

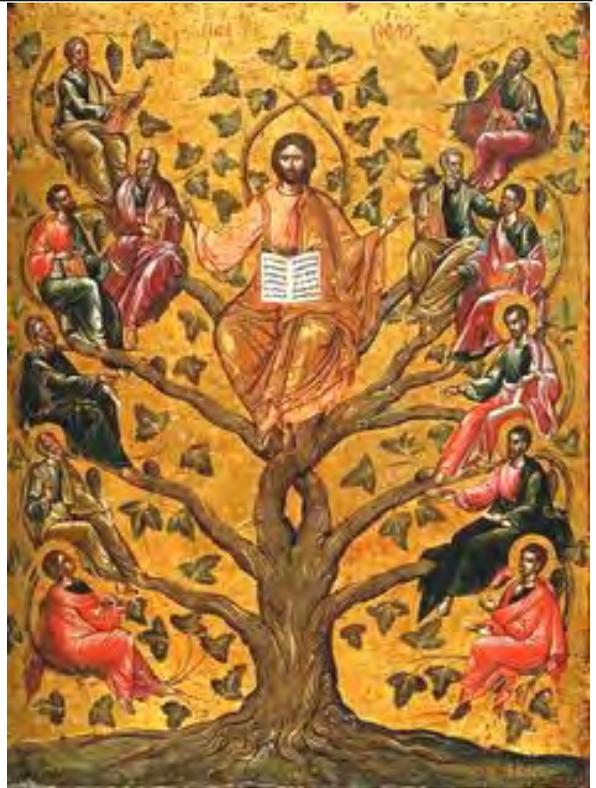
SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
SUNDAY OF THE ANCESTORS



Icon of the Holy Ancestors

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this weekend before the feast of the Nativity of Jesus Christ, the Church remembers His ANCESTORS. The Gospel we hear consists of a supposed genealogy of Jesus and the first proclamation of His birth. Looking closer at this genealogy, one would think that Jesus would have come from a background that consisted, if not of royalty, then at least of saintly and holy persons. But what do we find in His family tree? We find sinners like ourselves. We find people who even when blessed by God, fell in times of weakness like King David. We find sinners of all kinds! An invented family tree would have been different. But yet again we see the truthfulness of the Gospel writers. They don't lie about Jesus' ancestry, but tell it like it is. It was from this family tree that the holiest person to walk the earth came from. He was a descendent of sinful humanity. And what this means for us is that if Jesus is to be born in your soul, if He is to become a part of our daily lives and not just someone we are acquainted with only on Sunday mornings, He is to be born into our souls in spite of the accumulation of our sins. Because He came from this family tree full of sinners we find we have something in common with Him. He is not a Creator who separates Himself from us. His family tree is our family tree. He is one of us. He has compassion for sinners who are part of His own family. And yet He rises



above His ancestry.

All through human history we humans seem to have searched for the meaning and purpose of life. Why? Because life can be very confusing and difficult to understand. Our Church gives us some insight into life and then magnificently declares that God is with us through all the struggles and challenges of this life. He is not testing us to see if we love Him. He is going through life with us, encouraging us always by expressing His love for us.

Let us truly prepare our hearts, minds and lives for a true celebration of God's presence with us. Let us say:

God is truly with us! Glorify Him!

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THIS WEEKEND'S COMMEMORATION

