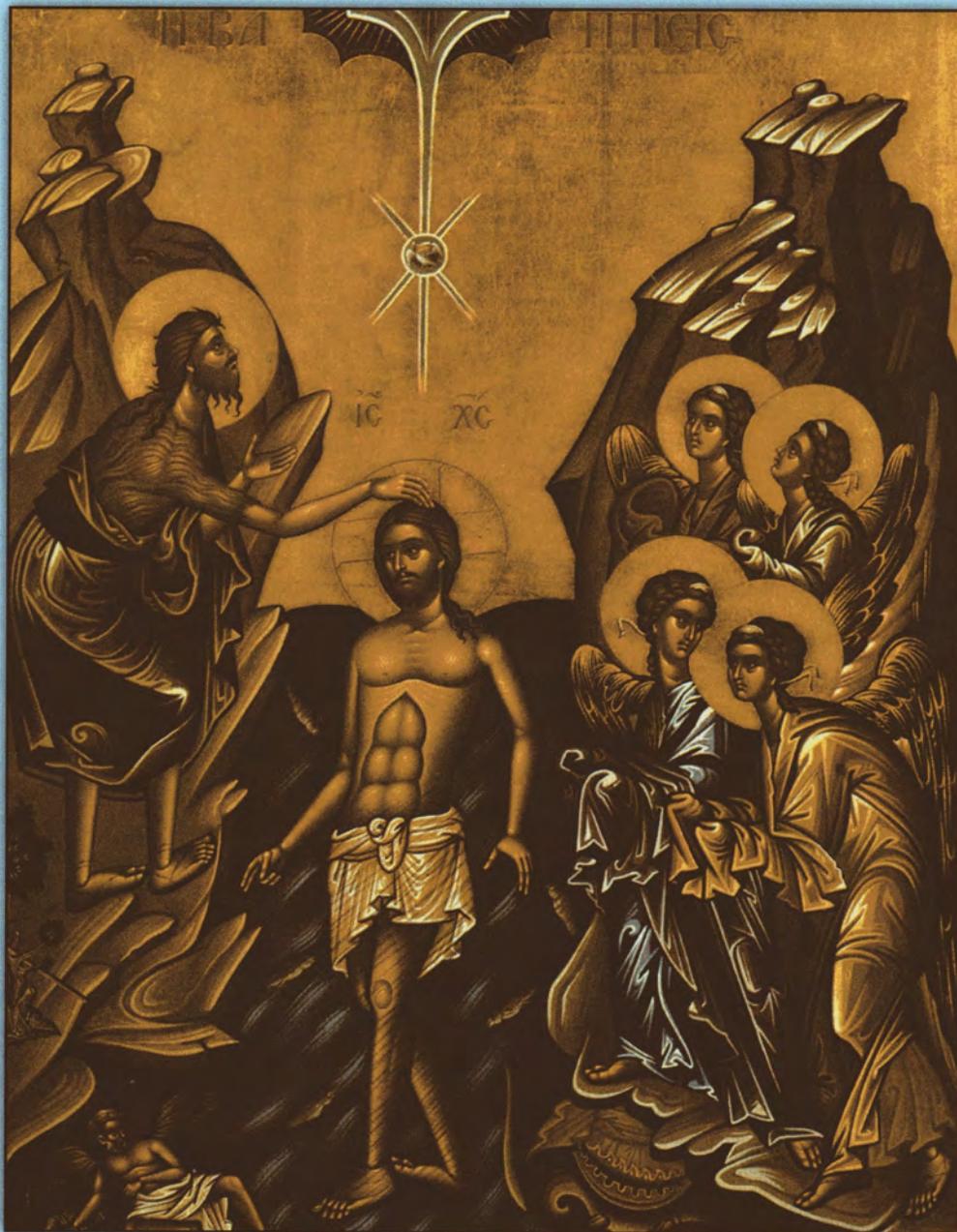


THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD,
GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST



