

THIRD SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST
SUNDAY OF THE HOLY CROSS



Icon of the Sunday of the Holy Cross

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this third weekend of the Great Fast, we bow before the image of the Lord's crucifixion, His Cross, and we praise His third-day resurrection. Our readings are taken from Paul's Letter to the Hebrews and Mark's Gospel.

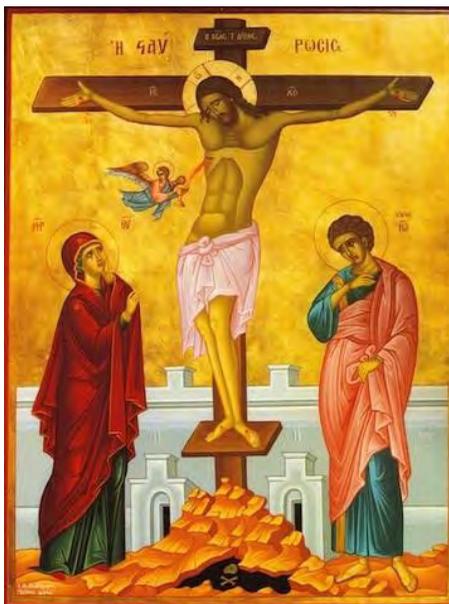
Paul writes to the Hebrews: *let us hold fast to our profession of faith. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet never sinned.* St. Paul characterizes Jesus in his letter as a "compassionate" High Priest, One Who is able to *deal patiently with erring sinners, for He Himself is beset by weakness.*

This depiction of Christ as High Priest, Who like the Jewish high priests, served as a mediator between God and THE PEOPLE. Jesus connects us to God the Father in a special manner since He assumed our human nature. So He is our direct connection to God the Father.

We bow to the Cross of Christ for it was upon His Cross that He taught us perhaps the most important lessons of His ministry: unconditional love and forgiveness for others. He showed us that how we treat others should not be

dependent upon how they treat us but, rather, on how a child of God treats others.

The passage from Mark's Gospel that we hear today presents the 'doctrine of the Cross.' Jesus said: *If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in my steps.... Whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will preserve it.... What can a man offer in exchange for his life.*



Such absolutely powerful words. It must be clarified that 'our cross' is the challenges that life delivers to us. It is the challenges in life which allow us to truly develop our likeness of Jesus. It is only when we are really challenged that we have the opportunity to respond as Jesus did.

Just as Jesus was challenged with betrayal, abandonment, torture and death in His life, so too we will have to face various challenges in our lives. How we respond to these challenges is important. The challenges of life give us opportunities to learn several very basic things, namely how to really unconditionally love and forgive others. Essential for our salvation!

THE LENTEN TRIODION



The inner significance of fasting is best summed up in the triad: *prayer, fasting, almsgiving*. Divorced from prayer and from the reception of the holy mysteries (*sacraments*), unaccompanied by acts of compassion and almsgiving, our fasting becomes pharisaical or even demonic. It leads not to contrition and joyfulness, but to pride, inward tension and irritability. The link between prayer and fasting is intrinsic.

Fasting, then, is valueless or even harmful when not combined with prayer. In the Gospels the devil is cast out, not by fasting alone, but by 'prayer and fasting'; and of the early Christians it is said, not simply that

they fasted, but that they 'fasted and prayed'. In both the Old and the New Testament fasting is seen, not as an end in itself, but as an aid to more intense and living prayer, as a real preparation for decisive action or for direct encounter with God. Thus our Lord's forty-day fast in the wilderness was the immediate preparation for His public ministry. When Moses fasted on Mount Sinai and Elijah on Mount Horeb, the fast was in both cases linked with a theophany. The same connection between fasting and the vision of God is evident in the case of St. Peter. He 'went up on the housetop to pray about the sixth hour, and he became very hungry and wanted to eat'; and it was in this state that he fell into a trance and heard the divine voice. Such is always the purpose of ascetic fasting - to enable us, as the Triodion puts it, to 'draw near to the mountain of prayer.

It must always be remembered that God will not love us any more than He already does if we fast. We cannot buy God's love. Fasting is not even really a penance that we do to make up for our wrong-doings. Rather it disposes us to open our hearts and minds to God's Spirit within us.