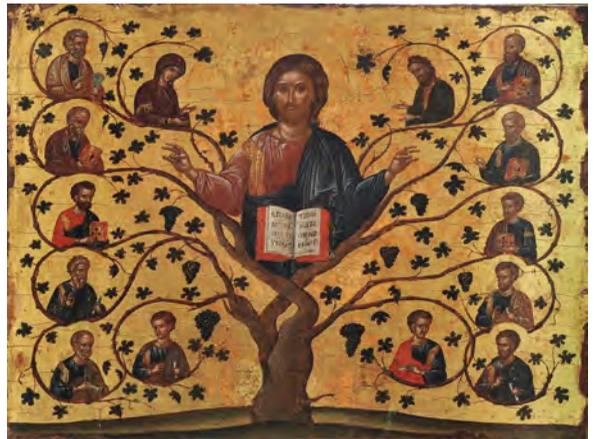
THE HOLY ANCESTORS OF CHRIST

On the weekend immediately before the Feast of the Nativity of Jesus, the Church remembers His ANCESTORS. This is an extension of the celebration from last weekend which honored the Fore-Fathers of Jesus. On this weekend we hear Matthew's presentation of the supposed "genealogy" of Jesus. It relates the ancestors of Christ from Abraham to Joseph the Betrothed. Why, some might ask, did St. Matthew include this in his Gospel and why does our Church read this right before the Feast of Christmas. Matthew and Luke both have accounts of the conception and birth of Jesus and of some incidents that followed His birth. Neither Mark nor John touch upon this period of the life of Jesus.

The genealogies of Jesus found in both Matthew and Luke are not parallel, nor are there parallels elsewhere in their Gospels. It is difficult to reconcile some of the details in the accounts of Matthew and Luke.

The purpose of the genealogy is to show that Jesus is the Messiah, the term of the history of salvation that was begun with the promises of Abraham. Matthew here takes the view of the "E" source of the Pentateuch, which also begins with Abraham.

The genealogy is deliberately compiled in 3 sets of 14 names; 14 is a multiple of 7. It is divided at two critical points of Israelite history, the



foundation of the monarchy of David and the collapse of the monarchy of Judah in the Babylonian conquest of 587 BCE. The artificiality of the numbers is maintained by the omission of the names of Ahaziah, Jehoash, and Amaziah between Jehoram and Uzziah. The queen Athaliah was regarded as a usurper, and she would not have figured in the genealogy in any case. Matthew follows the line of the kings of Judah; Luke follows a cognate line. Matthew's genealogy up to Zerubbabel could be formed by copying from a text of Old Testament books. For the rest of the genealogy, there is no documentary source with which we can compare it.

Four women appear in the genealogy: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. No principle governs their inclusion. Tamar deceived her father-in-law Judah into an incestuous union. Rahab in folklore was the prostitute of Jericho

(Continued on page 10)

ACQUIRING THE MIND OF CHRIST

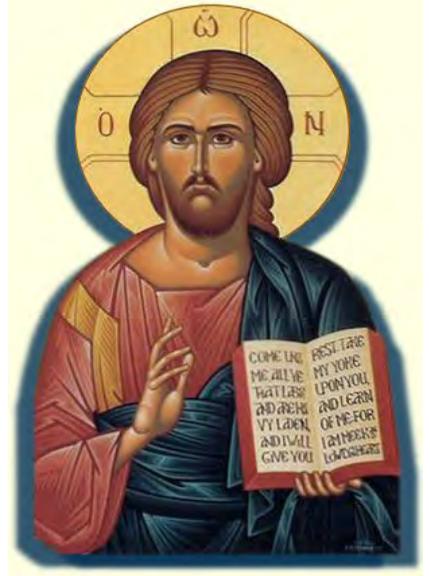
It dawned on me when deciding to write this article, that the one way that we can acquire the mind of Christ is by truly reflecting upon what and how He behaved. By the way, when I say acquiring the mind of Christ I'm also saying acquiring the mind of God.

Think about this. This is our faith. We believe that God decided from all eternity that He would become a part of His creation in the persons of human beings. He decided this because He knew that life, as He created it, would be truly challenging and difficult. It had to be since He also shared "FREE WILL" with humans. This meant that they would have to figure out how to live in order to grow into the persons that He intended when He created them. Some, He knew, would fail. Others, He knew, would truly succeed if He gave them a model. The model He gave us was Himself in Human Form in the Person of Jesus Christ.

First and foremost He came into a human family that was not perfect. His ancestors, as I shared in another article in this Bulletin, were not perfect. They, like us, were searching for the truth and the meaning of life. So He did not judge His ancestors but, rather, learned from them. He picked what was best in them, namely their commitment to *waiting for God's Promise* even though their interpretation of His Promise was misguided. They kept God in the forefront of their minds.

So did Jesus! This He probably inherited from His earthly mother, father and grand parents (*I say this because His Divinity did not dictate to His humanity, telling Him what human life was all about*).