Icon of Theophany -- January 6th

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

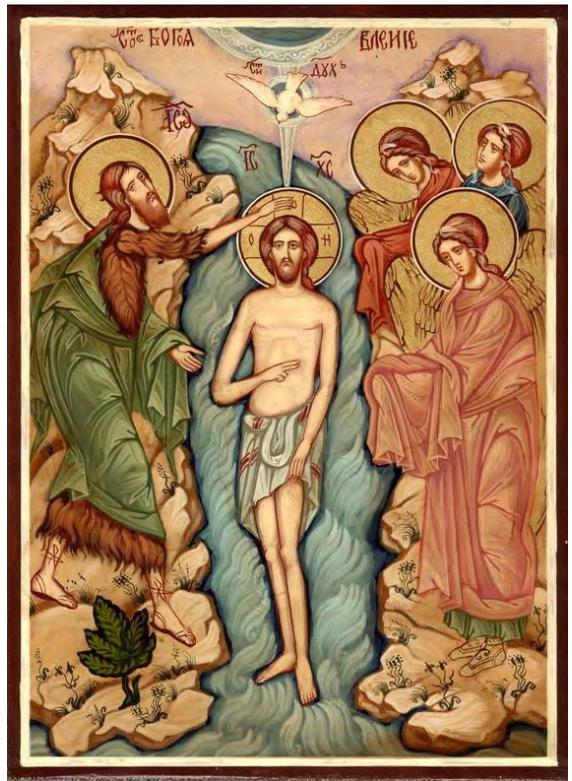
This weekend we celebrate one of the great *Theophanies* or *Manifestations* that God, according to Christian belief, made to humankind. In the Eastern Church this is the second greatest feast that is celebrated with only the Resurrection of Christ (Easter) being of greater stature. It is one of the feasts that also stresses the revelation of God as Triune - Three Persons in One Godhead.

Our readings this weekend are taken from St. Paul's Letter to Titus and Matthew's Gospel. The Letter to Titus instructs Titus about the character of the men he is to choose to lead the community in Crete in lieu of the pastoral difficulties that were peculiar to Crete. The passage we hear speaks about the *transformation of human life* by embracing a certain way of living. Paul declares that the message of Jesus *trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and live temperately, justly and devoutly*.

This message, of course, parallels the words spoken by John the Baptizer and then repeated by Jesus: *Reform your lives. The reign of God is at hand* which are shared as a part of the story of Jesus' Baptism by John in the Jordan.

This highlights the fact that the purpose of this earthly life is to give us a plethora of opportunities to become more like the human being God intended when He created us.

How do we know what we are to be



like as humans? Look at the person of Jesus, the Christ. He is the prototype of what human beings should be like. He became the person that He was through His own personal choice. His Divine Nature did not make Him become the human being that He was. Rather, His belief in God provided Him with multiple opportunities to choose to become the person that He was - a person who truly loved His neighbor as Himself. He demonstrated that humans can become noble, kind and generous people who can truly unconditionally love others. It is all a matter of personal choice.

How do you choose to live?

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THEOPHANY

Today we celebrate a feast that is called by many names: the Baptism of our Lord, Theophany, Epiphany and also Illumining. We commemorate our Lord's baptism in the Jordan by John. I would like to share thoughts about Theophany over the next several weeks since it is the second greatest feast in our Church year.

The definition of *Theophany* is a *visible manifestation of a deity*. It is taken from the late Greek word *theophaneia* - or the appearance of God (*Theos—Θεός*).

The Baptism of Christ is seen as a *Theophany* because of the account of the event in the Gospels. After Jesus was baptized, a “Dove” appeared over Him and a “Voice” declared that He was the “Beloved Son.” It is also called Illumining because through baptism we are indeed illuminated - we are given greater insight into Who God is.

God had a plan for man. The primeval plan was for humans to grow in knowledge and in wisdom about life and creation in cooperation with God's Divine Help. Man, God knew, could not accomplish this on His own. So God, in His wisdom, sent his only-begotten Son to help us come to a deeper and more realistic understanding of the meaning and purpose of human life, which is salvation.

Salvation is the true knowledge of God and life. We cannot understand God, however, without Him revealing himself to us. So that is why our God,



Jesus Christ, took on human nature and became incarnate of a Virgin. to invigorate us and make us able to live. He gave us an example of how to live this earthly existence so that we can accomplish what was intended by this earthly existence.

