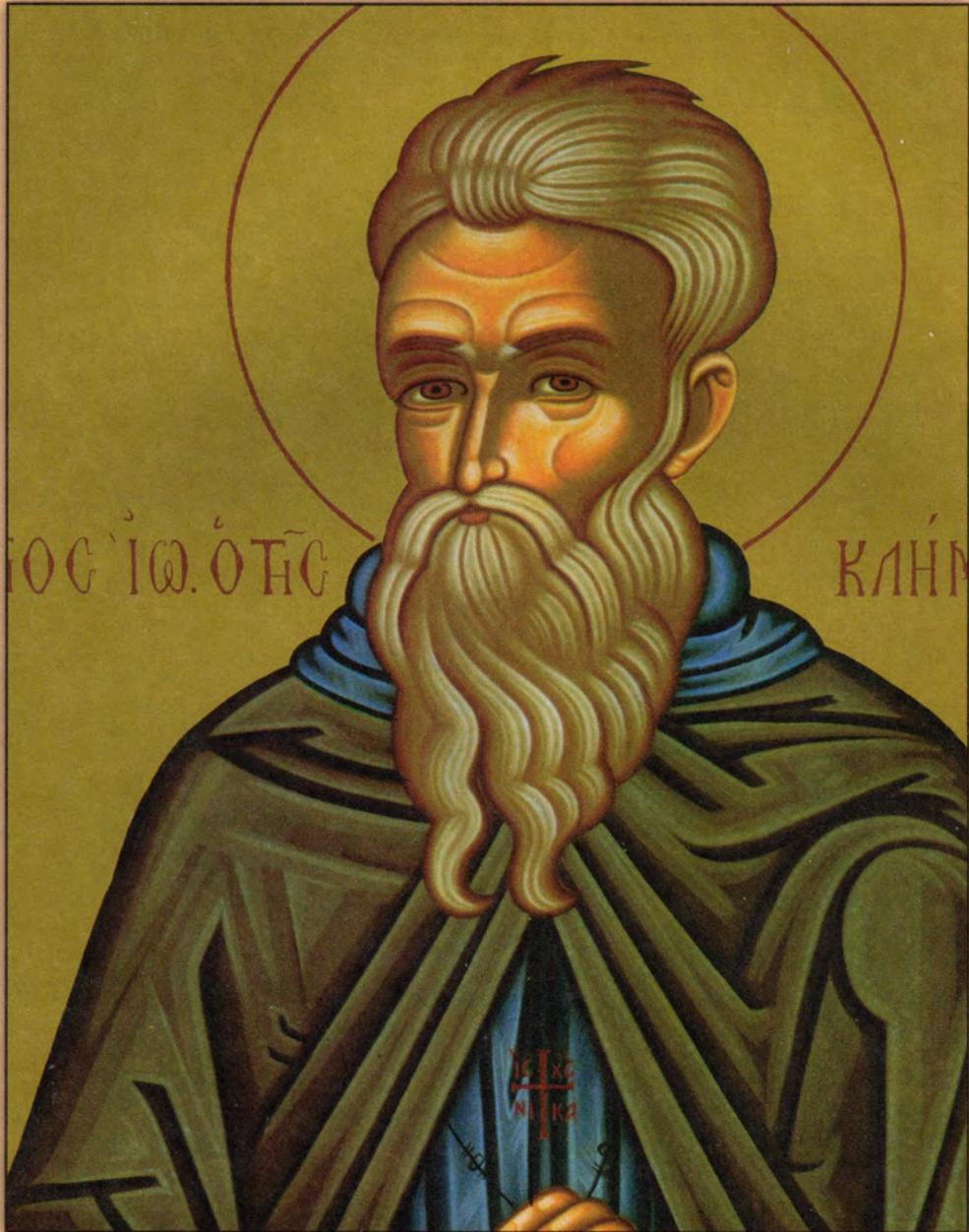


FOURTH SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST
SUNDAY OF ST. JOHN CLIMACUS



Icon of St. John Climacus

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this fourth weekend of the Great Fast, we again hear a reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews and a miracle story from Mark's Gospel, a miracle story which is found in all three Synoptic Gospels.