Jesus discovered, as did many others, that how you treat others really does influence your life. He learned that to unconditionally love



others brings about real changes in yourself. He saw how His earthly parents dealt with others and how their faith in a loving God sustained them. He then lived like they did.

We sometimes diminish the true love of God by thinking that Jesus knew all of these things from birth because He was also God. This diminishes the great love of God for us. He chose to go through the some processes as we do during our earthly existence so that He might truly be a model for us. What great love our God has for us.

May you, my readers, come to know God's love for you,



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

CHRISTMAS FOOD DRIVE



As a Christmas Outreach effort, we are collecting “dry food products” to be distributed to the poor. There will be a big box in the vestibule to receive your donations.

CHRISTMAS SERVICE SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve - December 24th

10:00 PM

Christmas Day - December 25th

10:00 AM

The two days after Christmas are special.

Divine Liturgy at 8:00 AM

OUR CONDOLENCES

I would, on behalf of myself and our entire Parish Family, express sincerest condolences to

CHRISTINE SOWINSKI and FAMILY

at the sudden and untimely death of

ROBERT SOWINSKI

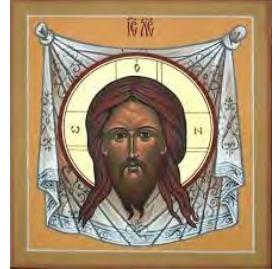
Вічна пам'ять

Eternal Memory

***Christmas is joy, religious
joy, an inner joy of light
and peace***

CALLED TO HOLINESS

As I thought about this article and the season of Christmas and Theophany, I came to a deep and real realization that the call to holiness is also a call to dare



to believe that what our Church teaches is true. The truths that we profess as a Church are not unchallenging and truly simple. Think about it. We are called to believe that our God is **THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD**. We are called to believe that our God loves His creation so much that He became a part of His own creation, in the Person of Jesus, so that we might understand how to live in order to gain the fullness of life.

The other major religions of the world don't offer these types of beliefs. While they offer many beliefs that can help their members to grow, their beliefs don't suggest that God is not only our Creator but He is part of us by sharing His life and Spirit with us. Think about that. Our beliefs suggest that we are not just objects of His creation but, rather His children in a real and true sense of the word. He calls us to actualize the potential *(Continued on page 8)*

ST. PHILIP'S FAST PRAYERS - CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23RD

Today, Heavenly Father, the Church calls me to remember the Ten Holy Martyrs of Crete. They were martyred for piety's sake and their belief in Your incarnation as a human being in the Person of Jesus, the Christ. Let me, together with the Church, honor Crete, that land most marvelous, which sprouted forth these ten flowers revered by all -these goodly pearls of Christ our God - these ten holy Martyrs. Although they were but ten, these most blessed men put to shame the ten thousand armored host of the wicked emperor Decius, who attempted to stamp out belief in Your Son Jesus. Help me, Heavenly Father, to gain true strength of faith by remembering their courageous lives. I make this prayer to You, my God, Who I believe to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN**

MONDAY, DECEMBER 24th

On this day, Heavenly Father, the Virgin comes to the cave to give birth to God the Word, Who was before all the ages. O earth and all creation dance with me out of joy on hearing the gladsome tidings. With the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him Who is willing to be gazed on as a young Child Who before the ages is God. Help me Father, to truly celebrate this wondrous feast. It tells me of Your wondrous love for me and reveals to me that You, through the Person of Your Son, shares human life with me so that I might come to know how to live and bring glory to You and save my soul. I make this prayer to You, my God, Who I believe to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN**

HOLY SUPPER

Many of the customs and traditions that are a part of our religion, deal with food and the sharing of food. For example, our preparation for major feasts always



involves fasting or abstaining from certain foods. Our celebrations of these feasts also include the eating of the foods that we fasted from in preparation for a feast (*Don't eat certain foods on a feast because you think that is very traditional. Eat the foods that you abstained from eating during the fast. That makes more sense*). Again our religion is reasonable.

If you are unable to have a Holy Supper on Christmas Eve, which is typically made without meat or dairy products, then make the Christmas Day meal special. Serve something which is special so that the day then becomes special.