Don't fast if it is a burden for you or if you think it will make God love you more. That's the wrong use of fasting. If you fast, combine it with prayer and almsgiving.

ST BASIL'S THOUGHTS ON GENESIS

God, according to Basil, created the returning exiles for His glory, the destroyer to tear down and Jerusalem to rejoice. This should prepare us to read the ancient and sacred text with an eye to function rather than to physics.

When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was a desolation and emptiness, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the *ruach* of God was moving over the face of the waters

The first thing we notice in the creation story is the divine name *Elohim*. Though meaning simply *God* (a singular noun in the plural form), it is the word used throughout much of the OT (Old Testament) to describe Israel's deity, Yahweh. Indeed, in the second creation story in Genesis 2:4f, the name *Elohim* is paired with that of Yahweh, so that it is Yahweh Elohim who made the earth and the heavens.

Though it is fitting that a name as generically universal as *Elohim* should be used to describe the universe's creator, one should not miss the fact, obvious to the original hearers, that the text says it was the tribal God of Israel who created the world. Pagans reading the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*

may have asserted that it was Marduk who set up everything and who was therefore the supreme deity. The Egyptians also had their own contenders for the role. But here, in the first three words of the Bible, we see that it was *Elohim*, the Hebrews' protector and God who made **heaven and earth** (i.e., everything). The pagan deities had nothing to do with it. The narrator polemically disdains and dethrones them by utterly ignoring them in his narrative.

The opening Hebrew words

bereshith bara' Elohim, usually rendered: "in the beginning God created," is rendered here **when God began to create**. A similar syntactical construction is found in

Genesis 2:4, and both seem to reflect the way ancient cosmological narratives began - with a statement of how things were before creation took place. (The *Enuma Elish*, for example, begins, "When above the heaven had not yet been named."). The sacred text is not concerned to locate the creation in time or before time. Its concern here is rather to glorify the Creator by stressing how hopeless things were on the earth before God created - namely, everything was a **desolation and emptiness**.



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



**LENTE
SERVICES**
Liturgy of the
Presanctified Gifts
Friday Evenings at
7:00 PM

Lenten Matins
Sunday Mornings at
9:30 AM

These two services are meant to assist you in your Lenten effort.

CONGRATULATIONS

We would congratulate Tony, Christie, William and Anastasia Grech and Robert and Patti Krokosky as we initiate into the Church

ANDREW JOSEPH GRECH

We pray for him and them on this day that God may grant to him:

MANY HAPPY, BLESSED YEARS

Многая літа – Mnohaya lita

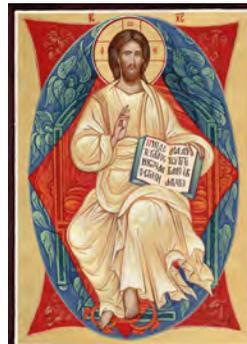
HAPPY BIRTHDAY WISHES

are extended to Jarosalva Zapolopnyj

Многая літа – Mnohaya li

CALLED TO HOLINESS

Following up on my thoughts in the last Bulletin, the call to holiness can also be thought of as a call to understand what it really means to be a human being. I suspect that most of us never even take time to think about what it means to be a human being. We just simply exist.



So the call to holiness is also a call to become a *reflective person* who actually thinks about life, the true meaning and purpose of life and what changes we need make in order to become the true human beings God intended when He created us. Our modern society, however, does not readily support people becoming more reflective. In fact in many ways it stifles thinking, at least as I see it.

We are not a very philosophical people. The Greeks were people who 'pondered' many things. This is so very evident in our Divine Services. It took a lot of thinking and meditation to come up with the worship which we have inherited. Great thought went into our

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You're only here for a short visit. Don't hurry, don't worry. And be sure to smell the flowers along the way.