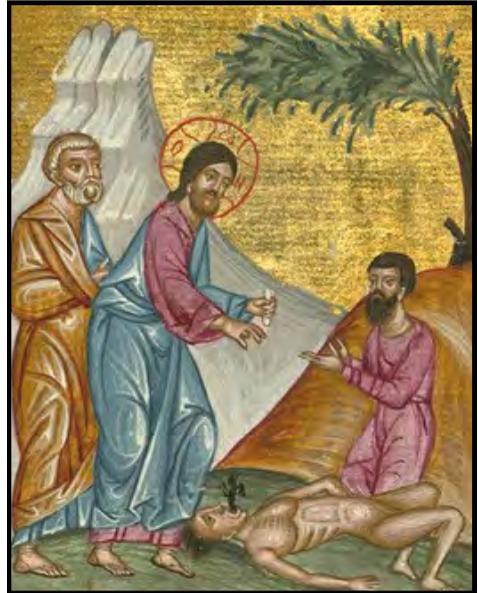
Paul shares with us the fact that God, Yahweh, made a promise to the People of Israel that He would bless and multiply them. Through Jesus, Paul writes, God has made another promise, a promise of life beyond the grave - a promise that is guaranteed because Jesus, through the resurrection of His human nature, has shown us the truth about human life. Life continues on beyond the grave. Of course this requires that we place our hope and trust in God's promise.

The miracle story reported in Mark's Gospel is unique in-so-far as a father brought the possessed boy to Jesus because Jesus' disciples could not cure him. It is apparent that the disciples were already performing miracles while Jesus was still alive.

The father of the boy, after experiencing the failure of the disciples to cure the boy, says to Jesus: *If out of the kindness of your heart you can do anything to help us, please do.* Jesus' response is: *If you can? Everything is possible to a man who trusts.* This very simple comment by Jesus allows the father to make an ACT OF FAITH. He says: *I do believe! Help my lack of trust!*

I believe that this is probably the most important statement in this story. Its one thing to believe. Its another to trust that what you believe is true.

Too often our faith is more intellectual than it is real. We say we believe, but when it comes down to the nitty-gritty, do we really



trust that God loves us and will only allow life to deliver to us what is beneficial for us. It often happens when we pray for something we want and, when we don't get what we want, we don't really trust God. When we pray, we have to pray for what is for our benefit and then allow God to deliver what is for our benefit and truly believe that He knows what is best for us. To do this, of course, means I have to learn how to TRUST GOD.

Challenge yourself today! Ask yourself if you really trust God to only allow what is best for you to happen to you? What is best for you may not be what you want!

THE LENTEN TRIODION



Prayer and fasting should in their turn be accompanied by almsgiving - by love for others expressed in practical form, by works of compassion and forgiveness. Eight days before the opening of the Lenten fast, on the weekend of the Last Judgment, the appointed Gospel is the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, reminding us that the criterion in the coming judgment will not be the strictness of our fasting but the amount of help that we have given to those in need. In the words of the Triodion: *Knowing the commandments of the Lord, let this be our way of life: Let us feed the hungry, let us give the thirsty drink, let us clothe the naked, let us welcome*

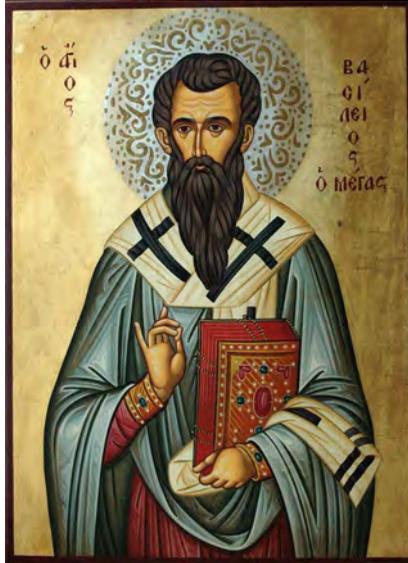
strangers, let us visit those in prison and the sick. The Judge of all the earth will say even to us: Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you.

This stanza, it may be noted in passing, is a typical instance of the 'evangelical' character of the Eastern Church's service-books. In common with so many other texts in the Triodion, it is simply a paraphrase of the words of Holy Scripture.

It is no coincidence that on the very threshold of the Great Fast, there is a special ceremony of mutual reconciliation: for without love toward others there can be no genuine fast. We need to forgive one another, even if we haven't been at odds with one another. Why? Because it sets the tone of the Great Fast. It also signals us that we are willing to support one another in this effort of personal transformation - this personal effort of changing our hearts and minds in order to become more like Jesus, Who is the image of God. There is no one of us who can say that we are sufficiently changed to be an image of Jesus. We all must work at transformation. That is the purpose of this earthly life. That is why others are so very important in this process. We cannot change in the abstract. It is in our very concrete and real interactions with others that we grow in our likeness of Jesus. The Holy Spirit helps us to accomplish this.

