

SUNDAY BEFORE THE EXALTATION
OF THE HOLY CROSS



Icon of the Elevation of the Holy Cross

REFLECTIONS ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this weekend before the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the Church assigns readings from St. Paul's letter to the Galatians and John's Holy Gospel. These are special readings that are related to the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The first, which is taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians, draws upon Paul's understanding of the idea that a life that is lived in according to the message of Christ is a life of *warfare* with unseen powers that are poised to distract us from the primary focus of life, transforming ourselves into the persons God intended when He created us. Paul sees life as a *warfare* between our natural desires and the directives of the Lord. This, of course, is very Semitic. Paul draws on his Jewish background and casts the Christian life as similar to that of Jewish life. It is all about *doing the things* that God has called us to do if we desire to grow in the fullness of life. This is, in many ways, a distortion of the Christian message. Indeed Paul later makes a resounding declaration of the true nature of justification by faith in Christ, which frees the conscience from the Mosaic law as a principle of man's justice before God.

The message from our reading in

John's Gospel says this: *Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that all who believe may have eternal life in him...whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life.*

The meaning of John's words focus not on the Western Christian world's idea that Jesus had to die in order to atone for the sins of mankind but, rather, that by His death Jesus conquered death and has given humanity a true and real insight into how to live this life on earth. In fact John goes on to say: *the light (Jesus) came into the world to show humans how to live and to model the way to live and think in order to grow in the likeness of God.*

We do well to think about the revelation given to us by God through the person of Jesus, the Christ. Jesus gives us insight into the meaning and purpose of this earthly life. The true purpose is to *learn* how to be truly human and how to live if we wish to gain the fullness of life. God knew it was critical, however, that we freely chose to embrace the Jesus way of living. That is why He gave us *free will*. The choice must be ours and we must embrace the idea of personal change in order to become God's children.



THOUGHTS ABOUT THE EUCHARIST

In the last issue of this article, I addressed the issue of the *Kiss of Peace* that was originally in our Liturgy before the recitation of the Creed. I also suggested that in the near future I hope to reintroduce it. As I reflect upon it, I discontinued it because of the various infectious illnesses which it seems plagues our society.

I also indicated that this common action was gradually replaced with an exclamation. As many know, this is why the Roman Catholic Church has introduced it. Of course it appears in a very different place in the Roman Mass and is disconnected from the recitation of the Creed.

The exclamation we have in the Liturgy would not require any explanation, inasmuch as everyone knows that love is the highest Christian commandment, and thus a reminder of it is appropriate. But if so, what does it matter whether this reminder consists in a call to love or in a symbol of love? One may suppose moreover that the disappearance of the action was linked with the growth of the Church, with the appearance of crowded assemblies in huge churches, where no one knew each other and where this rite, from our contemporary point of view, would be simply a formality.

But all this is so only *at first glance*,

when we have not yet considered the genuine and precisely liturgical meaning of these words and actions - and above all the meaning of the very expression "Christian love."

In fact, we have become so accustomed to this expression that it is difficult for us to be struck with the eternal *newness* of these words. And

yet Christ himself pointed out this newness: *A new commandment I give you, that you love one another.*

Even before Christ, the world in fact knew about love, about the value and height of love. Do we not find in the Old Testament the two commandments regarding love for God and love for neighbor which Christ said contain

the entire law and the prophets. In what, then, lies the newness of this commandment, the newness not only at the moment of the pronouncement of these words by the Savior, but for all time, all people - the newness that never ceases to be new?

While I will have more to say about Christian love in the next issue, I would also point out that this expression of love for one another must be real in order for us to profess belief in the *Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Trinity one in substance and undivided*. Our belief becomes real when we dare to love others as ourselves and to love them unconditionally.



ACQUIRING THE MIND OF CHRIST



I will continue in this article presenting the Eastern Christian idea about Christ's actions of death and resurrection. The Western world believes that Christ's death on the Cross was performed to compensate for mankind's sins.

If God then is infinitely offended by our sin and is therefore in need of some infinite "satisfaction," many can rightly (and unfortunately) begin to equate this God with a sadistic image of a father compelled by honor to inflict punishment. Thus God is made subject of justice. By subjecting God to this law of necessity and ascribing to Him human characteristics such as

vengeance and anger, we make it appear that it is God who is in need of healing and not man.

However, God never changes, for it is not God that is at enmity with man; but man who is at enmity with God. The foundation of a proper understanding of salvation is that God does not change: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." Thus the Eastern Church's approach seeks to heal man, and not God, recognizing sin as a refusal of the Love of God, the entrance of death, and the deconstruction of the soul.