A PRAYER A DAY DURING THE GREAT FAST

SUNDAY, MARCH 24th

Heavenly Father as I venerate the Holy Cross of Jesus today, I make the prayer of our Church my prayer and I say: *I bow to Your Cross, O Master, and I praise Your third day resurrection.* Help me to see that Jesus revealed to me through His voluntary crucifixion, how to face the challenges of life. He showed me that by facing the challenges of life with hope and trust in You, these challenges become the power by which personal transformation can be accomplished. He showed me that unconditional love of others is the source of spiritual growth. He revealed to me that His sacrifice conquered human death for me and all my fellowmen. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

MONDAY, MARCH 25th

Heavenly Father, today the Church celebrates Your incarnation as a human being in the Person of Jesus. I believe You became a human to teach me how to lead my life. You took on human nature to reveal to me the true meaning of my human nature. In this feast I see the strength of Mary, Jesus' mother, and Joseph as they were confronted with a real challenge. Mary simply said, *I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say.* Joseph simply loved Mary, believed in her goodness, and took her as his wife. Help me, Father, to learn the lessons that this feast attempts to teach me. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

TUESDAY, MARCH 26th

Heavenly Father, I would thank You for coming into the world as a human to help me understand the meaning of life. I must admit that life can be very confusing at times. I also admit that at times my feelings get in the way of my living the way that Jesus showed me. I know that quite often it is my thinking that is incorrect. Help me to think the way Jesus did. Help me to truly learn how to unconditionally love and forgive others. I know that it is only when I will be able to do this that I will experience fulfillment and true insight into my life. I ask Your help. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27th

Heavenly Father we have reached the midpoint of the Great Fast. I beg Your assistance. Help me maintain my efforts in observing this Fast for the sake of my spiritual growth. I desire to change myself so that I might become more like Jesus. Help me to truly see where I must change. I know that too frequently I am influenced by my society and that I inadvertently embrace some of the thinking of my society. When I do this, I realize that I frequently neglect my thoughts of conforming my thinking to that of Jesus. Help me, Father, not to judge others and to reject others because they may not think as I do. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

A PRAYER A DAY DURING THE GREAT FAST

THURSDAY, MARCH 28th

Heavenly Father, as I enter the second half of this Fast, I ask Your Spirit to help me find answers to questions about my life. I need to find answers to grow in my likeness of Jesus. Some questions are: *What do I REALLY BELIEVE about my life? Why was I created? What is the meaning and purpose of my life?* I truly believe that I have been called by You to discover the answers to these questions. I also believe that if I cooperate with Your Spirit, Who I believe is within me, I can discover my answers to these questions. I believe that it is important for me to find my own answers. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

FRIDAY, MARCH 29th

Heavenly Father, it is my desire to spiritually grow and to personally change myself to be more like Jesus. I believe this is the purpose of my earthly life. I believe the meaning of my life is to bring honor and glory to You to make Your Kingdom real. I know that I can do this by learning how to unconditionally loving and forgiving all my brothers and sisters and to develop the ability to accept all others regardless of how they treat me. I find, Father, that this is not easy. I find it so easy at times to judge others and to place conditions on my love and forgiveness. I beg Your help. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

REMEMBER, fasting without prayer is worthless.

SATURDAY, MARCH 30th

Heavenly Father, today our Church remembers Saints John Climacus. He said that spiritual growth is like climbing a ladder. He counseled his readers to take one step at a time in developing their spiritual life. He suggested that the place to start is to break with the world and to focus on the Kingdom of God. I beseech You, Father, to help me, as I continue this Fast, to truly place my whole focus on Your exhortation to *Change my heart and mind for the Kingdom of God is at hand.* Help me to truly experience Your Kingdom right now and to do all in my power to make it real for myself and others. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

SUNDAY, MARCH 31st

Heavenly Father, Saint John Climacus' second step on his Ladder of Divine Ascent is detachment. By this he meant detachment from ego and pride. It is my ego and pride which keep me from unconditionally loving and forgiving others. Help me to achieve this detachment. I know, Father, that I must desire to change if I want to achieve this detachment because my pride frequently gets in the way of my ability to unconditionally love others. If I develop detachment, I know I will no longer base my response to others on how they treat me but, rather, on how I want to treat them. I ask You, Father, to help me develop this detachment. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday, March 24 - Third Weekend of the Fast - Tone