ST BASIL'S THOUGHTS ON GENESIS

I ended Basil's comments about creation by sharing his thoughts that before God created, everything was a desolation and emptiness. He then goes on to comment that the Hebrew words translated "desolation and emptiness" are *tohu* and *bohu*, usually translated something like "formless and empty." The word *tohu* is often found in the Old Testament; the word *bohu* only occasionally, when it is paired with *tohu* - presumably for its rhyming value. When we turn from the usual translations of the term to see how the word is used, and therefore what it means, we see that the usual translations could stand some improvement. The thought of *tohu* is not "lacking in form" like a shapeless mass, but denotes its function (not surprisingly, given that creation for the ancients involved function). *Tohu* means "a desolation," "wasteland," "a useless, unproductive place." Thus the howling wilderness was *tohu*, the idols which could not save or profit were *tohu*, God caused His defeated foes to wander in a trackless *tohu* or wilderness. When God made the earth, He did not make it to be *tohu*, but created it to be inhabited. When



God judged Judah through the Babylonian invaders, He made the earth once again *tohu* and *bohu* - not a shapeless mass under water, but a wilderness, its cities laid in ruins and uninhabitable.

Underlying all Old Testament usage of the word is the idea of utility, value, societal worth. The sacred text here declares that none of this existed before God began His work of creation. We miss the point if we insist on importing our modern concepts of creation and interpret the text as saying that the world was once nonexistent (as we define existence and nonexistence). The point here involves function - without God's involvement, nothing was any good, and life as we know it did not exist. There was no laughter or joy, no buying and selling, no wives and children, no sowing and reaping. Everything was desolate and unproductive, *tohu* and *bohu*.

Another way of describing such a state is to say that all was chaos, abyss, the sea, the deep, and moreover that **darkness was over the face of the deep.**

Hopefully, my readers are getting a different idea about GENESIS.

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



LENTEN SERVICES

FRIDAY EVENINGS

Liturgy of the
Presanctified Gifts
7:00 PM

SUNDAY MORNINGS

Lenten Matins
9:30 AM

Basil the Great Liturgy
10:00 AM

FLORAL MEMORIALS

You will find a special envelope in your packet of envelopes for a donation for Easter Flowers. If you would like to contribute to our decorations and also have someone remembered in prayer, please be sure to submit the names.



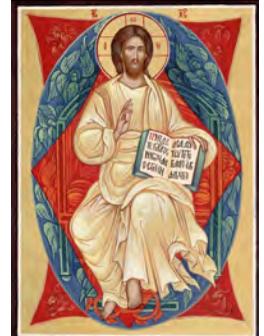
PRAYERS FOR THE SICK



Your prayers are requested for the sick of our parish. A number of our members are currently experiencing health challenges. Remember to pray for the sick of our community,

CALLED TO HOLINESS

As we have passed the mid-point of the Great Fast it occurs to me that the call to holiness is a call to grow in our courage to respond to the challenges of life as Jesus did, that is with courage and nobility.



The Cross tells us that life is designed to present the specific challenges that we need to CHANGE, to become more like Jesus. We just saw, as we venerated the symbol of Jesus' Cross, that He endured the greatest of all His challenges, namely His passion and death, with a true and real nobility and peace. He simply ENDURED all the things that were thrown at Him (e.g., betrayal, hatred, cruelty, torture) with a simply nobility which stated so very clearly that He would not allow how people treated Him to sway the way He treated people. He taught us that it is more important WHO WE CHOOSE TO BE rather than allow others, by the way that we treat us, to get us to be other than children of God.