The Eastern Church sees man's condition from a medical perspective: an illness of the heart that brings death by being attracted to the things of the world and not building a communion with the One Who is Life. God, however, had to create man in this condition so that man could "freely" and "voluntarily" turn himself to God. Otherwise man would be a slave or a robot, unable to freely return God's love and seek to become, with God's help, the person God intended when He created man.

Holistic healing is sought by the pursuit of building this communion with God. The believer conquers death through a real participation in those rituals that bring life by bringing a new perception of the mysteries of life.

Conversely, the Anselmian understanding essentially declares man "not guilty," and leaves him, unfortunately, unhealed and unchanged. This distorts the real message of Christian salvation: to "be partakers of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4).

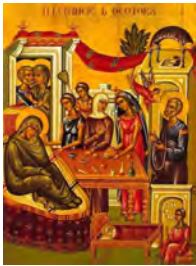
Does this give you a new perspective on religion?



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

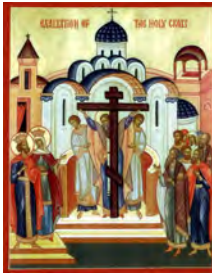
NATIVITY OF MARY



We include in our weekend celebration the Nativity of Mary, the Mother of God. This feast was celebrated on September 8th. The feast of Mary's birth is the first major feast of

the new Church Year,

The second major feast that marks the beginning of the new Church Year is the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. These two feasts indicate that our entire Church Year is all about the meaning of birth and death - about human life. The Church has been given to us by God to help us understand life and death and to inspire in us the hope of "eternal life" - immortality.



As we celebrate these feasts, think about the message they have for you and your life!

Happiness is found when you stop comparing yourself to other people

CALLED TO HOLINESS

I have been sharing ideas about the Holy Moments we are called to create during this life - this life wherein God calls us to holiness. It may be helpful to have



litmus test questions, such as *Will this, the implementation of Holy Moments in my life, help me become a-better-version-of-myself?* Will this help me grow in character and virtue? Does this contradict Jesus' teachings? Will this action bring harm to another person? Will this help or prevent others from becoming a-better-version-of-themselves? And if we find ourselves confused, it is best to turn that confusion or lack of clarity into an opportunity for prayer, by turning to God in our hearts and asking, "Lord, what is it that you want most for me and from me in this moment?"

It is also important to note that we need God's grace to create Holy Moments. We can't do this alone. If you have been following my writings you realize that the Eastern Church sees our salvation as a "cooperative" action between us and God. It is not something we can do *(Continued on page 8)*

MAN, THE TARGET OF GOD



I thought that I would introduce a different idea in this article. I am reading a book by Archimandrite Zachnarias called Man, the Target of God. I feel that it has much to help us understand our faith. I sort of exhausted my thoughts on the last topic that was this article.

This book states in the very beginning that a man who has fully realized or manifested the principle of the hypostasis has six major characteristics. I'm sure by now that my readers understand the word "hypostasis" (i.e., the underlying or essential part of anything as distinguished from attributes, substance, essence, or essential principle - I know that you have to think about this - the essential part of anything) has six major characteristics.

The first characteristic is that

He is not a 'man without instruction' but that he is 'taught by God.' This means that he has gone through all the three stages of spiritual life. In the first stage, he received the first grace of his calling to be a disciple of the one and unique Master, Christ. In the second stage, he was confronted with the trial of the withdrawal of this grace and waged titanic warfare in order to repossess it., Finally in the third stage, the gift of the Holy Spirit which in the beginning was not his own, an 'unlawful' treasure, become legitimately his own, so that he might claim it as his inheritance for ever. The man who has gone 'lawfully' through all the phenomena of spiritual life and convinced God of his fidelity and love, become a truly spiritual man, as St. Paul says in the first epistle to the Corinthians. He is received as a son, and thereafter he is able to judge all the phenomena of spiritual life, and discerning the thoughts of the enemy from the thoughts of God. Nothing can surprise him in the spiritual world. Such a man cannot be judged by anybody for he has become as 'the wind that bloweth where it listeth.'

This all highlights that our spiritual growth goes through certain stages. It takes work! It takes determination! It takes intention! The questions we must ask ourselves are: *Do I really understand that I must grow and change? Do I really want to grow and change? Do I really sense that the purpose of life is to grow and change?*

What do you understand as the meaning and purpose of life? Why are you how? What are you supposed to do?

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY - WHO IS GOD?