Traditionally, the Christmas meal has (1) one place setting at the table for the deceased; (2) food is shared with any pets; (3) the Gospel story of the Birth of Christ is read before the meal; and (4) you sing a Christmas Carol before the meal. As in all celebratory meals, the head of the house picks one thing that is then shared by him/her to all those at table. This just makes the meal very special and also create some special customs of your own!

METANOIA - A PATH TO SPIRITUAL CHANGE AND GROWTH

On January 6th we will celebrate one of the great “manifestations” of God to the world, namely His Baptism by John the Baptizer. This is an important feast because it presents, whether we are aware of it or not, the goal of human life, namely personal change of mind and heart or METANOIA/REPENTANCE.

That we are all in need of personal change or repentance is beyond dispute, as this is clearly indicated in the Gospel of Matthew (3:2) wherein he quotes the very first words preached by both John the Baptizer and Jesus Christ: *Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Also at the end of Luke’s Gospel (24:47) Jesus commissions His disciples telling them that: *repentance and remission of sins be preached in his name among all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.*

So the question that I would like to propose at the outset of my reflection on this fundamentally crucial theme is this: What is repentance and how does it being about our *personal renewal, spiritual growth and change?*

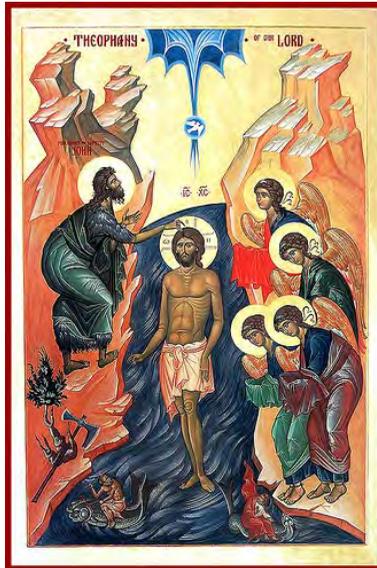
Repentance, says St. John of the Ladder (I’m sure everyone knows about him since I shared his 30 steps to heaven some time ago in this same Bulletin), *is the renewal of Baptism.* We know from Scripture and our life in

the Church that Baptism means dying to the old person and being raised together with Christ in newness of life. Paul wrote this: *Know you that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?*

So if, as St. John of the Ladder teaches us, repentance is the renewal of baptism, then it too must signify the renewal of the very same death and resurrection in Christ that we receive at baptism. But what exactly is this kind of death, and what is this kind of resurrection? A short answer, which is found in St Paul’s Letter to the Romans is: *that death which sets us free from sin, for he that is dead is freed from sin.*

In practical terms, however, how do we die to sin? This is what I how to be reflecting on during the coming weeks. We know that Christ said this: *If any person will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

What, I would ask you, do these words really mean? How do I deny myself and what is my cross? It is my sincerest hope that you, my readers, are already thinking of answers to these simple, but truly challenging questions. ***More to come!***



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, December 23 - Sunday of the Ancestors - Tone 6
10:00 AM + Special Intention

32nd WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - TONE 7

Monday, December 24 - Christmas Eve
10:00 PM - Special Intention

Tuesday, December 25 - Christmas Day
10:00 AM - Special Intention

Wednesday, December 26 - Synaxis of the Mother of God
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Thursday, December 27 - Stephen, First Martyr
8:00 AM - Special Intention

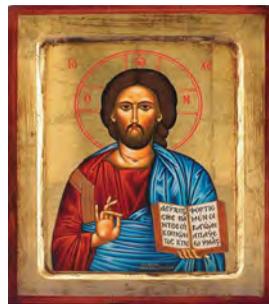
Friday, December 28 - 20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia
No service scheduled

Saturday, December 29 - Holy Innocents, Martyrs
No service scheduled

Sunday, December 30 - Sunday After Christmas - Tone 7
10:00 AM + Special Intention

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)
He has infused within us to become more like Him. As SS. Peter and Athanasius said: *God became man in order for man to become God.* Truly this is a most profound thought and forms the basis of our Eastern Spirituality.

When you think about it, it makes absolute sense. We believe, as did Judaism, that we are created in His image and unto His likeness. Christianity, because of our belief about Jesus, move one step closer to this reality by also believing that He has given us the potential, since He has given us free will, to free work to become more like Him as expressed in the human person, Jesus Christ. I don't know about you but I find this belief truly wonderful.