His ministry was two-fold. Being God, He taught us all the things that were necessary for our salvation. He did this by His example, by how He lived, by how He spoke, by His demeanor and how He thought about life. He transmitted this faithfully and carefully to his disciples. And this is found - this mind of Christ is found - in our Christian faith. It has been transmitted carefully and perfectly, throughout the ages, by the Church.

Jesus showed us not only by His teaching but also by how He lived. He was a man, as well as being God, so He was subject to the things we are subject to, even unto death. So when He called us through His disciples and Church to be baptized, He called us to a way of living. (Continued on page 6)

ACQUIRING THE MIND OF CHRIST

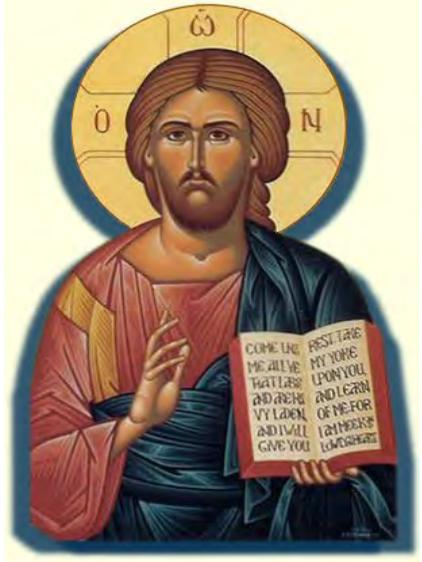
As I have shared in this article, the call that God has given, through Jesus Christ, to us humans is a call to “acquire” the mind of Christ - to “put on Christ”, as it were. In fact when we initiate someone into the Church we sing: *All you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ, Alleluia.*

I have been attempting to share with my readers what it means to *put on Christ*. This is the spiritual growth and development process that we have been called to through our initiation into the Church. It requires, as you might guess, self-reflection and examination as well as *spiritual practice*. It cannot be achieved by just reading spiritual material or by just regularly attending Divine Services. It also requires us to make a **PERSONAL CHOICE**.

- I have to “want” to acquire the mind of Christ.
- I have to “want” to become all that God has created me to be.
- I have to “want” to become engaged in the process of acquiring the mind of Christ.

As would seem to be self-evident, this requires that I have to take my “faith” seriously and become engaged in personal growth activities which many around me may not understand or recognize as important. This requires that I may have to change a number of things in my life. This is the challenge, especially if you live with a family. Others may not understand why you want to change and do things that, perhaps, you never did before.

When I make a decision to spiritually grow, it seems that God immediately sends me various kinds of help. At times I might not recognize the help He sends since it may come as a “challenge” or “struggle” that I have to face. Nevertheless, these are meant to help me



to spiritually grow. Why? Because they will call me to place my hope and trust in God. I have to believe that God will only allow life to deliver those things that can help me grow. Remember St. Paul. He asked God to remove a “thorn in his flesh”. God’s response was: *My help (grace) is sufficient*. Paul had something to learn from the thorn in his flesh.

Acquiring the mind of Christ means that, as we live life, we are committed to constantly asking ourselves in the various situations we find ourselves: *What would Jesus do? How would Jesus react? What would Jesus say? What am I to learn?*

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



CHRISTMAS FOOD DRIVE



As a Christmas Outreach effort, we collected “dry food products”. We have chosen to give these to St. Patrick’s Soup Kitchen. In years past we often donated to this particular kitchen. We will be delivering our gifts sometime this coming week. I would thank all those who donated to this very worthy cause.

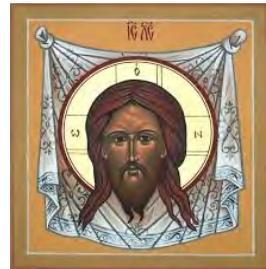
BLESSED HOLY WATER

I would simply remind our members that our tradition uses holy water in many ways: we drink it, cook with it, feed some to our plants and pets, all the while remembering that it is our belief that God’s Life-Force, water being a symbol of life, permeates and vivifies all living things. You are encouraged to also bless your living space, asking God to keep it safe and to welcome His Spirit to dwell there with you.