**10:00 AM - Initiation of Andrew Joseph Grech into the Church
Health and intention of Jaroslava Zalopanjy; Family**

FOURTH WEEK OF THE GREAT FAST – TONE 4

Monday, March 25 - Feast of the Annunciation

7:00 PM - Special Intention

Tuesday, March 26 - Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel

No service scheduled

Wednesday, March 27 – Matrona, Venerable—MID-LENT

No service scheduled

Thursday March 28– Hilary & Stephen, Venerables

No service scheduled

Friday, March 29 - Mark, Cyril & Others, Martyrs

7:00 PM - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, March 30 - John Climacus, Hegumen-Abbott

No service scheduled

Sunday, March 31 - Fourth Weekend of the Fast - Tone 4

10:00 AM - Special Intention

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

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

worship ritual. The Fathers who put our worship ritual together drew upon many different traditions and formulated what we use today. All of our worship is designed to join us with Jesus in offering thanks and praise to the Father through the action of the Holy Spirit.

During His entire life, Jesus always directed His prayers to the Father, the Creator, the Source of Life. We, because we are also human beings, are called to join with Jesus as a human being and offer praise to God. While Jesus is a part of the Holy Trinity, He, nevertheless, is our connection with the Holy Trinity because He shares human life with us. As we pray, think about this fact.



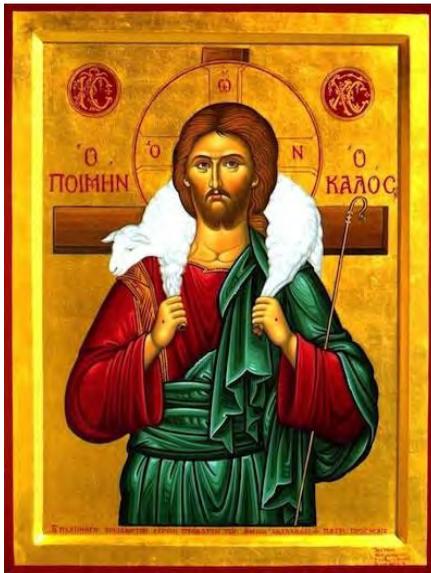
<http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org> - and - [Facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn)

BEING HUMAN - BEING IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

'And God made man, according to the image of God he made him; male and female he made them' (Genesis 1.27). Here man is translated as *anthropos*, which is not an abstract noun, like 'humankind' but a concrete noun: man (male and female). In the first part of this sentence we are told God made man in the singular, but in the last clause we are told then he made 'them' male and female. It is hardly a mistake. We are being told about the unity of humanity, and yet, that humanity is also a manifold, based on the distinction between the sexes, between male and female. This combination of one and many comes again in the next chapter when God makes woman from man's side, for 'it is saying that he should cleave to her, and 'the two will become one flesh' (2:24). 'One is one, and all alone, and ever more shall be so', as the folk song has it: not a good idea! The Scriptures present humanity as one-in-many, a unity embracing different persons.

In the New Testament, similar ideas are introduced. We are all, as baptized Christians, members of

Christ, forming one body, the body of Christ. The apostle Paul presents a picture of the Church, consisting of many members, who are all bound up with one another: 'And if one member suffers, all the members suffer together; if a member is glorified, all the members rejoice together. For we are the body of Christ and members in particular' (1 Corinthians 12:26-27).



The Genesis text seems to suggest that the manifold that is humanity is in some way based on the distinction between the sexes. The Fathers, however, are not very good at handling what an American poet has called the 'archetypal cleft of sex.' I am not sure we are much better, either. We can

see that the relationship of man and woman forms the basis of the family and that is the primary unit of human society. We can see (most of us; they, the Fathers, rarely) that the relationship is one that offers human beings the deepest human delight, but we recognize too that this 'archetypal cleft' lies behind the most painful and destructive aspects of human experience. This is the challenge of humanity.

MORE ABOUT HOLY SCRIPTURES: THE GOSPEL OF MARK

In the last issue of this article I presented information about the theological structure of the Gospel of Mark. This included two separate parts: The Mystery of the Messiah and the Mystery of the Son of Man. These two parts overlap in the incident at Caesarea Philippi (8:27-33) when Peter on behalf of the disciples, asserts that Jesus is the Messiah, and Jesus undertakes to correct that mistaken notion of his messiahship by predicting for the first time that the Son of Man must suffer and be repudiated. This first glimpse of a recognition of his identity by human beings is the turning point of Mark, and occasions a change in Jesus' tactics: He continues to conceal his messiahship from outsiders who could easily misinterpret it, and concentrates instead on instructing his disciples in its true nature.

