8:00 AM**

English

### SACRAMENTS

**Penance**

*By Appointment*

**Baptism & Matrimony**

*In most instances membership  
required for six months*

**Funerals**

*Membership of an immediate  
family member required*

### Parish Life Council

Bob & Corinne Boyko  
734.451.1893

John & Janet Dicky  
313.563.5509

Daria Drobny  
313.791-0292

Robert Krokosky  
248.431.9554

Leo & Mary LaDouceur  
313.278.7378

Gordon Malaniak  
734.564.9817

Leonard Mier  
313.584-6795

Greg & Esther Petrovich  
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter  
313.624.9867

<http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org>

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# UNDERSTANDING OUR UKRAINIAN GREEK-CATHOLIC CHURCH

It is said that Christianity has two “lungs” one Western and the other Eastern, and that both are needed for proper breathing. It is a metaphor put forward by those who long for the re-establishment of unity that was torn asunder in 1054 when the Pope of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople excommunicated each other.

As is well known, one of the triggers for the Great Schism was the Western Church’s addition of the Filioque to the Nicene Creed. This one word signified a different notion of our Triune God, namely that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father *“and from the Son”*, instead of simply *“from the Father”*, as was traditionally stated and continues to be recited to this day during Divine Liturgy. Eastern Christians believe that this denies that the Holy Spirit is consubstantial with the Father.

It is not my purpose in this article to explore the theological complexities of that detail in the Christian Creed or to elaborate on the historical and geopolitical forces that, over the preceding centuries, had built up the pressures that led to the split. However, what is important to underscore here is the fact that this episode in Christian history had monumental and unintended consequences, not only for Christianity but for the way European Civilization and the world at large have developed.



The Western part of Christianity followed a radically different historical experience than its Eastern counterpart. Whereas Western Church became increasingly more involved in the affairs of this world and more rational in its theological formulations on how to know God, the Eastern part of Christianity became more other-worldly and more focused on the inward and mystical experience of Divinity. The Western Church adopted the massive work of Thomas Aquinas, who incorporated into Christian theology the philosophy of Aristotle. This innovation set the foundation for the scientific revolution and the parallel development of capitalism. God was conceived in rational terms, the One who created the universe, governed by rational laws and principles. Therefore, human beings, made in the image of God, are encouraged to apply their God-given reason to understand their world and their Maker. The great monasteries of the West became workshops in studying nature. Western monks studied nature, and in doing so they would come to understand how God governs his Creation.

## THE POWER OF METANOIA (REPENTANCE)

Repentance is not an emotion. But how can we be sure that we are repenting, and that we are not simply indulging in emotion and human sentimentality? Indeed, how can we be sure that we are living and acting in accordance with the will of God?

It is important that we examine more closely the culture of repentance as expressed in the daily life of our Church. We do well to look in particular at the monastic life, at the life as it were of our “specialists” in the ascetic life. For as St. John of the Ladder puts it, “Angels are a light for monks, and the monastic life is a light for all men. Therefore let monks strive to become a good example in everything.”

We Christians, then, must also be prudent enough to learn from the light of the monastic life, recognizing that it is the generator and measure of our own lives in the world. And let us not forget that asceticism - *ascesis* in Greek - understood as “spiritual labor”, refers to monks and others alike, since this is nothing more or less than living according to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

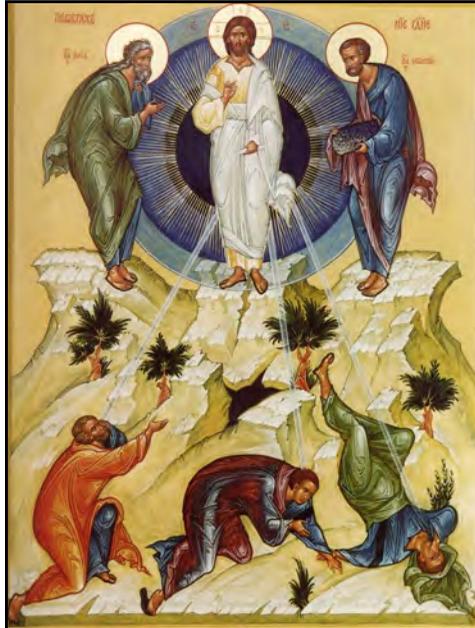
When speaking of repentance or following the teachings of Christ, the Fathers place a special emphasis on the importance of obedience, by which they refer not so much to an outward discipline as to the laying aside - or sacrifice - of one’s own will in order to learn the will of God.