CALLED TO HOLINESS

The call to holiness, as I have indicated, has many different dimensions. This is probably why this article seems to “wander” all around. The call to holiness



is, truly, a call to become all that we can possibly be and to grow ever more in the image and likeness of God.

As you know, the only image and likeness of God that we humans can know is found in the person of Jesus, the Christ. He was/is the living image and likeness of the Father.

One of the things that I have probably failed to make quite clear, however, is that it has been my experience that the call to holiness is always very “personal.” Each of us seem to be called in our own unique way. God, knowing us as He does, allows life to present to each of us the unique experiences that can, if we positively respond to them, call us to a genuine life - call us to holiness. We are not on some sort of assembly line where every thing built is put together in the very same way. Each of us has a very unique personality. We are not robots that were created all

(Continued on page 8)

Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THEOPHANY

(Continued from page 3)

He was not the kind of leader, or the kind of king, who would tell his subjects to do something that He wasn't willing to do. In fact, he asked James and John: can you drink the cup that I will drink and be baptized with the baptism I will be baptized with. The question: could they bear what the Lord bore for us.

He will do more for us than He requires of us and expect more of himself. And indeed, that is a principle of leadership. A leader, whether he be a father, a mother, or a priest or someone who teaches children, must *lead by example*. He taught us how to do it and gave us the blueprint of how to do it.

Today we have an amazing scene before us. He who created the waters submits to being baptized in them. He who created the heavens and the earth and saw that they were good and not with any evil, submits to cleansing in waters. He who regenerates our flesh, Who is the Regenerator, He descends in the flesh into regenerating waters. *And he does this to show us how necessary it is for baptism.*

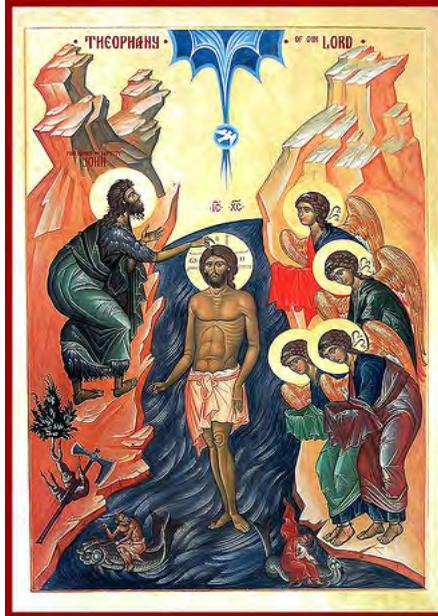
To know Christ we must be *like Him*. You cannot know somebody

unless you become like that person - it is not possible. So our Christian life in the flesh is to try to acquire virtue - to truly live a genuine life that espouses unconditional love.

While our Lord taught us the principles of how to live, the most important aspect of His ministry was that He made us *ABLE* to live this way. By God taking on human nature, He made it possible to live the way that Jesus lived. It does not take "divine power" to live like Jesus lived, it only takes personal choice to cooperate with God's Spirit within us to live as Jesus lived.

So the God-man, when He preached, preached with true authority, because He was able to back up his words like no other human person could. But again, it is important to remember, that He preached as a "human" and not as God.

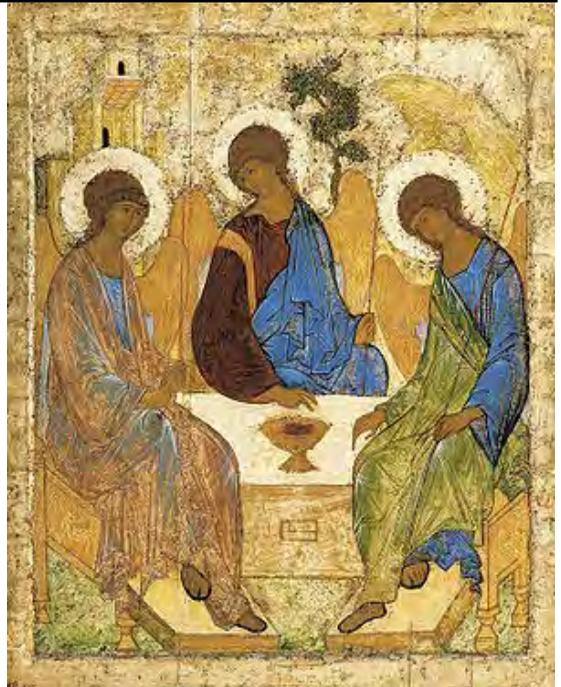
I know that this is difficult for many to understand since if Jesus is God and Man, why doesn't His "Divine Nature" dictate what His "human nature" does and says. Remember, Jesus, as Man, had free will. All He did, how He lived as a human, was dictated by His human nature not his Divine Nature.



