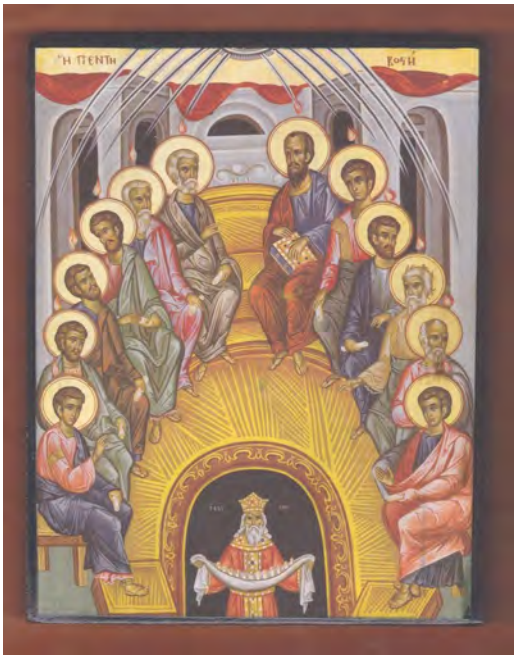
Sunday of Pentecost

Icon of Pentecost

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this weekend when we celebrate the great feast of Pentecost, our readings are again taken from ACTS and John's Gospel. The early Church's experience of the apostles gaining the courage to go forth and continue the ministry of Jesus, is related. Filled with fear of being killed like Jesus, originally the Apostles hid in the upper room, even though they had been visited by Jesus. Something then happened which caused them to put their fears aside and go out and preach the message of Jesus and to perform healings. Pentecost is therefore called the "birthday" of the Church. Their fear of death and persecution was quelled.



What is interesting about this story is that when the apostles went out to preach, everyone listening to them were able to understand them in their own language. The Apostles probably only spoke Aramaic and some Hebrew. Nevertheless, all understood what they preached.

John's Gospel, however, relates, in Chapter 7, three episodes when Jesus spoke during a Jewish celebration of the Feast of Booths. He clearly laid out much about His life and His mission. In the third episode John quotes Jesus as saying: *I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness; no, he shall possess the light of life.*

What I find very interesting is that John, the writer of the Gospel, would have been part of the Pentecost event and yet he does not mention it. Why? He felt it more important to relate what Jesus had said during the Feast of Booths. This feast is connected with the time after the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt. Perhaps the real connection to the Christian feast of Pentecost is that Jesus has led us out of captivity and gave us the ability to bear witness to His teachings. His teachings allow us to "walk in the light" - that is to understand that God's Spirit is within us, helping us to make sense out of the events of this life. We are called to live through Jesus in the Spirit - to be so spirit-filled that we are able to live like Jesus - like a child of God. Open your heart to God's Spirit. What does Pentecost mean to you?

ON THE UNITY OF CHRIST

Since I have sharing with you the thoughts of St. Cyril of Alexandria on the Resurrection of the Human Body, I thought, since St. Cyril is one of the preeminent Fathers of the Eastern Church, that I would share with you his writings on the "Unity" of Christ. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges we have as Christians is to understand Christ as God and Man. We all have our thoughts about what this means. It seems that throughout history humans have made Jesus Christ either more Divine or more human. Our true faith says that He was/is fully and completely God and Man. Cyril addresses this in his treatise on the Unity of Christ.

In his treatise on the unity of Christ, Cyril first discusses the major issue concerning the hypostatic union of the two natures, and then brings to the reader's attention the validity of the *Theotokos (Mother or Bearer of God)* title. The contents of this treatise would prove to be a means of a complex Christological contemplation on the hypostasis of the Divine and human natures of Christ.

The most discussed theme throughout his treatise seems to be the dispute of the Divine hypostasis wherein He, Christ, unites human nature to Himself. St Cyril here and on numerous occasions responds to his friend 'B' against the heretical teaching of Nestorius. Cyril would argue against Nestorius that both natures of Christ must be hypostasized which means that after the incarnation the two natures were not separate realities, but were both in the one Christ. By no means would Cyril agree that Christ would have two *hypostasies* as Nestorius would claim because this would allude to a teaching of two Sons.

According to Cyril, Jesus' two natures,

ST CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

human and divine, are inseparable. Jesus will forever be the God-man, fully God and fully human, two distinct natures in one Person. Jesus' humanity and divinity are not mixed, but are united without loss of separate identity. Jesus sometimes operated with the limitations of humanity (John 4:6; 19:28) and other times in the power of His deity (John 11:43; Matthew 14:18-21).

