

SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY



Icon of Saints Hermylaus, Maximus and Stratonicus -- January 13th

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this weekend after the feast of Theophany, our readings are taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians and Matthew's Gospel. Each reading sets forth, I believe, something about the ministry in which Jesus became involved and the subsequent ministry of His followers.

Paul shares with the Ephesians his belief that *each* follower of Jesus is given certain talents and strengths which are meant to be used to build up the Church *till we become one in faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, and form that perfect man who is Christ come to full stature.*

The portion of Matthew's Gospel that we hear today, presents the beginning of Jesus' ministry which was precipitated by the arrest of his cousin, John the Forerunner. Matthew states that Jesus, after He heard of John's arrest did this: *From that time on Jesus began to proclaim this theme: "Reform your lives! The kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

As I reflected upon these two readings, the following came to mind: We, as followers of Jesus, have two primary tasks: (1) to engage in the work of personal transformation, and (2) to realize that the gifts we have been given need to be used to build up our own Christian Community.

As I think about this, I know this to be true: there are many people in both of the Christian communities that I serve who are using their gifts to build up the Church - to strengthen the spiritual communities to which they belong. I would laud them for all their efforts and continue to support them in these efforts. It is the work of true followers of Jesus.

While I sense that many members of my spiritual communities are also truly engaged



in attempting to reform their lives by changing the ways that they think and behave, I will not presume to know the status of their lives and would only offer them my help and support. If there is anything that I can do to help in this process, I am open and ready to be of assistance.

Spiritual growth takes work. It cannot be achieved by just coming to church services on a regular basis, although that truly helps. I would just encourage all that the effort is worth it. Something happens when you truly become engaged in spiritual growth: internal peace, contentment and joy.

SOME INFORMATION ABOUT OUR CHURCH SERVICES



If you have been paying attention to your church calendars and also the Bulletin, you may discover something very interesting. You will discover that although this coming week is seen as the 30th week after Pentecost, next weekend we celebrate the 35th Weekend after Pentecost. Hopefully you did not think that this was just a mistake in the printing of our calendars or one of my many Bulletin mistakes.

As you may or may not know, the weeks after Pentecost are determined by the date of Easter, which, this year, will be on April 21st (*This means that the Great Fast – Lent - will begin on March 4th*). Our lectionary, that book which contains prescribed readings throughout the year, only counts for 34 weeks after Pentecost and this year there are 36 weeks after Pentecost. So, we must repeat several weeks of readings in order for it all to work.

This is all due, as you know, to the fact that Easter is not celebrated on a particular date each year. Rather it is calculated. In 325 CE the Council of Nicaea established that Easter would be held on the first Sunday after the first Full Moon occurring on or after the

vernal equinox. From that point forward, the Easter date depended on the ecclesiastical approximation of **March 21** for the vernal equinox.

It should be noted that many religions use astronomy to calculate the dates of their religious festivals (e.g., Judaism and Islam). This custom began during the very early history of humankind since humans truly believed that heavenly bodies control what transpires in life. (*Even modern people tend to rely on Horoscopes which are directly connected to the heavenly bodies*).

As you may or may not know, our Church actually embraces the use of two different calendars, the Gregorian and the Julian calendars. Our Church in Ukraine uses, as does the Orthodox Church, the Julian (Old) Calendar. There are a number of our parishes in this country who still keep the Julian Calendar. It should be noted that on the Julian calendar Easter always falls after the Jewish Passover.

There has been a long-time effort among Christian Churches to find a solution to the celebration of one common Easter date. So far, all attempts at setting a common date have failed. The Greek Orthodox Church's solution to all of this is by celebrating Christmas on the New Calendar and Easter on the Old Calendar. I personally am much in favor of that solution.