THE HOLY TRINITY: STRUCTURE OF SUPREME LOVE

One Father of the Church, who like so many others, wrote this very lengthy and, perhaps, confusing statement: *We can say that just as the incarnation of the Word in the life and works of the historical Christ is a condescension of the divinity towards human obscurity, a condescension through which 'mysteries hidden from the foundation of the world' are revealed, so the same Word, the Truth himself, comes down in order to 'be incarnate' in our formulae and in the dogmas that serve to guide the Christian through the labyrinth of confusion and ignorance in which he finds himself.* In other words, doctrinal formulations have a twofold aspect. On the one hand, they 'reveal' the Truth in terms accessible to human intelligence and in this sense they have an affirmative aspect and are useful to man both as supports in his spiritual growth into maturity and as safeguards against the mistaken conceptions which human intelligence is always tempted to adopt. But on the other hand, they are not the Truth itself, only expressions of the Truth in human terms, and in this sense they have a negative aspect.

All of our human words fall short of explaining or describing Who God Is. They help in some way, but we humans tend to think that if we can describe something in our words that we know exactly what that is. This is not true of God. We can never find adequate words to describe Who God



actually is. We need to experience God at some level if we want a clearer idea of Who He is.

God has revealed himself clearly as Trinity in the world of salvation and hence this revelation is clear only in Christ in whom God has come down among men in order to save them. A uni-personal God remains an exclusively transcendent God who does not himself accomplish the salvation of men but issues instructions to them as to the way in which they can save themselves. This is key, I believe, to our understanding of God. Our salvation is a cooperative endeavor between us and God. We have to do our part in order to be saved but cannot do that without Him.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

**Sunday, January 6 - Feast of Theophany - Tone 8
10:00 AM + Special Intention**

29th WEEK AFTER PENTECOST – TONE 1

Monday, January 7 - Synaxis of John the Baptizer
No service scheduled

Tuesday, January 8 - George, Dominica & Emilian, Venerables
No service scheduled

Wednesday, January 9 - Polyeuct, Martyr
No service scheduled

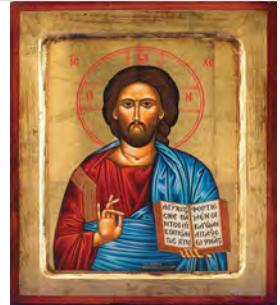
Thursday, January 10 – Gregory of Nyssa, Bishop
No service scheduled

Friday, January 11 - Theodosius, Venerable
No service scheduled

Saturday, January 12 - Tatiana, Martyr
No service scheduled

**Sunday, January 13 - Weekend after Theophany - Tone 1
10:00 AM + Special Intention**

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)
the same, but were each given an individuality which is God's gift to us in order to achieve greater union with Him. Although we all share the same Life-Force, each of us is an individual, unique expression of that Life-Force. Our individuality, I truly believe, is an expression of God's great love for us. He loves us so much that He gave us our individuality and unique personhood *(Just like in human families, where each child has his/her own very, unique personality)*.



This also tells us that God knows each of us in a very personal, individual way. We are not just one of similar human beings. He knows each of us by name and also by the way we think and behave.