Of course this requires that all of us realize that we (Continued on page 8)

Friendship is always a sweet responsibility, never an opportunity

A PRAYER A DAY DURING THE GREAT FAST

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

MONDAY, APRIL 1st

Heavenly Father, we have passed the mid-point of Lent. I pray to St. Mary of Egypt to help me continue my efforts. While my Lenten practices are now a regular part of my life, the burden of observing them hasn't lessened. I ask for Your help to continue my effort to the end. I truly want to prepare myself to celebrate the Resurrection. This feast gives me hope for eternal life and while I believe that life is eternal, it is difficult for me to understand how this is possible. May my efforts during Lent help me gain a greater sense of what this means. In all sincerity I ask this of You, Father, and I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

TUESDAY, APRIL 2nd

Heavenly Father, there are only twelve more days before the Great and Holy Week. I ask Your help to maintain my present efforts to prepare myself to truly celebrate this very special week. Help me to fully enter the mystery which this week presents, the mystery of God showing me, through the Person of Jesus, how to live my life. Help me to understand that You underwent all these challenges because of Your great love for me. Help me to believe that it is Your desire that I spiritually grow. I know that Jesus taught me from His Cross how to unconditionally love and forgive all others. Help me to embrace the lesson He taught. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3rd

Heavenly Father help me to focus, during these last few days of the Fast, on my preparation for the Great and Holy Week. It is a week like no other during the year. Help me to concentrate on the great lessons Your Son taught us at the end of His life. Help me to see how He embraced physical suffering. Help me to understand how He was able to unconditionally forgive those who betrayed, abandoned, tortured and killed Him. Help me to see that He taught His greatest lessons during the time of His greatest life challenges. Then, reflecting on these lessons, help me to become determined to grow more in my likeness of Him. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

A PRAYER A DAY DURING THE GREAT FAST

THURSDAY, APRIL 4th

Heavenly Father I confess that I think again, after venerating Your Son's Cross, that You revealed to me how to respond to the challenges of my life. Jesus made a choice how to respond as a man. He showed me that I can respond to the challenges of my life with the same courage and nobility that He did. I also know that I must prepare myself to act as He did by believing in You, my true God and Father, and then by also choosing to live the way that Your Son lived. I ask Your help in developing my ability to truly respond to the challenges of my life as Your Son did. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

FRIDAY, APRIL 5th

Heavenly Father the time of this Great Fast is rapidly ending. I would ask Your help to make these final days truly days of spiritual growth. Help me to prepare for the celebration of Great and Holy Week learn the lessons that it is designed to teach me. I desire with all my heart to be Your child. I know this requires me to look at my life and embrace the ways of thinking and living of Your Son Jesus. I believe that He showed me how I must respond to the challenges of my life. Help me, O Father, by the power of Your Spirit within me, to become more and more like Jesus. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

REMEMBER: this is the last week before the Great and Holy Week. Now is the time to give it your greatest effort!

SATURDAY, APRIL 6th

Heavenly Father today our church remembers St. Methodius, one of the Apostles to the Slavs. I would offer this word of thanks to You, Father, for having sent him to the Slavic lands and bringing the Greek way of worship to these lands. This way of prayer, worship and understanding of our faith is truly a wonderful tradition. I would ask You, Father, to help me grow in my appreciation of the great depth of this faith. Help me to truly embrace the way of worship which he and his companion Cyril gave to us. I truly believe that my Greek faith is one of the many gifts you have given me for my salvation. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

SUNDAY, APRIL 7th

Heavenly Father today our Church remembers St. Mary of Egypt, one of the great Eastern women saints. Her story is one of personal change. Her life changed after she was able to worship the Holy Cross. The power of the Cross, Father, worked wonders for her, giving her the grace and strength to overcome evil. Originally not a religious woman, she transformed herself through prayer and fasting and became this truly remarkable model of what it means to be Your Child. a person who models their life after the life of Your Son Jesus. In her was preserved unimpaired that which is according to God's image for she took up her Cross and followed Jesus. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

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

10:00 AM - Anne Kushner; Luba Bluj

Health of Bob & Corinne Boyko; John & Janet Dicky

FIFTH WEEK OF THE GREAT FAST – TONE 5

Monday, April 1 - Mary of Egypt

No service scheduled

Tuesday, April 2 - Titus, Venerable Wonderworker

No service scheduled

Wednesday, April 3 – Nicetas, Venerable-Confessor

No service scheduled

Thursday April 4 – Joseph & George, Venerable Fathers

No service scheduled

Friday, April 5 - Theodulus, Agathopodes & Others, Martyrs

7:00 PM - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, April 6 - Methodius, Apostle to the Slavs

