

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



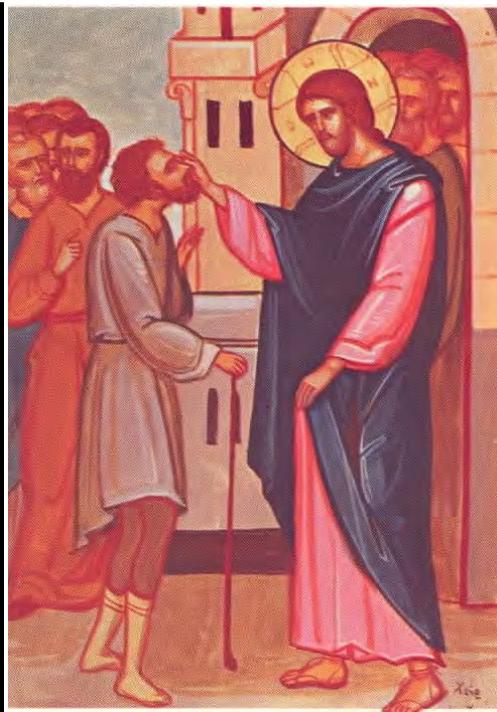
Icon of Saint Gregory, Saint John, Saint Basil -- January 30th

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this 36th weekend after Pentecost, our prescribed readings are taken from Paul's First letter to Timothy and Luke's Gospel. The passage from Paul truly reiterates something that I have been exploring in another article in the Bulletin, namely what it means to be a sinner. Paul confesses to Timothy: *You can depend on this as worthy of full acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Of these I myself am the worst.* You will also recognize this as part of our Prayer Before Communion. Paul goes on to say: *But on that very account I was dealt with mercifully, so that in me, as an extreme case, Jesus Christ might display all His patience and that I might become an example to those who would later have faith in Him and gain everlasting life.*

The miracle story we hear in the passage from Luke's Gospel is the curing of a blind man on the road to Jericho. When the blind man heard that it was Jesus who was passing by, he cried out: *Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me.* Jesus then called the man over and simply asked him: *What do you want Me to do for you?* His reply was simply: *Lord, I want to see.*

This challenges us to answer a very simple question: *Do we really want to see and know what the real meaning and purpose of life is?* Do we really want to see? This is the challenge that we face as we think about spiritual growth. In order to grow spiritually, we really have to want to see life as it really is and not as we want it to be. Too often, I think, we want life to



be the way that we think it should be instead of how God has intended it to be. This challenges us to think about our vision of life. *Do we see that life presents us with the challenges that can help us grow? Do we see that life is given to us as a means of helping us spiritually grow?*

I firmly believe that Jesus will give us the sight to see life as His gift to us if we reach out to Him and ask for His help. This means, of course, coming to Him not just wanting life to be what we would like it to be, but seeing life as it is given to us. We do well to truly think about this!

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EASTERN SPIRITUALITY



As I shared in the initial installment of this article, the first of the six elements of our Eastern Spirituality is Holy Scripture. It is important, if we are to spiritually grow, that we become well-acquainted with, especially, the New Testament. As I shared, our Church is encouraging us to begin by reading the Gospel of Luke in its entirety. Not all at once, however, but thoughtfully and with reflection.

Our spirituality is a mixture of Greek metaphysics (i.e., *the branch of philosophy that deals with the first principles of things, including abstract concepts such as being, knowing, substance, cause, identity, time, and space*) and ritualism. Nevertheless it also emphasizes this fact: *Jesus' words take the first place in our Church too, and the quiet mission which pursue is not suppressed.* This means that first and foremost we are committed to making the words of Jesus real in our minds, hearts and

lives. For we know that their fruits cannot be mistaken by anyone who will look below the surface. For example, Jesus' exhortation to *love your neighbors and enemies like yourself* are not just some flowery words. They are words which, when truly lived, become transformative. The way to spiritually grow is to follow the example of Jesus and make His words the guides of your life. They call us to come to know God as the Father of mercy and the leader of our lives, and who love Jesus Christ, not because they know Him as the person with two natures, but because a ray of His Being has shone from the Gospel into our hearts and this ray has become light and warmth to our lives.

Certain books of the Bible have had a particular influence on our Eastern spirituality. The Psalms, from the Old Testament, hold a great place in our public worship and, since the time of the Desert Fathers, have fed individual monastic piety. Certain Psalms in their entirety, or at least fragments of them, haunt the memories of Eastern Christians. Psalm 51, for example, is one that, when read, reminds us of what we have heard in Vespers (*why not look it up and read it*). Even among people who are practically detached from the Church some words of the Psalms, learnt during their childhood, often give a concrete shape to a longing for God.