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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

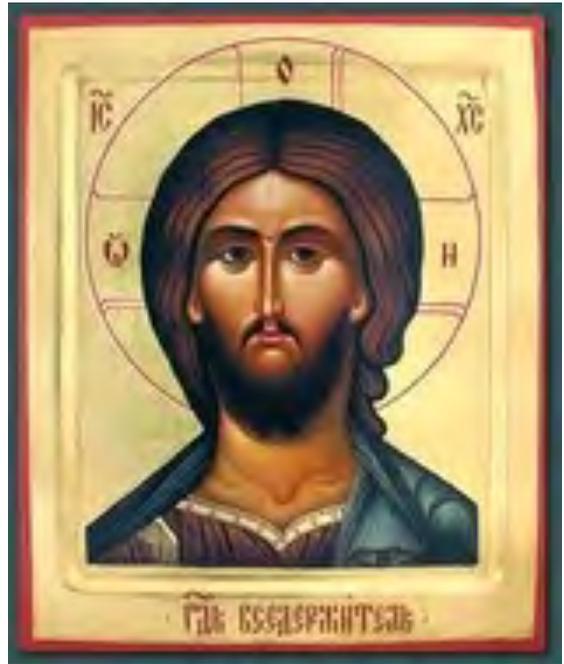
Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

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

MORE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

In the last issue, I introduced the fact of Nestorius and his teachings on Mary, the Mother of God. At a council held in Ephesus, the third Ecumenical Council, in 431, Nestorius was condemned and eventually deposed. After the council many of his followers, Nestorians, left the Roman Empire and settled among the Persians. Later some became missionaries and took the gospel as far as China. In 433 Cyril agreed a “Formula of Union” with Nestorius’ more moderate supporters, in which it was affirmed the Christ was to be understood to be *homoousios* with the Father in his divinity, as had been asserted since Nicaea, but also *homoousios* with us in his humanity. The Son, who was ‘one of the Trinity,’ in an expression that became increasingly popular, as incarnate ‘in the flesh’ became truly one of us.

How did Cyril and his supporters (in reality most Christians, at least in the East) understand the attribution to Christ of both divine qualities, such as working miracles, and human qualities, like hunger and thirst? In principle it was very simple: it was precisely to bear our weaknesses and limitations of our human nature that the Word took on flesh in the first place. If the Word made flesh did not bear the weaknesses and also the diminishments of human nature, but they were borne by some ‘human person’ alongside the Word, then the Incarnation would achieve nothing. It



was precisely in his love for humanity that the Word or Son of God assumed a human nature and lived a human life, and in this way overcame the havoc which is part of human nature that has not been changed or “transformed” by purposeful, spiritual growth. By the Word assuming our human nature as it is, we are offered the hope of living the divine life, becoming deified. He revealed to us how to live in order to overcome any of our limitations by “choosing” to live like a spiritual, human being and love others as we want to be loved. The Jesus way of living directly deals with any weaknesses or limitations that we have when we are born into this world. He shows us the way to live. He shows us how to spiritually grow.

MORE ABOUT HOLY SCRIPTURES

I have been sharing information about the Gospel of Luke. More light will be cast upon the literary qualities of Luke as I share information about the author's religious emphasis. You will recall that both the third Gospel and ACTS are attributed to Luke.

An overarching plan reaches from the Gospel into ACTS. Each begins in messianic Jerusalem with the imparting of the Spirit. The Gospel then presents Jesus' Galilean ministry and his journey to Jerusalem. ACTS subsequently takes up the early ministry of the apostles, confined for the most part within Judaism, followed by Paul's journey to the center of the world, Rome. Each ends with a rejection of Jesus by his own people, which leads to a world-wide apostolate. Not only is there this parallel between the Gospel and ACTS, but we also find that ACTS continues where the Gospel leaves off. In Luke, Jesus never preaches immediately to Gentiles, nor is the kingdom fully established with Jesus. The kingdom must include the Gentiles, but this universal scope is realized only after Jesus' ascension, in the ministry of the Church, as described by ACTS. Luke repeatedly reminds his readers that the time of the Parousia - the Second Coming of Christ - is quite indefinite. The Kingdom did not appear in full glory with the resurrection of Jesus, nor with the fall of Jerusalem. Now, within the Church it is gradually but surely being revealed - in anticipation of the final fulfillment of all promises and hopes.