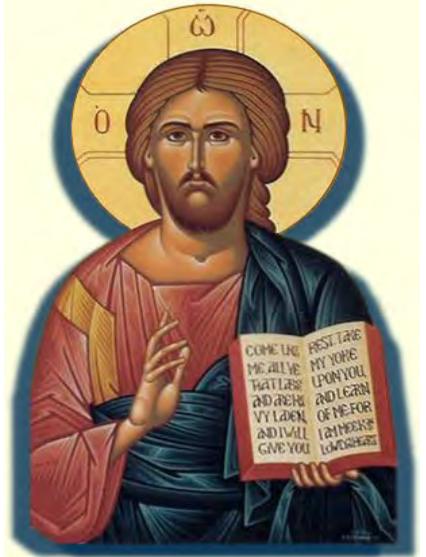
ACQUIRING THE MIND OF CHRIST

This article started out as a good idea but, as I have tried to write it over the weeks, has become increasingly more difficult. I've tried to set forward what I believe to have been and is the MIND OF CHRIST, but I seem to have come to an end-point. I think I have tried to represent what the mind of Christ was/is. I have tried to suggest that the most important aspect of the Mind of Christ is UNCONDITIONAL LOVE OF OTHERS. Something happens when we can reach a point where we unconditionally love all others, without exception (*of course that is what unconditional love means - I don't allow anything that others do to cause me to stop loving them*).

I know that in our modern American society that this is difficult to do since our civil discourse tells us that others are attempting to kill us and to “ruin” our society. I think that this public discourse taints the minds and hearts of many people, causing them to forget how Jesus lived and what He taught. Our society, I truly believe, is not unlike the society in which Jesus lived. He lived in a society that felt oppressed and therefore hated others. His society judged so many others, including Samaritans who were Jews but who had a different approach to their religion. Doesn't that sound like our society?

According to the Gospels, Jesus did not let His society's values influence how He CHOSE TO LIVE. He helped Samaritans, Romans, the DISABLED and others His society rejected. I hope that my readers hear this in the Gospel stories that we share as a part of our worship. He decided how He would live. He wanted to live like a “son of His heavenly Father.”

The question I ask us is: *Do we want to truly live like children of the Heavenly Father?* If we do, can we really afford to live and think like our



fellow citizens of 2019 in the United States? For example, are all immigrants, people who are fleeing from oppression and corruption, a danger to our society? I say this not as a “political” belief but as a Christian. I don't really care what political affiliation anyone has, I only know that I speak from my heart as a Christian, a follower of Jesus. My Christianity is very important to me as a human being. I weigh all things in reference to how Jesus would approach an issue. I would challenge you, who I love, to also take this stance: Weigh all things in light of how you think that Jesus would approach these issues!

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



TIME IN BETWEEN



This weekend we end our celebration of the Winter Theophanies, the two great feasts that revealed God to humankind. We do not begin the Great Fast - our preparation for the Feast of Easter - until March 4th. It is still a time for giving our attention to our spiritual growth.

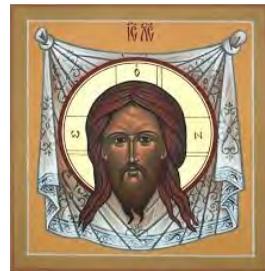
As I encouraged my readers at the beginning of this New Year of 2019, make a resolution to give yourself at least a little time each day to devote to enriching your spiritual life. You will not be disappointed, I can assure you. How will you spend your time? Remember, now is a part of eternity



In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: it goes on

CALLED TO HOLINESS

In the last issue of this article I shared my belief that the call to holiness is always personal and individual. Each of us has a path that can lead us to true union with God. The path, while it may have some similarities with the paths of others, is always very unique and quite personal.



How is the call given to us? It is given to us through the experiences and challenges that life delivers to us. As we have these experiences and challenges we are constantly called to accept them as opportunities to grow in our true understanding of ourselves and to make a true profession of our hope and trust in God. The experiences and challenges of life, which come not as tests or punishments but rather as rare opportunities to grow, are meant to help us think about what is most important to us and to grow in our belief that the God we worship is a loving and caring God Who only wants the very best for us.

Now I realize that the challenges that we have to face in life are not always to our liking, (Continued on page 8)

HOW TO BE A SINNER

I recently came across a book which absolutely intrigued me: How to Be a Sinner: Finding Yourself in the Language of Repentance by Peter Bouteneff. Since it was printed by a religious press, I had to pick it up and read it. I will be using some of it as a part of this article since I believe that most Western Christians don't really understand what it means to be a sinner. Like all of my sources, I draw upon them and then infuse my own comments also.