This, as we all know, is by no means an easy task, especially in our self-confident, modern times. Independence is part and parcel of our American way of thinking and living.

The true meaning of repentance is a “changing of our minds and hearts” so that they more

closely represent the mind and heart of Jesus. It means changing the way we think, especially our attitudes about others, and behave. And the bottom line seems to be, learning how to unconditionally love others, regardless of how they treat us.

Prayer and fasting are disciplines that can help in this process. They help us to focus. The first thing to do is to identify at least one thing that you realize you need to change. You can’t change everything all at once. Start out small and work at it.





# THE EASTERN HERALD

## СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.  
Vol. 64 No 25 5th Weekend After Pentecost June 23-24, 2018

### THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

In this article I have been attempting to suggest that God's intimate and active involvement in the lives of His children, that is us, is such that He constantly is calling us to a deeper and more genuine relationship with Him. His intent, in creating us, is that we might be truly joined with Him. He did not just create us and leave us to just flounder about in life. He is here with us and is calling us constantly to join with Him in life.

Consider this. God creates us as human beings. He Himself then becomes a human being to reveal us how to live in order to acquire the fullness of life through the Person of Jesus Christ. Why would He do this? He desires us to become truly spiritual beings who understand and rejoice in our connection with Him. This is what any good Father would do! He then does everything in His power to help us to achieve this deeper union with Him. He comes

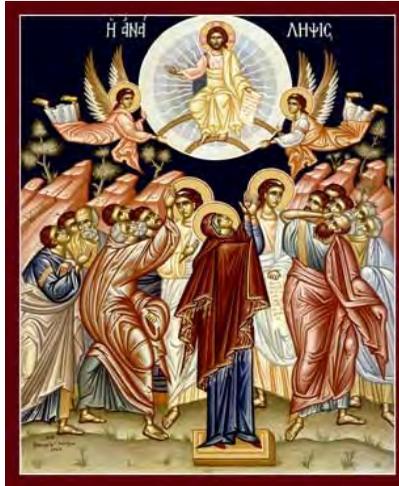
Himself to show us how to achieve this. He endures all the challenges of human life. He reveals to us, through Jesus, that part of the process of growing spiritually is to facing the challenges of human of life with trust

in Him and with a true and real understanding that it is only through challenges that we will change sufficiently to learn how to love others as ourselves - that is to unconditionally love all others as ourselves.

Of course this means that we must learn how to base our reactions to others in accord with our deepest beliefs. We must learn how to base our reactions on others

not on how they treat us but, rather, on how we know God desires us to act. If we truly believe that we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves, then we will do all that we can to base our reactions on others in accord with this belief.

***What our your thoughts?***



*Life's Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father*

### *Sermon by St. Augustine of Hippo*

The Church observes the birth of John as in some way sacred. And, you will not find any other of the great men of old whose birth we celebrate officially. We celebrate John's, as we celebrate Christ's. This point cannot be passed over in silence, and if I may not perhaps be able to explain it in the way that such an important matter deserves, it is still worth thinking about it a little more deeply and fruitfully than usual. John is born of an old woman who is barren; Christ is born of a young woman who is a virgin. That John will be born is not believed, and his father is struck dumb; that Christ will be born is believed, and He is conceived by faith.

John, it seems, has been inserted as a kind of boundary between the two Testaments, the Old and the New. That he is somehow or other a boundary is something that the Lord himself indicates when He says the law and the prophets were until John. So he represents the old and heralds the new. Because he represents the old, he is born of an elderly couple; because he represents the new, he is revealed as a prophet in his

mother's womb.

Finally, he is born, he receives a name, and his father's tongue is loosed. Zachary is struck dumb and loses his voice, until John, the Lord's forerunner, is born and releases his voice for him. What does Zachary's silence mean, but that prophecy was obscure and, before the proclamation of Christ, somehow concealed and shut up? It is released and opened up by his arrival, it becomes clear when the One who was being prophesied is about to come. The releasing of Zachary's voice at the birth of John has the same significance as the tearing of the veil of the Temple at the crucifixion of Christ. If John were meant to proclaim himself, he would not be opening Zachary's mouth. The tongue is released because a voice is being born – for when John was already heralding the Lord, he was asked, who are you and he replied I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. John is the voice, but the Lord in the beginning was the Word. John is a voice for a time, but Christ is the eternal Word from the beginning.