No service scheduled

Sunday, April 7 - Fifth Weekend of the Fast - Tone 5

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)

have a choice how we respond to how others treat us. We are truly responsible for our behaviors. No one can make us feel any thing. Our feelings are our own. If we respond to the way that others treat us, we must realize that it is our choice, whether that choice is conscious or unconscious. If we find that we react badly to the way that others treat us, then we can choose to change our reaction. We have the power of our own feelings! Jesus showed us so very clearly the truth of this statement. He refused to allow the hatred of others to change Him, causing Him to hate them or condemn them. He chose the path of nobility, humility and compassion. He knew that they did not know what they were doing. So He chose to love them instead. **WE HAVE A CHOICE!**



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

THE PRACTICE OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST

The Great Holy Fast, called also the Forty Days Fast, is one of the oldest and most sacred Christian practices. The history of the Great Fast is long and rich in tradition, dating from Apostolic times. The pre-paschal fast is called Great, not only because of its duration but also because of its significance in the life of the Church and every Christian.

The Fathers of the Church have the greatest respect and the highest praises for the holy fast. In regard to its antiquity, St. Basil wrote: "Allow me again to appeal to history and to recall that fasting is very old and that all the saints observed it as though it were an inheritance from both parents, transmitted from parents to children.

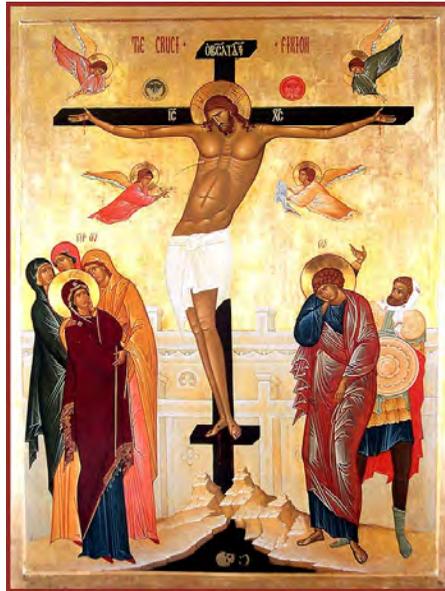
Thus did this treasure come down to us as an unbroken tradition.

It should be noted that traditional forms of religion all include the practice of fasting (e.g., Judaism and Islam).

From Apostolic times, the Apostles and the first Christian communities began to replace the day of the Jewish Passover with a commemoration of the passion and death of our Lord. The death of Christ was seen as a new

Passover, Jesus Himself becoming the new Moses. For them, the anniversary of the death of Christ was a very sad day, so to celebrate it worthily, they fasted on that day. Thus the original celebration of the Christian Pasch (Passover) began with a fast. This was the Pasch of the crucifixion. According to the testimony of St. Irenaeus, which

the Church historian Eusebius mentions, the present Forty Days Fast can be traced back to a time when fasting was restricted to one or two days. This fast was not regarded as a pre-paschal fast but was the Pasch itself. According to this testimony some kept the Paschal fast for one day, others for two, others even more, and some fasted forty



hours.

In post-apostolic times the Church of the second and third centuries began to attend not only to the sad anniversary of the death of Christ, but also to the joyful anniversary of His Resurrection. So along with the Pasch of the Crucifixion the Pasch of the Resurrection began with the ultimate elimination of the Pasch of the Crucifixion slowly being eliminated.

It can truly be a time of grace!

MORE ABOUT HOLY SCRIPTURES: THE GOSPEL OF MARK

I don't know how many of my readers are aware of this, but "commentaries" have been written on all Scripture. These commentaries are a scholarly analysis of the text. For example, the passage we hear from Mark's Gospel this weekend is analyzed in this fashion.

Although this passage is a composite of several stories, Mark has made of them an artful and unified composition consisting of three scenes, each with a narrative and dialogue and portraying Jesus as victor over the demon.

Unlike many of the miracles in Mark that take place privately, this miracle and one other take place before crowds.

They are in the nature of public proclamations of Jesus' Messianic power. The presence of the *Scribes* is inconsequential to the story and they disappear from the scene as soon as Jesus chides his disciples for disputing with them. It may be that Mark says in Jesus' causal dismissal of them an anticipation of his authoritative expulsion of the demon. With regard to the apostles not being able to heal the boy, the Greek tells us that "they were not strong enough." By driving out the demon Jesus will show himself to be the "stronger" one who overpowers

Satan. Jesus' comment about the *unbelieving generation*, seems out of place in this context for it is not applicable either to the crowd, to the disciples, or to the boy's father. Originally added in order to enhance Jesus' transcendence in this scene, it

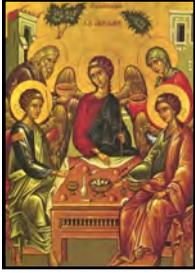
shows that without faith in Christ one is doomed to the fact of this unbelieving generation. Scholars say that Mark apparently intended the boy's exorcism as a symbol of resurrection from death which then connects this story with the prediction of Jesus' own death and resurrection. Since the demon was deaf and dumb the disciples could not resort to the usual

method of dialogue with the demon in order to expel him. A more profound communion with God was required. That is why most texts add the phrase "by prayer and fasting".