Within this larger framework, Luke develops other, subordinate themes. He writes the "Gospel of Mercy" or the "Gospel of Great Pardons." Luke alone of the Synoptic Gospels includes such episodes or parables as: the sinful woman; the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son; Jesus' presence in the house of Zacchaeus; Jesus' executioners; and the good thief. Luke records Jesus' words, *Be merciful as your Father is merciful*" which Matthew



reads as *be perfect*. The entire sermon "on the plain" focuses attention upon the social bond of charity. Matthew's catechetical sermon "on the mount" delays over the legal aspects of the subject and the relevance of the Mosaic Law. Luke makes other, notable additions to the text of Mark. He inserts the phrase *to repentance* after the statement that "I have not come to call the just but sinners". A similar modification occurs at Luke 8:12.

As you can tell, Luke, like the other evangelists were not writing history. They were writing texts to stimulate faith and belief in Jesus Christ.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 65 No 1 Weekend of Theophany January 5-6, 2019

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

Eastern spirituality requires us to look clearly at our understanding of what it means to be human being. The view of human beings in the Christian East is based upon the notion of *participation* in God. This *natural* participation, however, is not a static given. Rather, it is a challenge and the human being is called to grow in divine life. Divine life is a gift, but also a task which is to be accomplished by a free human effort.

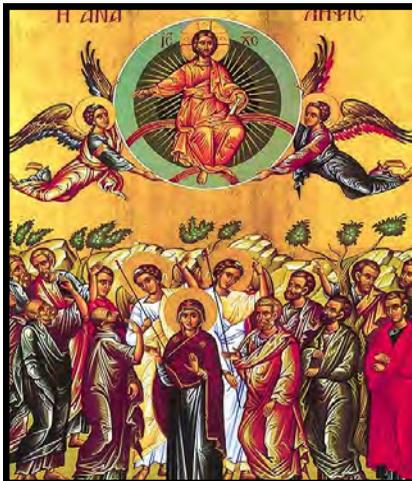
A person becomes the perfect image of God by discovering his or her likeness to God, which is the perfection of the nature common to all human beings. The Greek term *homoiousios*, which corresponds to *likeness* in Genesis, means precisely that dynamic progress and growth in divine life and implies human freedom. In Greek patristic thought there is no opposition between freedom (likeness) and grace (God's image in human beings): the

presence in man of divine qualities, of a "grace" (God's image) which makes him fully man, "neither destroys his freedom, nor limits the necessity for him to become fully himself by his own effort: rather it secures that real cooperation, or *synergy*, between the divine will and human choice which makes possible the progress 'from glory to glory' and the assimilation of man to the divine dignity for which he was created."

Unlike much of classical Western

theology, the Eastern fathers never viewed the creation of human beings as perfect even before the Fall. Humans were created imperfect and have to become perfect through the stages of growth and maturity.

This last point, I believe, is very important and I shall write more about that in the next issue of this article on Eastern Spirituality.



Life's Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

Let Us Venerate Today the Baptism of Christ ... Wash Yourselves and Be Clean

I cannot restrain my joy; my heart is deeply moved and filled with delight. Forgetting my weakness, I long to undertake the mission of the great John the Baptist; though I am not the Forerunner, I have indeed come from the desert!

Christ receives the sacrament of enlightenment, or rather He enlightens us with His brilliance. He is baptized; let us go down into the water with Him so that we may also come up with Him. John is baptizing, and Jesus comes to him. Christ certainly sanctifies the man who now baptizes Him, but His purpose is chiefly to bury the old Adam in the waters and, above all, to sanctify the waters of the Jordan by His baptism in them so that just as He was spirit and flesh, those who would later be baptized might be sanctified by the power of the Spirit and by water.

John refuses; Jesus insists. "It is you that should be baptizing me!" says John. The torch addresses the Sun, the voice speaks to the Word. Jesus comes out of the water, drawing the world with Him, as it were, and raising it up when it had hitherto been sunk in the abyss. He sees the heavens not being rent, but opening of their own accord.

The first Adam had of old closed heaven to himself and us, just as he had seen the earthly paradise being closed to him, with a fiery sword barring access. The Holy Spirit bears witness. Here all is in perfect harmony, for the testimony comes from heaven, just as He to whom the Spirit bears witness has come from heaven.

St. Gregory the Theologian