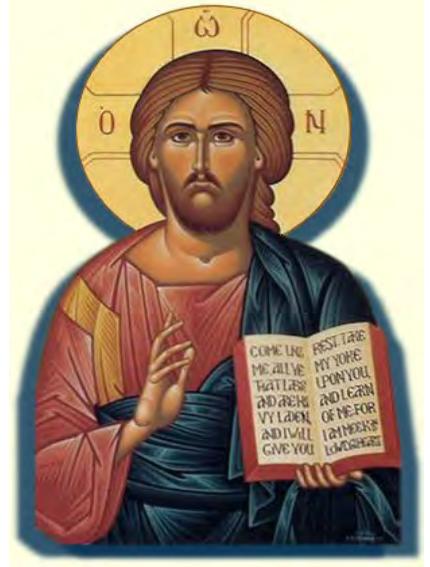
LIFE'S PILGRIMAGE: GROWING IN THE LIKENESS OF JESUS

I think that it is good to view life truly as a pilgrimage - a journey to a particular end. I liked this definition of pilgrimage: any long journey, especially one undertaken as a quest or for a votive purpose, as to pay homage. I think that sums up exactly what life is all about. We are here on earth and in human form to pay homage to our Creator. We do that by personal transformation or change.

Each of us is given a certain set of strengths and weaknesses - abilities or talents as well as negative predispositions. Our job during this lifetime is to lessen the power of our negative predispositions to control our lives and to reinforce the power of our strengths or abilities. Like everything in life, we have to LEARN how to be the spiritual-physical beings that God created in His image and given the potential to grow in His likeness. What is wonderful is that God so loves us that He allows us to do this in our own time and in our own way. He doesn't force us to become truly His children. He only calls us, out of love, to be His children by allowing life to deliver us the challenges which can help us to grow in His likeness.

Of course, we have to believe that this is truly the meaning and purpose of life. We have to believe that we are placed here on earth with the particular strengths and weaknesses that we have to grow in the likeness of the archetype of humanity, Jesus. We can deny this or just disregard it. The challenges of life, however, will continue only because God wishes, if I might use a human term, to know who we are in His creation.

It is essential, I believe, that we truly believe that He knew what He was doing when He created humans - creatures that have many of



powers and strengths, one of the primary ones being FREE WILL. We can live anyway that we want. The question is this: Will living anyway that we want truly bring us to becoming all that we can possibly be? Living the way that God intended us to live will lead us to becoming all that we can possibly be.

When human beings involved in the various religions of the world don't distort their message, all tell us the same thing. It is only when we distort the meaning of the religions, that we fail to see that they all call us to become what the Creator intended when He brought humanity into existence.

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



COMING HOLY DAYS

Wednesday, January 30 - 7:00 PM

THREE HOLY HIERARCHS

Sunday, February 3 - 10:00 AM

ENCOUNTER OF CHRIST WITH SIMEON

PARISH OUTREACH

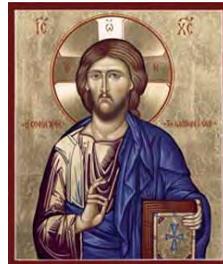
As members may or may not know, Our Parish Council this year decided that one of the hallmarks of a Christian Community is to do Outreach. So each quarter the Council, utilizing funds from our Coffee Hour, has made a contribution to some worthy cause. We have sent contributions of \$250 to

- St. Patrick's Senior Center
- Ukrainian War Victims
- First Step: Domestic Abuse Victims
- Pentrickton Center for Blind and Multiply Handicapped Children

These donations were approved and recommended by Council Members. It is important that we as a Christian Community reach out to those who are in need. I would applaud the efforts of the Council who were able to look beyond our own needs and help others. I would offer a big thank you to all who contributed to these causes.

CALLED TO HOLINESS

When you think about it, this entire Bulletin truly contains various articles about the Call to Holiness. The call as I have described it, is all about personal transformation and



change which is made possible when we believe in Jesus and turn to the Gospels and learn how to live like Jesus. It is also about discovering the meaning and purpose of this earthly life. It is all about embracing the pilgrimage of life which is summed up with ***Growing In the Likeness of Jesus - Growing in the likeness of God!*** Accepting this as the vision of life answers the questions about the meaning and purpose of life. We are here to achieve what God intended when He created us humans, namely to be transformed into His true children.