I thought that this would be a worthwhile topic to explore since the word *sinner* appears in our Liturgy. Think about the prayer we say before Holy Communion: *O Lord, I believe ... You are truly Christ ... Who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first.... Be merciful to me a sinner.*

So what do we understand about ourselves when we say this prayer? Most all of us are well aware that we have faults. What we do with that knowledge is another matter. It is possible to make too little or too much of our shortcomings. We may brush them off, saying "I'm only human." Conversely we might be shocked by our faults, as a matter of pride. "How

can someone be wonderful as I am get it so wrong?" Some of us may even experience real self-loathing and become disaster to ourselves as well as to everyone around us. Any of us are liable to move along this spectrum between these two extreme reactions at different points in our lives. But apart from the emotional aspect of dealing with our faults, we need to try to take an objective look at ourselves. Just as we need to diagnose an illness

so that it can be treated, we have to find a way to perceive in what ways we truly need to change.

This all comes on the weekend that we remember that Jesus preached what John the Forerunner also preached: *Repent, change your minds and hearts for the*

Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. When we hear these words we must realize that this is what this earthly life is all about: A time to change and grow ever more in the likeness of Jesus.

There is a meaning and purpose to this earthly existence. It is just one of an eternity of opportunities God gives us to grow into the persons that He intended when He created us.

This being said, it is important to understand what it means to be a sinner.



THE HOLY TRINITY: STRUCTURE OF SUPREME LOVE

In dealing with the idea of the Trinity, we have to know at the very outset that it is extremely complex and, truly probably beyond our human comprehension. It is a mystery even though we attempt to understand it. We must admit, at the very outset, that an exclusively immanent God, wholly identified with the world, is no longer a personal God, or, if He is, then men are no longer real persons but only apparent ones manifesting a single being, namely, their very own essence. A personal and saving God is a God simultaneously transcendent and revealed in immanence. In the Old Testament where God still remains only transcendent, even though he acts upon history from a distance, he is not revealed as Trinity.

What I am saying is that the Christian belief in God as being not only transcendent but also immanent, is a mystery and something that our human minds find impossible to truly comprehend. How can God be beyond us and yet, at the same time, be within us? Of course my response is that He can do this because He is God. He always does things that are beyond human comprehension. He is not limited to our way of thinking and doing, although I suspect that we would like Him to be limited to our way of thinking (*Humans always desire to be in control and be able to define everything so that they can feel that*



they control things. Guess what, God is not made in our image and likeness. We are made in His).

The revelation of the Trinity took place in Christ, for one divine Person became man in order to save men, while another divine Person remained above men so that He who had become incarnate might raise men up to that divine Person who was not incarnate but transcendent. The Son becomes man but the Father remains the goal of the incarnated Son's striving and that of all the men whom the Son has united to himself. The incarnate Son could not have been without this goal or else he would not have been able to save us.

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
586.755.3129

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

Steve Petryk
248-615-0456

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

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

30th WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - TONE 2

Monday, January 14 - Venerable Fathers of Sinai & Raitho

No service scheduled

Tuesday, January 15 - Paul & John, Venerables

No service scheduled

Wednesday, January 16 - Veneration of the Chains of Peter

No service scheduled

Thursday, January 17 - Anthony the Great, Venerable

No service scheduled

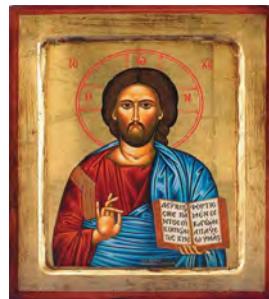
Friday, January 18 - Athanasius & Cyril, Archbishops
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday, January 19 - Macarius, Venerable

No service scheduled

Sunday, January 20 - 35th Sunday After Pentecost - Tone 2
10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy - Special Intention

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)
they are always uniquely designed to help us grow in our relationship with God if we accept them in the right way. I really don't think God is busy "testing" us to see how we will respond. Rather, life is designed to give us the challenges that can truly help us to grow and become the persons that God intended when He created us. So, some of the challenges might be difficult. Some might be very easy. They all are opportunities to place our hope and trust in God and in the life He has given us. The call to holiness, therefore, is a call to accept and understand life as it is given to us and to use all of life's experiences to spiritually grow. Is that how you see this earthly, human experience?