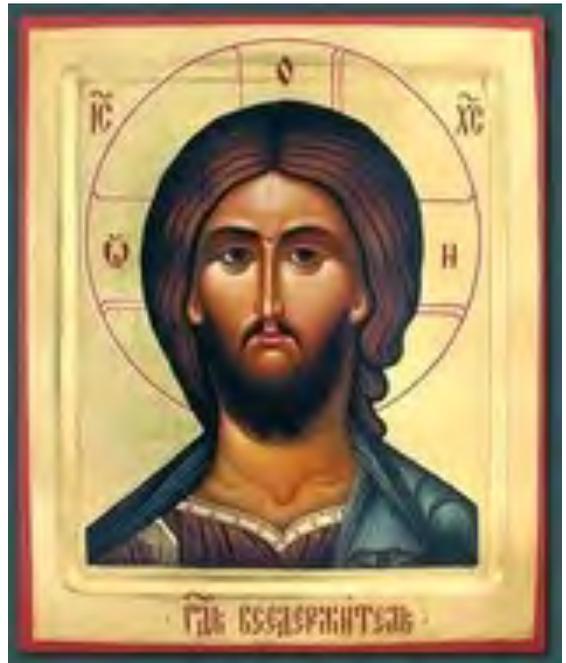


<http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org>
[facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn)

MORE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

One of the big questions raised when the Church wrestled with its understanding of WHO JESUS IS, was How could the uncreated God be juxtaposed immediately with created humanity? The first attempts to articulate this argued that God could not unite Himself to a complete humanity - and that this was not necessary, for Christ had only to be human enough for God to make contact with humans. The most famous theologian to think like this was a friend of Athanasius and his supporter in the fight against what they call Arianism, which did not end with the Council of Nicaea in 325 but lasted in one form or another for the next 50 years. His name was Apollinaris and he was the bishop of Laodicea, a coastal town in Syria. He maintained that Christ could not have a human soul, or at least not a human mind; there could not be two centers of activity in Christ - one divine, one human - for this would destroy the unity of Christ, nor was it necessary, for all that was needed in the Incarnation was to being the power of the divine into contact with frail humanity. If Christ's human mind could make up its own mind, as it were, then our salvation would be jeopardized.

This heresy, called Apollinarianism, was countered not least by St. Gregory of Nazianzos, later called 'the Theologian,' who argued that if the



Word of God did not assume a human mind, then the human mind would not have been healed, but that it was precisely the human mind and will that stood in need of healing. As he put it: 'the unassumed is the unhealed'. At the Ecumenical Council held at Constantinople in 381, Apollinarianism was condemned as a heresy. Indeed, at that council an attempt was made to define the lineaments of True and Genuine Christianity, and measures set up to see that this orthodoxy was enforced throughout the Empire.

Coming to know Who Jesus Is took many years for the Church. Why? Because the idea that an infinite God could also become a finite human is beyond our comprehension. But for God all things are possible!

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THIS WEEKEND'S COMMEMORATION

(Continued from page 3 - Weekend of the Ancestors)

Ruth, the heroine of the Book of Ruth, was a Moabite who joined the Israelite community. Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah and the partner of David's adultery. The only common element is that they were foreigners.

The number 14 in the third group can be maintained only by including Mary or by counting Jesus and Christ as two. It is possible that a name was omitted in the early transmission of the text. One could explain the inclusion of Mary because of the virgin birth, clearly declared in the passage that follows. If Jesus and Christ are counted as two, the duality could be understood as referring to his nativity in the flesh and to his Second coming. Such an eschatological allusion is common in Matthew.

The reconciliation of the divergent genealogies of Matthew and Luke already was a celebrated problem in patristic times. Reconciliation assumes that both genealogies are compiled from reliable records. It is known that genealogies were kept in the post-exilic Jewish community, but this does not prove that genealogies were available to Matthew and Luke. It is much simpler to suppose that each genealogy was compiled artificially where the biblical record failed or where Luke, for reasons of his own, chose not to follow the line of the kings of Judah.