This whole process of personal transformation is called *deification or Theosis* a word which each and every Eastern Christian should know. This is not the first time that this term has been used in this Bulletin and will probably not be the last time. It is the key to Eastern Spirituality - to the Call to Holiness. (Continued on page 8)

HOW TO BE A SINNER

Self-discovery, the author states, by definition is a personal matter. It is private and it looks different for everyone. That said, the author presents some facts about his own life. He states that he can't point to the day and hour that he began to see himself as a sinner. He narrowed it down, however, to a five-year period in his youth, with a "before" picture and "after" picture. Part of the "before" was that once he turned seven there was never a time when he didn't go to confession at least a few times a year. He said that he would typically confess, as many of us probably do when we go to private confession, that he lied, fought with his sister, got angry and forgot his morning and evening prayers. Although he thought that these actions were "sins." He never considered himself a saint or even a particularly good person. He had plenty of insecurities and knew that he surely wasn't getting things right. He knew in his core that he believed in God and loved him and the Church and that he fell short of being worthy of either. Despite all this, it didn't occur to him to call himself a "sinner." He had no clear concept for what that



word meant and no idea how to evaluate it as a word that might describe himself. He pushed it to one said: "sinner" sounded too negative and perhaps a little too pious. He figured that he was basically a decent guy who, although he made mistakes, never intended to "offend God".

Something happened to him when he was in his early 20s. He went to confession but very little came to mind. He knew that it somehow wasn't

right to say so little - to feel so little - about his wrongful thoughts, words and acts. He knew he had erred more than he was conscious of. So he said this to the priest. The priest answered rather matter-of-factly and without special portent, "Its all right. Sometimes God hides

our sinfulness from us. He puts a cloak over our sins, especially when He knows we can't bear to see them.

This, of course, got the author thinking about what it means to be a sinner. He reminds us that each of our stories will be different and we will not have the same experiences

As you think of it right now, do you see yourself as a sinner. If you do, and most people say they do, what does it really mean for you and your life?

MORE ABOUT OUT CHURCH

During the reign of the Emperor Alexius Comnenus (1081-1118), a controversy arose in Constantinople among men learned in Faith and zealous for virtue about the three holy Hierarchs and Fathers of the Church, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom. Some argued for Saint Basil above the other two because he was able, as none other, to explain the mysteries of the Faith and rose to angelic rank by his virtues. Organizer of monastic life, leader of the entire Church in the struggle with heresy, austere and demanding shepherd as to Christian morals, in him there was nothing base or of the earth. Hence, said they, he was superior to Saint Chrysostom who was by nature more easily inclined to absolve sinners.

The partisans of Saint Chrysostom retorted that the illustrious Archbishop of Constantinople had been no less zealous than Saint Basil in combating vices, in bringing sinners to repentance and in raising up the whole people to the perfection of the Gospel. The golden-mouthed shepherd of matchless eloquence has watered the Church with a stream of homilies in which he interprets the divine word and shows its application in daily life with more accomplished mastery than the two other holy Doctors.

According to a third group, Saint Gregory the Theologian was to be preferred to the others by reason of



the majesty, purity and profundity of his language. Possessing a sovereign mastery of all the wisdom and eloquence of ancient Greece, he had attained, they said to such a pitch in the contemplation of God that no one had been able to express the dogma of the Holy Trinity as perfectly as he.

With each faction setting up one of the Fathers against the other two in this way, the whole Christian people were soon caught up in the dispute, which far from promoting devotion to the Saints in the City, resulted in nothing but ill-feeling and endless argument. Then one night the three holy Hierarchs appeared in a dream to Saint John Mauropus, the Metropolitan of Euchaïta, separately at first, then together and, speaking with a single voice, they said: "As you see, the three of us are with God and no discord or rivalry divides us. Each of us, according to the circumstances and according to the inspiration that he received from the Holy Spirit, wrote and taught what befits the salvation of mankind. We celebrate their feast on Wednesday of this coming week.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday, January 27 - 31st Sunday After Pentecost - Tone 3
10:00 AM - Special Intention

32nd WEEK AFTER PENTECOST – TONE 4

Monday, January 28 - Ephrem the Syrian
No service scheduled

Tuesday, January 29 - Translation of St. Ignatius' Relics
No service scheduled

Wednesday, January 30 – THREE HOLY HIERARCHS
7:00 PM - Special Intention

Thursday, January 31 – Cyrus & John, Unmercenaries
No service scheduled

Friday, February 1 - Tryphon, Martyr
No service scheduled

Saturday, February 2 - Encounter of Our Lord with Simeon
No service scheduled

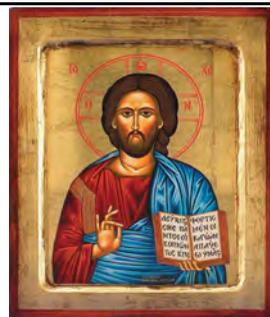
Sunday, February 3 - Feast of the Encounter - Tone 4
10:00 AM - Special Intention

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

Again the path of *Theosis* is quite personal. There is not just one way to achieve greater growth in our likeness of Jesus. If we are at all attuned to life, however, we will be shown the way that we must go.