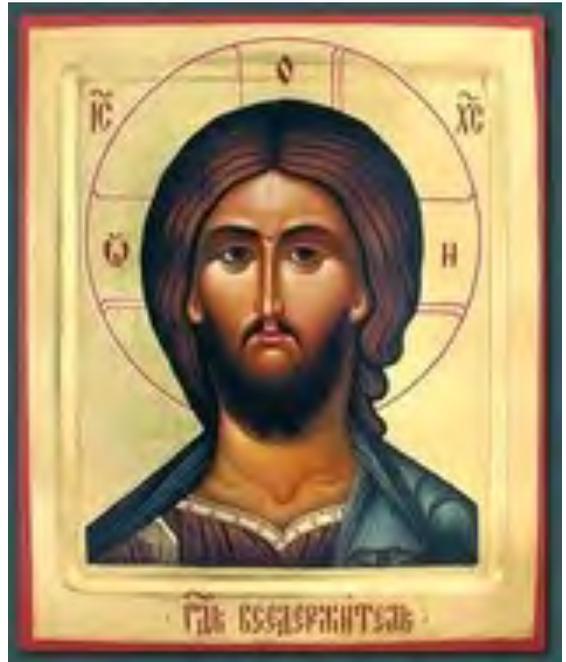


<http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org> - and -
[Facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn)

The acceptance of Ephesus in accordance with the “Formula of Union” (you will recall that I referenced this in the last issue) was not the end of the matter, however. After Cyril’s death in 444, controversy began again. Some Christians felt that the unity of Christ was being compromised by the way the ‘Formula of Union’ was being interpreted, and felt furthermore that if the unity of Christ was compromised, then so was the hope of our salvation. The events surrounding Chalcedon, the next Ecumenical Council held in 451, are complex, but the result was a conciliar definition in which it was affirmed that there is

one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being.

I would, at this point, ask you, my readers, to think about what you see as a true expression of Who Jesus Is. According to the various Councils that dealt with this belief, it seems that they came to the conclusion that somehow, in God’s great wisdom and power, the Second Person of the Trinity took on human flesh - became a human being - and, as such,



functioned completely as a human being during His life-time on earth. His Godhead - His Divine Nature - did not dictate how He functioned as a human being. He had to grow and mature as a human being and had to refine what He truly believed about God and His relationship with humankind. Although He had only one personality which joined His divine and human nature, neither his divine nor human nature influenced each other.

He can be imitated because what He accomplished in His life was due to His belief in God and His desire to truly honor His heavenly Father, Abba.

Is this what you believe? I think we have to say it is truly beyond our human comprehension.

MORE ABOUT HOLY SCRIPTURES

To truly understand this article, you, my readers, have to have read the previous issue. In that I shared that Luke made “additions” to the text of Mark’s Gospel. In the last issue I shared that Jesus said that “I have not come to call the just but sinners” The pardon of Jesus reaches out to all men, so that Luke has composed the “Gospel of Universal Salvation.” The genealogical table does not limit Jesus’ ancestry to the royal line of David, as Matthew’s does, but places Jesus within the family tree of the entire human race as a son of Adam who was of God. The faith of Abraham can be shared with all men, thereby making them Abraham’s children. Immediately preceding this statement was the fuller rendition of the Isaian text; Mark 1:3 and Matthew 3:3 omit the words that “all mankind shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6).

This same merciful concern reaches to the poor and lowly, so that Luke merits to be called the “Gospel of the Poor.” This spirit shines brightly in the Infancy Narrative, where the poor and insignificant are chosen for the greatest privileges: the childless couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth; Mary and Joseph from unknown Nazareth; shepherds from the countryside; an old man and elderly widow at the Temple. Luke preserves the strong regard for actual poverty in his beatitudes; in writing “happy are you poor”, he keeps the direct address of the second person and does not add, like Matthew, “poor in spirit” (Luke 6:20). He includes the full Isaian text about the poor to whom the gospel is brought. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is exclusive to Luke (16:19-31). Still other words about poverty, including a parable, are found only in Luke (12:13-21).