I would challenge my readers to think about what they truly believe about Christ. Although it is a difficult question, do you believe that Jesus was truly God and truly Man and how that reality impacted His behavior.

ST BASIL'S THOUGHTS ON GENESIS

ST BASIL THE GREAT

DAY THREE

And Elohim said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land "earth," and the waters that were gathered together He called "seas." And God saw that it was good. And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

Continuing the work of making earth habitable on the next morning, God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." and it was so, for the waters obeyed the sovereign command of God. When the waters gathered themselves together, the dry land appeared from where it had been submerged. God gave them both their proper names, thus assigning their functions. He called the dry land "earth," and the gathered waters He called "seas." Since this was now of some use, God saw that it was good.

There was more to do that day if the newly dry land was to prove productive. So then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, that is, both plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind." Once again the earth obediently responded to the sovereign order, vegetation spontaneously sprouting from the now dry soil, with plants and fruit trees. The threefold repetition of the words "each according to its kind" shows the stability of the creation, for in the seed (stressed as being in both plants and fruit trees) was the promise of future growth and harvest.

Moderns concerned to fight against the theory of evolution have fastened on the phrase "each according to its kind" as a kind of slogan against evolutionary claims of the existence of transitional species.

This entire story is, of course, contrived to support Yahweh as the Creator of all.

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

GRAVE BLESSINGS

Holy Sepulchre Cemetary

Today, June 9th @ 2PM

St. Hedwig's Cemetery

All Saints, June 23rd @ 1PM

At each cemetery we first meet at the mausoleum for a general PANAHYDA and then go to individual graves for a blessing.

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A BIG THANKS

I would extend a big thanks to both Dr. Tony Grech and Deacon Candidate Len Mier, Jr. for sharing their thoughts with us last week.

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KNEELING IN PRAYER

Beginning today, it is our tradition to kneel, if we wish, when in prayer. It is also an old tradition to always stand in prayer accept during fast periods. It is a matter of personal choice, but if we stand, do so in the back so as not to block another person's view.

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NEXT WEEK: FATHERS" DAY

A CALL TO HOLINESS

In so many ways the call given to us by God to become holy is closely connected with what we celebrate this weekend. We celebrate the fact that God is not only sharing His Life with us but is also graciously sharing His Spirit with us - that is His power to love, create, think, make decisions, forgive, be merciful and freely act - make decisions. These powers truly are wondrous gifts which we so very often just take for granted. The ability to think, for example, is such a marvelous gift. It can, however, be used for good or for evil. Its within our power, as beings with free will, to distort the true purpose of these powers. They have all been given to us for our good. They are the means that God has given us to "grow in our likeness of Jesus". When we use these powers to bring about "good" in our world, we discover that we "grow", actualizing the true potential within us to become more united to God our Creator. When we use them for evil, we diminish ourselves, making us unlike the beings that our Creator originally envisioned when He conceived us and willed that we come into existence in time.

As I shared in one of my recent sermons, we are called to always think about how we respond to others and to events by asking ourselves two very important questions: (*Continued on page 8*)

OUR MOST IMPORTANT DOCTRINE: THE TRIUNE GOD

As I shared in the last issue, there seems to be among the Eastern Fathers a particular emphasis on the Father of the Trinity. There is an emphasis in the Eastern Fathers on the "monarchy" of the Father. Contrary to the concept which prevailed in the post-Augustinian West and in Lain Scholasticism, Greek theology attributes the *origin* of hypostatic "substance" to the *hypostasis* of the Father - not to the common essence. The Father is the "cause" and the "principle" of the divine nature, which is in the Son and in the Spirit. What is even more striking is the fact that this "monarchy" of the Father is constantly used by the Cappadocian Fathers against those who accuse them of "tritheism": "God is one," writes Basil, "because the Father is one." And the same thought is found in Gregory of Nazianzus: "God is the common nature of the three, but the Father is their union. Pseudo-Dionysius also speaks of the Father as the "source of divinity," and John of Damascus, in his *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* also affirms the essential dependence of the Son and the Spirit upon the *Person* of the Father:

> Whatsoever the Son has from the Father, the Spirit also has, including His very being. And if the Father does not exist, then neither does the Son and the Spirit; and if the Father does not have something, then neither has the Son or the Spirit. Furthermore, because of the Father, that is, because of the fact that the Father is, the Son and Spirit are; and because of the Father, the Son and the Spirit are; and because of the Father, the Son and the Spirit have everything that they have.