How do I go about shaping my *thinking* so that my behaviors look more and more like those of Jesus? We know certain things seem to be necessary. First, we have to attempt to learn how to *unconditionally love others* and base our behavior not on how people treat us but, rather, on how we want to be treated (*I don't think that any of us want to be rejected, abused, hated or judged*). Second, we have to desire with our whole heart and soul to become a "HEALING PERSON."

I wonder what you think it means to be a "healing" person?



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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
586.755.3129

Daria Drobny
313.791-0292

Robert Krokosky
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Greg & Esther Petrovich
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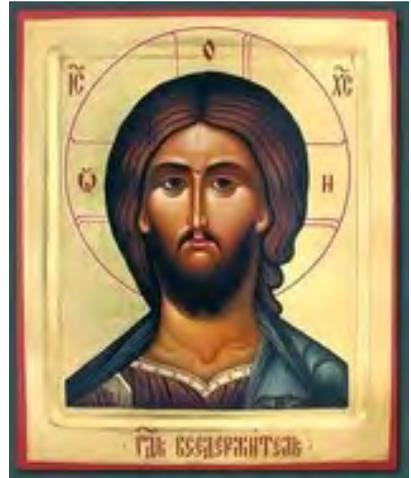
Rafic Vawter
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<http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org> - and -
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MORE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

In probably the 620s, some theologians (including the Ecumenical Patriarch, Sergios) thought that agreement with the monophysites (*i.e.*, *persons who hold that in the person of Jesus Christ there is only one nature, wholly divine or only subordinately human, not two*) could be reached on the basis of Chalcedon by accepting that there was one divine person in Christ (the second person of the Trinity), in which were united the two natures, divine and human, but that furthermore, there was only one activity, a divine-human or *theandric* activity, in Christ. Everything Christ did was both human and divine; it was impossible to separate out his activities between the human and the divine. In itself it was a brilliant suggestion, but it met with mistrust from those committed to Chalcedon; for one thing, it seemed to contradict the 'Formula of Union' of 433, which had been reaffirmed at Chalcedon. Further reflection followed and a refinement was suggested, according to which there was only one will in Christ, the divine will. It is not at all clear what was meant, whether Christ had no human will, or a quiescent one; but opposition to Monothelism (*i.e.*, the theological doctrine that Christ had only one will even though he had two natures [human and divine]; condemned as heretical in the Third Council of Constantinople in 680) was led by St. Maximos the Confessor. For Maximos the problem with Monothelism was the same as the problem with Apollinarianism: Christ's humanity would be defective. Furthermore it was the human will that had brought about the Fall, so the human will needed healing, and if Christ had no human will, then he could not heal it. Maximos quoted the remark of Gregory the Theologian: 'the unassumed is the unhealed.'

That is a brief sketch of the gradual clarification



of the Church's belief about Christ. All the way through, the concern was to preserve the unity in Christ of the divine nature with the human nature: the divine nature of the person He was, and the human nature that the Person of Christ had assumed. The dangers were seen to be: either the Godhead of Christ was diminished in some way to make it accessible to contact with the human or the humanity of Christ was incomplete, to make room for the Godhead, as it were, or the human and divine were held apart and achieved no proper unity.

Hopefully you can tell how complex our belief is!

MORE ABOUT HOLY SCRIPTURES: THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke's work stands out from the rest of the Synoptic Gospels by way of at least three particularities. First, Saint Luke is a very sophisticated storyteller, who has a great command of the Greek language and who adapts his style both to the Greek translation of the Septuagint (LXX) and to the culture and mentality of his audience (it is amazing how Luke here and there replaces the difficult notion of "resurrection" for the Greek reader with the assertion "He is alive" (see Lk 24:23; Acts 1:3; 25:19), or, in describing transfiguration, he avoids the term μεταμορφώω (to transfigure/to be transfigured) (see Lk 9:29), in order to steer clear of associations with the "metamorphoses" of the Greek gods, about which his readers would be very knowledgeable.