In this article I have been presenting ideas about how the Church gradually grew to come to the notion that God is truly Three-In-One. It had to maintain the idea of monotheism, that God is One, and yet it saw God as working in three different ways and, especially that God had embrace human nature in the Person of Jesus, the Son. Gradually the Church developed the terminology in which to express her understanding of God the Holy Trinity, one God in three Persons. This, of course, is a mystery and yet it truly enhances our idea about God. In order to achieve clarity, the Church came to adopt a technical language. We need to be clear about what kind of clarity was sought. At no point did the Church seek to solve the mystery of the Trinity: that was an accusation often made, whether justly or not, against the heretics, the proponents of positions rejected by the Church. We speak of “definitions” of the faith, most notably, in relation to Christology, of the “Chalcedonian Definition’ issued by the Ecumenical Council of 451. “Definition’, in English, suggests some precise description, an account of what something really is. But the etymological origins of the word rather suggest establishing a boundary; indeed, the Greek word used by the Council - *horos* - simply means ‘a boundary’. The Chalcedonian ‘Definition’, then, should be understood not as defining precisely how Christ is both God and man and yet one, but rather laying down a boundary, beyond which is heresy. For, although the mysteries of the faith are beyond understanding, they are not beyond *misunderstanding*, and the conciliar definition are intended to prevent such misunderstanding.

The Eastern HERALD



The first technical term to be introduced was the word, *homoousios*, *consubstantial*: it was affirmed of the Son in the creed of the Council of Nicaea, the First Ecumenical Council (CE 325), that He is *homoousios*, consubstantial, with the Father, meaning that he derives his very being from the Father and is equal to Him, not some sort of subordinate. Later in the century, it was made clear that the Holy Spirit, too, is consubstantial with the Father. This entailed the assertion that there was only one divine substance or essence, or *ousia*, and that this expresses the unity of the Godhead. This is how we understand our God.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

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

Sunday, September 9 - 16th Sunday after Pentecost - Tone 7

Parish Celebration of the Nativity of the Mother of God

10:00 AM + Special Intention

17th WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - TONE 8

Monday, September 10 - Menodora & Others, Martyrs

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Tuesday, September 11 - Theodore, Venerable

No service scheduled

Wednesday, September 12 - Automosous , Bishop-Martyr

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Thursday, September 13 - Dedication: Church of the Resurrection

No service scheduled

Friday, September 14 - Exaltation of the Holy Cross

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday, September 15 - Saturday after the Exaltation

No service scheduled

Sunday, September 16 - 17th after the Exaltation - Tone 8

Parish Celebration of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

10:00 AM + Special Intention

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

on our own. This is God's loving gift to us. Although He has called us from our birth to grow and become truly the persons we have been created to be, He also loves us and, therefore, has made sure that He gives us help and support to us. Our God truly wants us to succeed in becoming His children and has spared nothing in order to extend His help to us. He came in the Person of Jesus to show us how to live. He implanted His Spirit within us to help us achieve the personal change and real transformation that is needed. He is truly a loving Father that only wants us to succeed.



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

MORE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

As I shared in the last issue of this article, the *hypostatic union* implies that the Logos (i.e., Christ) made humanity *his own* in its totality. The Second Person of the Trinity was indeed the subject, or agent, of the *human* experiences, or acts, of Jesus. The controversy between Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius concerning the term *Theotokos* (i.e., *Mother of God*), applied to the Virgin Mary, concerned essentially this very problem. Was there, in Jesus, a human person whose mother could have been Mary? Cyril's answer - emphatically negative - was, in fact, a Christological option of great importance. In Christ, there was only one Son, the Son of God, and Mary could not have been the Mother of anyone else. She was, therefore, indeed the "Mother of God." Exactly the same problem arose in connection with the death of Christ: impassibility and immortality were indeed characteristic of the divine nature. How, then, asked the theologians of Antioch, could the Son of God *die*? Obviously, the "subject" of Christ's death was only His humanity. Against this point of view, and following Cyril, the Fifth Council 553 affirms: *if anyone does not confess*



that our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified in the flesh is true God and the Lord of Glory and one of the Holy Trinity, let him be anathema. This conciliar text, which paraphrases First Corinthians (i.e., 2:8 - *If they had understood, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory*), inspired the hymn "The Only-Begotten Son," attributed to Emperor Justinian and sung at every Byzantine Liturgy - One of the Holy Trinity you were crucified for us.

Theopaschism - the acceptance of formulae which affirm that the "Son of God died in the flesh" - illustrates how distinct the concepts of "hypostasis" and "nature" or "essence" really are. The distinction is stressed by one of the main Chalcedonian theologians of the age of Justinian, Leontius of Jerusalem. He wrote: *The Logos is said to have suffered according to the hypostasis, for within His hypostasis He assumed a possible [human] essence besides His own impassible essence, and what can be asserted of the [human] essence can be asserted of the hypostasis.*

In the next issue I shall further explain what Leontius meant by his statement. As you can tell, this is a complicated idea.

UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY GOSPELS

In this article I would continue presenting information on the Gospel of Matthew. As I shared in the last issue, Matthew is a Jewish Gospel but it is also a Gospel of the Church. Matthew has not the Pauline idea of the body or the Johannine idea of the vine, but Jesus is present where two or three assemble in his name, and he remains with the disciples and the Church until the end of time. Matthew's reign is universal. The unbelief of the Jew has opened the Gentile world for the proclamation of the Gospel. The Gentiles are not evangelized simply because of the defect of Jewish faith. Matthew understands that Israel should have proclaimed its Messiah to the world, but has refused to accept him. For the Church is the new Israel, and because the Church alone believes in Jesus Messiah it is the only true Israel. The "fulfillment" of Israel must be realized in the Gentile world without the people of Israel.

Of course this also means that the true Messiah is the Messiah of all humankind, not just the Chosen People. All humanity needed to hear God's revelation through Jesus. It's a revelation about how to live this human life on earth.

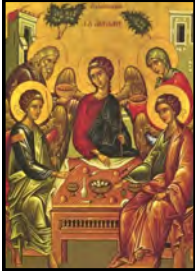
But the reign of God is not identified with the Church in such a

way that the identification is total. The reign of God is fulfilled only in an eschatological (i.e., *hopefully by now my readers understand this word to be the part of theology concerned with death and the final destiny of the soul and of humankind*) sense. Here Matthew does not differ from Mark. Matthew's contribution is the eschatological thrust of the Christian community. The eschatological event begins with the Church. And indeed the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews initiates the eschatological mystery; this rejection elicits the judgment which, in Matthew 24, is merged with the eschatological judgment (i.e., *how did you treat other people*).

Since Jesus is the Messiah of the Old Testament (OT), Matthew finds it necessary to state the position of Jesus toward the Law, the basis of Judaism in New Testament (NT) times. This position is expressed in a classic phrase: *Jesus did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it*. To fulfill the law means to bring it to the fullness of which it is a development phase. The reign - and Jesus himself is identified with the reign - is this full reality. Jesus is Lord of the Law; He does not annul it any more than mature manhood annuls childhood, but the "yoke" of the reign removes the yoke of the Law.

Ask yourself: What is the Law of Christ?





THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
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THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

At the core of Eastern Spirituality is the fundamental belief that if we wish to be eternally with Christ, we must make every effort to become like Him. This process of becoming Christlike, this purification - this true personal, individual change or personal transformation always invariably involves repentance, which is a fundamental change in our whole way of life, in our *mode of being*.

Our reactions, then, in any and every circumstance should be Christlike. I must continuously and also frequently ask myself, am I acting as Christ would act? This means also challenging the way I think. Do I have thoughts about the value and worth of other? If I do, I must ask, is this how Jesus would think?

Each time we find ourselves in difficult circumstances; each time that we are tempted to think or act according to the way of the world, and

every time that we resist this impulse for the love of Christ, and ask for His help and mercy, we are indeed taking up our cross, we are indeed striving to change our way of life in accordance with Christ's example and commandments, we are indeed truly beginning to repent.

I would guess that in our present modern society, we have to, in particular, guard the way that we think. There is so much negativity in our present society about minorities or others who are felt to be a threat to our culture, for example, the many immigrants trying to

find shelter in our county, that it is easy to negatively think about them. My father was an immigrant and I suspect that many of my readers have had a family that were immigrants. Think first how Jesus would think about immigrants before you allow your mind to be clouded!



Life's Journey Is an Ascension to

The Cross Raised for All the World to See

The cross is raised and appears above the earth, which until recently malice had kept hidden. It is raised, not to receive glory (for with Christ nailed to it what greater glory could it have?) but to give glory to God who is worshiped on it and proclaimed by it.

It is not surprising that the church rejoices in the cross of Christ and robes herself in festal clothes, revealing her bridal beauty as she honors this day. Nor is it surprising that this great throng of people has gathered together today to see the cross exposed aloft and to worship Christ whom they see raised upon it. For the cross is exposed in order to be raised and is raised to be exposed.

What cross? The cross, which a little while ago was hidden in a place called "The Skull" but now is everywhere adored. This is what we rejoice over today; this is what we celebrate; this is the point of the present feast; this is the manifestation of the mystery.

For this hidden and life-giving cross had to be exposed, set on high like a city on a hill or a lamp on a stand, for all the world to see.

Saint Andrew of Crete