So given all of this, why do we relate this genealogy before the Feast of Jesus' birth? It can be said that the reason our Church does this is to stress the FULL HUMANITY of Jesus Christ. Jesus did not just possess human nature but he had blood relatives and that He came from a long family line. One of the shortcomings of modern culture is the tendency to leave the past behind and focus on the now. This has resulted in people feeling rootless and incomplete.



because they are a part of us. To remember our family and our family roots is to affirm our humanity; likewise, to overlook our family connections is to truly diminish our humanity. To remember is an act of love and faithfulness. We all came from somewhere. Our family heritage is a source of blessing and sometimes a source of pain. As Christians we have both a biological and a spiritual family lineage. Salvation in Christ extends to both family lines.

Matthew and Luke wanted their readers to know that Jesus was real and had a real family.

Think about this!



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 64 No 51 Weekend Before Christmas December 22-23 2018

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

The spirituality of the Christian East is centered around one key idea: that is to activate, with the help of God's grace, the potential we have been given by God to grow in our likeness of Jesus, God's human form. If we are focused on this, then we don't have to worry about keeping rules and regulations.

Of course this does require that we have a clear understanding and knowledge of what Jesus was/is like. This means that we have to explore how He thought and acted and then make every effort to imitate Him. To grow in His likeness we have to truly know what He was like. Although we may not want to admit that we know what He was like because we then have to change, it is critical that we make an honest and real assessment of Him and His way of living.

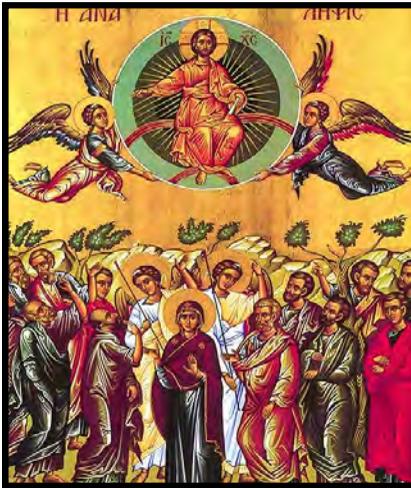
I'm sure that if I pressed anyone who had even the slightest knowledge

about Jesus they would be able to tell me what He was like.

He truly was a person who had the courage to unconditionally love and forgive others. He had the humility to extend Himself to help others without any thought of being thanked. He always saw the good in others and was truly an empathetic person. And, He lived this way not because He was God but because He wanted to be His Father's Son and truly embraced what His religion taught Him. He understood quite

clearly that "how you treat others" speaks to how you love God.

I think we humans frequently make things much more complex than they are because then we have an excuse not to change - not to grow in our likeness of Jesus. We want to believe that Jesus lived the way that He did because He was God and not because He loved God.



Life's Journey Is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

The Story of the Origin of Jesus Christ, Son of David, and the Rest of the Names

Matthew's genealogy is extraordinarily comprehensive in his theology of the roots of Jesus' story in the Old Testament. But that is only one part of the story of Jesus Christ. The story has a sequence as well; and the continuing sequence is what makes the genealogy "good news" for Matthew's audience and for us. Human being have been empowered to preserve, proclaim, and convey the salvation brought by Jesus Christ throughout history. The God who wrote the beginnings with crooked lines also writes the sequence with crooked lines, and some of those lines are our own lives and witness.

A God who did not hesitate to use the scheming as well as the noble, the impure as well as the pure, men to whom the world hearkened and women upon whom the world frowned - this God continues to work through the same melange. If it was a challenge to recognize in the last part of

Matthew's genealogy that totally unknown people were part of the story of Jesus Christ, it may be a greater challenge to recognize that the unknown characters of today are an essential part of the sequence. The proclamation of that genealogy in the Advent liturgy is designed to give us hope about our destiny and our importance.

By stressing the all-powerful grace of God, the genealogy presents its greatest challenge to those who will accept only an idealized Jesus Christ whose story they would write only with straight lines and whose portrait they would paint only in pastel colors. If we look at the whole story and the total picture, the Gospels teach us that Jesus' ministry was not thus; the history of the church teaches us that the sequence as not thus. God's grace can work even with people like us.

Father Raymond E. Brown, S.S.