The second particularity — Luke is the author not only of a Gospel but also of an additional book of the New Testament — The Acts of the Apostles. Acts is not an independent work, it can be regarded as the second volume of one entire work, in which Luke wanted to show how Jesus' work due to the apostles and through them continues on in the Church. Such a "continuation" of the action of Jesus in the life of the Church reflects Luke's conception well, according to which the history of salvation is composed of three stages: the time of promise (the Old Testament), the time of Jesus (the Gospel) and the time of the Church — our time.

The third particularity of Luke lies in the fact that he, more than the other evangelists, inspires the imagination and the genius of artists, most of all painters, to convey, through art, episodes and individual important events, about which only he mentions. It is enough to call to mind the numerous images and icons of the "Annunciation", which we find not only in every one of our churches



but also in museums and many galleries throughout the world; or to also recall Rembrandt's "The Supper at Emmaus" or Caravaggio's "The Conversion of the Apostle Paul". Luke himself very humbly confirms that he is simply narrating events that have been fulfilled among us, so that the disciples could be strengthened in the faith. However, the phrase "among us" - this is not only a memorial from the past, but moreover, it is an awareness of Christ in the life of the Church.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 65 No 4 31st Weekend after Pentecost January 26-27, 2019

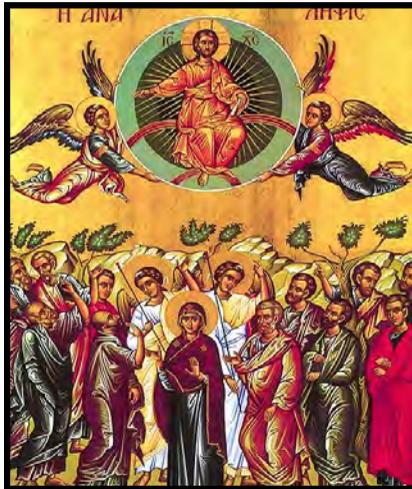
THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

The Eastern Fathers never developed the theory of “satisfaction” along the lines of Anselm’s theory. You will recall that I address Anselm’s theory of “satisfaction” in several past Bulletins. One author states: *The voluntary assumption of human mortality by the Logos was an act of God’s condescension by which He united to Himself the whole of Humanity.* This is what Gregory of Nazianzus taught when he said, *What is not assumed is not healed, and what is united to God is saved; so therefore we needed a God made flesh and put to death in order that could live again.* One of the preferred images of the effects of Christ’s death in the Christian East has been “medical”: the cross is an antidote to the poison of corruptibility and sin.

We must realize that God, from all eternity, desired to have us, who are created in His image and unto His likeness, joined with Him in

the communion of a personal relationship. This had to be a voluntary communion however, because we were given one of God’s greatest powers, *free will.* If He truly created us in His image, we had to have free will. It is truly a very wonderful plan which allows us true freedom and yet every opportunity to come into communion with our Creator-God. He has given and gives us the help we need in order to accomplish this. It remains for us to *desire* to have a relationship with Him -

a relationship which can only be accomplished if we *take upon ourselves the work of personal transformation.* What is also very amazing, in my estimation, is that when we freely and voluntarily take upon ourselves this transformation - this spiritual growth - we will feel truly free and of great value and worth in God’s creation. ***What say you?***



Life’s Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

The Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs

This week we celebrate the Feast of the three Holy Bishops, St. Gregory the Theologian (also known as Gregory Nazianzus), St. Basil the Great and St. John Chrysostom. In addition, to this feast in common, each of these great Fathers of the Eastern Churches has a special day commemorating his memory: St. Basil the Great (January 1st), St. Gregory the Theologian (January 25th), and St. John Chrysostom (November 1).

In the early part of the twelfth century a controversy arose among the admirers of these famous bishops; each group proclaiming that their saint was the greatest. This divided the people of Constantinople and caused great confusion. The saintly Bishop John of Euchaita was appointed as arbitrator. With fervent prayer, he asked God to help him resolve the problem. One night he had a vision in which the three saints appeared to him and told him they were equal before God

and that each had his own individual genius a value. They asked him to institute a common feast, commemorating all three. Bishop John chose January 30th and composed a beautiful office for this feast.

The merits of these three great bishops are expressed in the Vesper services of the feast. "Come, feast lovers! Let us come together and extol in song those sons, bishops of Christ, the pride of the Fathers, towers of faith, and teachers and guardians of believers, saying: Rejoice, O Basil the Wise, star of the Church and its unshakable pillar. Rejoice, O heavenly intelligence, Gregory the Theologian, the great High Priest. Rejoice, O John of the golden words, Chrysostom, fervent preacher of repentance. Therefore, O blessed Fathers, do not cease to intercede with Christ always for those who, in faith and love, celebrate your most noble and sacred feast."