It is not surprising, therefore, that Luke should write the “Gospel of Absolute Renunciation.” Disciples must leave “all things” (5:11). In a similar statement, Mark and Matthew restrict the renunciation to nets and father



to follow Jesus. Yet another statement, only in Luke (9:62), insists upon total dedication to Jesus. Luke alone adds the word “wife” to the list of what some will be asked to renounce for the sake of the kingdom. Again, where Matthew writes “lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven”, Luke has, “sell what you have and give alms”. Luke extends the cross-bearing of the single eschatological moment to the continuous daily sorrows of life. The necessity of renunciation and suffering as the way to glorious fulfillment shows up in repeated assertions that Jesus “must” suffer.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

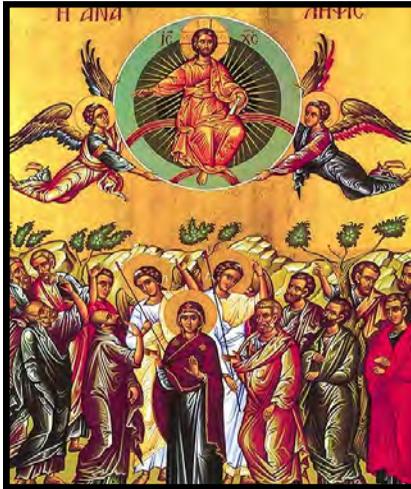
The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 65 No 2 Weekend After Theophany January 12-13, 2019

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

I ended this article in the last issue of the Bulletin by sharing that the Eastern Church does not view the creation of human beings as perfect even before the Fall that is mentioned in Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament. God created us in a manner that we might think “imperfect” but that He thought to be wonderful in light of the “free will” that He also is sharing with us. According to Irenaeus, “they [Adam & Eve] were both naked and were not ashamed, having been created a short time previously; they had not understanding of the procreation of children, for it was necessary that they should first come to adult age, and then multiply from that time onward.” The first human beings then fell during the growth period while they were still immature.

Did you ever think about this: Were Adam and Eve adults when they were

created? We just presume that they were adults. The purpose of Genesis was not to address this issue. In fact, the purpose of Genesis was not to describe a historical or sociological treatise on how human beings came into existence. The purpose of this first book, Genesis, was to establish that the God of the Jews was the God Who was the CREATOR of all things and, therefore, more powerful than all the gods that other tribes and nations saw as their god. Other creation stories don't



Life's Journey Is an Ascension to the

embrace the idea of gods creating all things out of nothingness. The Jewish God, Yahweh, had to be greater than all of the other gods in which other people believed in. Therefore, Yahweh created all things out of nothingness, even human beings.

Genesis is not HISTORY. It does not reveal how creation actually came into existence. I hope you realize this.

Make Another Shot

So how many New Year's resolutions have you broken already? If you are like me, though you might be a little scared about even making a resolution. The experience of making resolutions, and failing to keep them again and again and again, can be somewhat off-putting: we have failed so much in the past that the prospect of another failure is more daunting than what we want to resolve to do or change in our lives. I ran into an expression from basketball the other day. It read, "You are 100% certain not to make the shots you don't attempt." How true that is! If you don't make the shot, you can't hit the basket! Similarly, if you don't make the effort, you never realize the success. This is such an ingrained part of human experience that it is no wonder that one of the central mysteries of our faith is repentance.

The New Testament word for "repentance" is, in Greek, metanoia, which literally means "change of mind" or "change of heart." St. John the Baptist's great message was "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" – a cry that was taken up by Our

Lord Himself as the first words of His public ministry.

The sacramental mystery of Holy Baptism means, first of all, the forgiveness of sins, becoming a new person, being born again. Likewise, the mystery of Confession recognizes that, even as committed, born-again, believing Christians, we continue to experience failure in our lives as we try to live out our baptismal commitments. Repentance, meaning that we recognize our failure and make a resolution to do better next time, is not something that happens once and for all, but something that becomes as natural and repetitive in our daily lives as breathing.

If you have not broken any of your New Year's resolutions, good for you! Give thanks to Almighty God for having preserved your good intention by His grace. If you have broken some, however, give thanks to Almighty God for giving you another chance, and make your shot one more time.

Bishop John Michael Botean