It is presupposed by many scholars that Mark was the earliest written canonical Gospel and served as one of the sources for Matthew and Luke. There are certain sections of Mark,

however, that appear to reflect a later development over what is found in Matthew, and that may derive from a tradition used independently by the two Evangelists. They do not appear, however, to discredit the basic view of the Two-Source Theory in Synoptic analysis.

One scholar has pointed out several word groups that Mark has clearly introduced into his redaction of the Gospel tradition and that serve to characterize this Evangelist's true theological outlook.

The age of salvation prophesied in the Old Testament is the time of the kerygma or proclamation. This begins with John the baptizer, taken up by Jesus, continued by the disciples and eventuates in the Church's universal mission. This kerygma is both a call to repentance and a proclamation of the good news. Significantly, however, Mark reserves to Jesus the proclamation of God's kingdom. Closely allied to this is Mark's view of the kingdom that Jesus proclaims. What is this kingdom?



This icon is of St. Mark the Evangelist



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

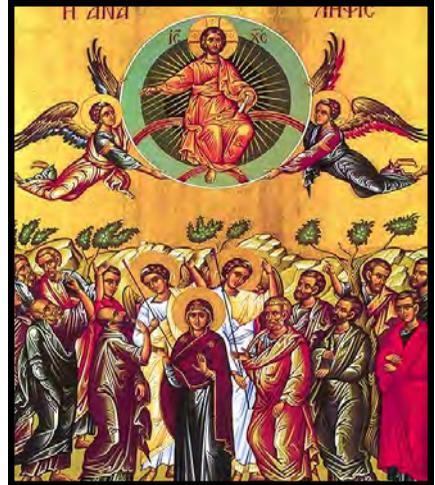
The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 65 No 12 Third Weekend of the Great Fast March 23-24, 2019

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

Eastern tradition never separates grace and human freedom. Therefore, the charge of Pelagianism (i.e., that grace is a reward for the merit of the human will) is not fair. It is not a question of merit(s), but of cooperation, of a synergy of the two wills, divine and human. "Grace is a presence of God within us which demands constant effort on our part." One Eastern theologian wrote: "The Holy Spirit, acting within us, accomplishes with us our salvation" and that "being assisted by grace, man accomplished the work of his salvation."

I believe this is a very important point. The work of our salvation is a cooperation between God and us. He always initiates and is ready to help and support through His Holy Spirit. It is for us to become attuned to the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Of course this can only truly happen when we engage in prayer and work to grow in our likeness of the human image of God, Jesus. We cannot achieve salvation simply on our own. We need God's help. Why? Because our salvation is closely linked to recognizing God's Life and Spirit within us and to see in Jesus a model of what it means to be a human being in accord with God's Divine Design.

God never forces salvation on us. He honors our free will. But, because of His love for us, He also makes His Spirit available to help us achieve the true meaning and purpose of life.



Life's Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

I truly believe that the Eastern formulation of how God works, namely that God accomplishes all things through Jesus in the Holy Spirit, makes so very much sense. Jesus is the Word of God which creates. The Word becomes real through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are saved and come to know God.

The Cross, Our Victory

Have you seen the wonderful victory? Have you seen the splendid deeds of the Cross? ... Who can tell the Lord's mighty deeds? By death we were made immortal: these are the glorious deeds of the Cross.

Have you understood the victory? Have you grasped how it was wrought? Learn now, how this victory was gained without any sweat or toil of ours. No weapons of ours were stained with blood; our feet did not stand in the front line of battle; we suffered no wounds; witnessed no tumults; and yet we obtained the victory.

The battle was the Lord's, the crown is ours. Since then victory is ours, let us imitate the soldiers, and with joyful voices sing the songs of victory.

Let us praise the Lord and say, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"

The Cross did all these wonderful things for us: the Cross is a war memorial erected against the demons, a sword against sin, the sword with which Christ slew the serpent.

The Cross is the Father's will, the glory of the Only-begotten, the Spirit's exultation, the beauty of the angels, the guardian of the Church. Paul glories in the Cross; it is the rampart of the saints, it is the light of the whole world.

St. John Chrysostom