We must recognize that the Fathers had to maintain the idea of "MONOTHEISM (ONE GOD)" and yet introduce the idea of Jesus as also God Who was able to accomplish all that He did because of the Power (Spirit) of God the Father. Thus we have ONE GOD impacting His creation through two others: Son and Spirit. This IDEA was not easy to put together. If it had not been for Greek Philosophy, the Church could never have come to the conclusion that God is ONE IN BEING and THREE IN PERSONS.

THE FIRST ECUMENICAL COUNCIL: NICAEA (325)

As I suggested in the last issue of this article, controversy did not cease after the Council of Nicaea. Even when the century is understood as one of evolution in doctrine, scholars continue to talk as if there were a clear continuity among non-Nicene theologians by deploying such labels as Arians, semi-Arians, and neo-Arians. Such presentations are misleading in two very important ways.

First, this controversy is mistakenly call Arian. No clear part sought to preserve Arius' theology. Many who are termed Arian justly protested their ignorance of his teaching or works: their theologies often have significantly different concerns and preoccupations. Even those who initially supported Arius in his struggle with Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, may be misleadingly termed Arian if what they recognized in the controversy over Arius was not an attack on their teacher or main inspiration, but an attack on one who expressed ideas to which they (perhaps only in part) subscribed. Many of Arius' earliest supporters appear to have rallied to him because they, like him, opposed Alexander's theology: we have little information about their allegiance to the emphases of Arius' own theology. For these reasons some scholars now simply refrain from using the term Arian other than as an adjective to describe Arius' own theology. The relationships between those termed Arian must be demonstrated, not assumed.

Second, it is misleading to assume that these controversies were about 'the divinity of Christ' if that implies either *a priori* agreement about the meaning of ascribing divinity to the Son, or if it means that these controversies focused on this specific question. Suggestions that the issue was one of placing Christ (and eventually the Spirit) on either side of a well-established dividing line between created and uncreated are particularly unhelpful. At issue until the last decades of the controversy was the very flexibility with which the term 'God' could be deployed. Many fourth-century theologians easily distinguished between 'God' and 'true God'. In discussions of the relations between the Son and the Father, or between creation and generation, arguments about the 'grammar' for talking about God were also under way.

Everyone was seeking truth!

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

Schedule of Services

Sunday, June 9 - Weekend Of Pentecost
10:00 AM - Deceased of the Parish

PENTECOST WEEK

Monday, June 10 - Pentecost Monday
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Tuesday, June 11 - Bartholomew & Barabas, Apostles
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Wednesday, June 12 - Onuphrius & Peter, Venerables
No Service Scheduled

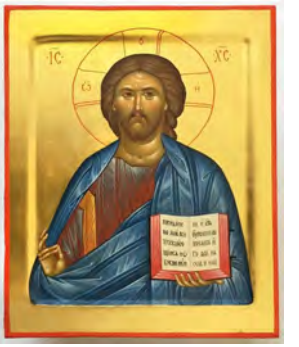
Thursday, June 13 - Aquilina, Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Friday, June 14 - Elish, Prophet
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday, June 15 - Amos, Prophet
No Service Scheduled

Sunday, June 16 - Weekend Of All Saints
10:00 AM - Volodemir Damoretskii; Jaroslava Zalopanyj

(*Continued from page 5 - the Call to holiness*)



What would Jesus do? and *How would Jesus respond*? If we get accustomed to answering these two questions before we react to others or situations, we will change. The call to holiness is a call to develop the habit of always being very aware of the meaning and purpose of life. If we do this, we will gradually begin to think more and more like Jesus and to act more and more like Jesus since the purpose of LIFE is to become more like Jesus.

One of the greatest tendencies we humans have is that we LIKE TO MAKE EXCUSES for not taking personal responsibility for our lives, that is how we think, feel and behave.