Actually this story concludes the section begun with the first prediction of the passion and, like Jesus' instructions, is addressed to the crowds. By its content and context it has both Christological and catechetical significance: it is a sign of Jesus' triumph over Beelzebub, a reminder of his death and resurrection and a call to faith.



The Evangelist Mark



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

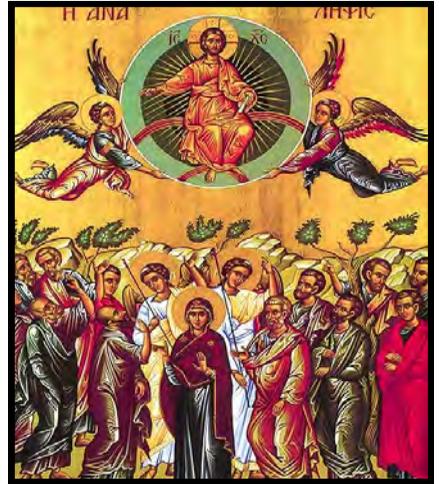
The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 65 No 13 Fourth Weekend of the Great Fast March 30-31, 2019

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

One of the most distinctive characteristics of Eastern theology is its acceptance of the early Christian understanding of creation and of man's ultimate destiny as inseparable from the study of the Holy Spirit's work - pneumatology (*the branch of Christian theology concerned with the Holy Spirit*). It has always been the task of the Eastern wing of the church to keep alive the pneumatological orientation. Too frequently it seems that Western Christianity is more Christocentric and disregards the absolutely essential need for the Holy Spirit's involvement.

Since the divine Spirit is the Giver of life, his main soteriological operation is the divinization of human beings. So the role of the Holy Spirit in Eastern soteriology is highlighted by the ultimate goal of salvation. Redemption has our salvation from sin as an immediate aim, but salvation will have its ultimate realization in the age to come in our union with God, the deification of the created beings whom Christ ransomed. But this final realization involves the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is, of course, inseparable from that of the Son. In the words of St. Athanasius, *God bearing flesh*, and Christians *bearing the Spirit*.

In Eastern spirituality and thought salvation is understood essentially in terms of participation and communion with the deified humanity in the incarnate Logos (Christ). The Eastern Fathers



Life's Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

fathers even dare to call the Spirit the "image of the Son"; by this they imply the truth that the Spirit is the main agent which makes communion a reality. According to Athanasius, the Son has given us "the first fruits of the Spirit, so that we may be transformed into children of God, according to the image of the Son of God.

Think and pray about

Journeying to Pascha

Jesus continues today his work of healing and exorcism, and that is appropriate for this time of Lent, because Lent is a time for healing and exorcism. It is a time for us to heal the wounds of our souls – self-inflicted wounds due to our complacency and laziness and self-indulgence. It is time to get rid of those demons of our own sinful habits and anything that keeps us away from God and from living that abundant life that Christ came to give us.

We start to make our way toward Jerusalem. At the end of today's Gospel already there is the prediction of the passion, the death and the resurrection of Christ, giving a little hint in the Gospel that the course of Lent is moving now towards Jerusalem. We have gone through several weeks now of spiritual preparations, Scripture texts, prayers and activities. Now our focus

is starting to turn towards Jerusalem. That will be made more explicit in next Sunday's Gospel, but we are already getting a hint of it now.

There are only three weeks now until Easter, two weeks until Palm Sunday, when we are really liturgically accompanying Christ into the mystery of His Passion.

So it is coming soon, and we have to start turning towards Jerusalem. We have to get focused, we have to get recollected, we have to really revive our Lenten prayer and fasting so that we can make the rest of this journey and be fruitful and overcome the demons and find healing for the wounds of our souls – and go with Christ to his Passion and, through the mystery of His Cross, come to that great, transfiguring, glorious celebration of His Resurrection.