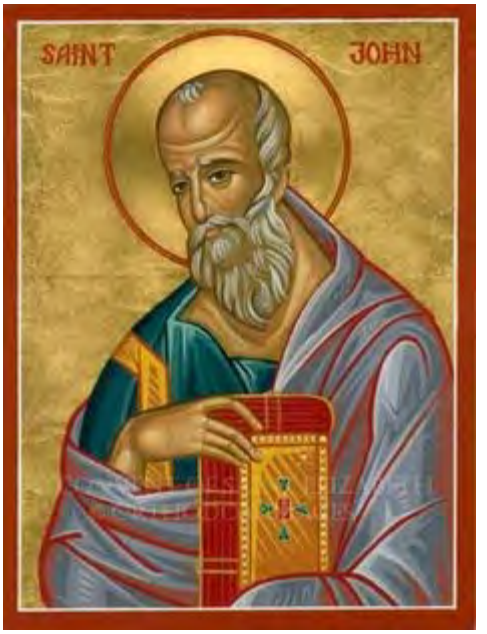
http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org - and - Facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn

MORE ABOUT ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

A stately church stood formerly over the tomb where St. John was buried. It is presently a Turkish mosque.

It is important to note, I believe, the clear teachings of St. John in his holy writings about love. St. John teaches that without the love of God no one can please Him. "He that loves not, knows not God, for God is love." He continues saying: "Let us love God, because God first loved us." This is the first maxim in a spiritual life, which this apostle most tenderly inculcates.

The second is that our fidelity in continually repenting and shunning all sin, and in striving to be keeping all God's commandments, is the proof of our love for God, but especially a sincere love for our neighbor is its great test. "For he that does not love his brother whom he sees, how can he love God whom he does not see?" Our blessed Redeemer, in the excess of His boundless love for all men, presses this duty upon all men, and, as an infinitely tender parent, conjures all His children to love one another even for His sake. He who most affectionately loves them all will have them all to be One, in One Body, in Union, in Re-Union (as St. Athanasios the Great says) in sanctification/deification, in acquiring the Holy Spirit (Which Saint Seraphim of Sarov says is the goal of Christian life) and growing in the Uncreated Energy of God in *Theosis* in Him, and therefore He commands us to bear with one another's infirmities and to forgive one another all debts or injuries, and as much as in us lies "to live peaceably with all men." This is the very genius and spirit of his law of love, without which we can have nothing of a Christian disposition, or truly deserve the name of his children or disciples. Neither can we hope with a peevish, passionate, or unforgiving temper ever to be heirs of heaven. Harmony, goodness, unanimity, mutual complacency, and love will be the invariable temper of all its blessed inhabitants. Those happy regions are the abode of everlasting peace and love.



ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

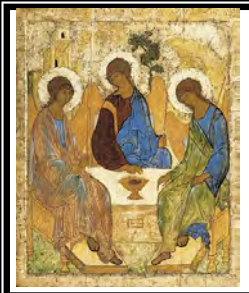
John sets forth the true message of his beloved friend and teacher, Jesus!

UNDERSTANDING THEOSIS - DEIFICATION

In the last several Bulletins I shared with my readers a number of different Biblical references which serve as a foundation for the process that is called *THEOSIS* or *DEIFICATION.* This process is the true "goal" of earthly life. Although some of the passages I shared concern the afterlife, or events connected with the return of Christ, all of them have implications for the present life of believers, suggesting an ongoing transformation, a progressive *engodding* of the believers, to use the endearing Old English phrase.

I would now look at the implications of this grouping of biblical sayings. Imitation of God leads to a reception of the character traits of God, an idea that is standard throughout most of the Bible. The idea of being indwelt by a special spirit of God is found intermittently throughout the Old Testament, and is a central idea in the New Testament. This is not synonymous with *Theosis,* but it is an indispensable element in any theology of *Theosis*. Without the constant guidance of God, we humans always go astray. Without "encouragement," the renewal of spiritual courage in our hearts, we constantly grow faint, like Peter after Jesus was arrested. But with a strong connection to inner guidance, believers "shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles" (Isa 40:31). "We do not lose heart....our inner nature is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). As Jesus said, "the kingdom of God is within you". This saying should not be marginalized just because it occurs in only one gospel. It is an indispensable part of the proclamation of Jesus, and is fully consistent with his teachings about an indwelling Spirit of Truth that :"will be in you," and of the "light in you."

What surely suggests *Theosis* is the notion of being transformed by God, or taking on the divine nature. In the letters of Paul, in particular, this means being transformed into the likeness of Christ, who is the embodiment of God. Believers are "conformed to" and "transformed into" the image of Christ, even having the "mind of Christ". One may suppress the divinizing implications of these passages, but not of those that say that believers will "become the righteousness of God."



THE EASTERN HERALD
СХІДНЙЙ ВІСНИК

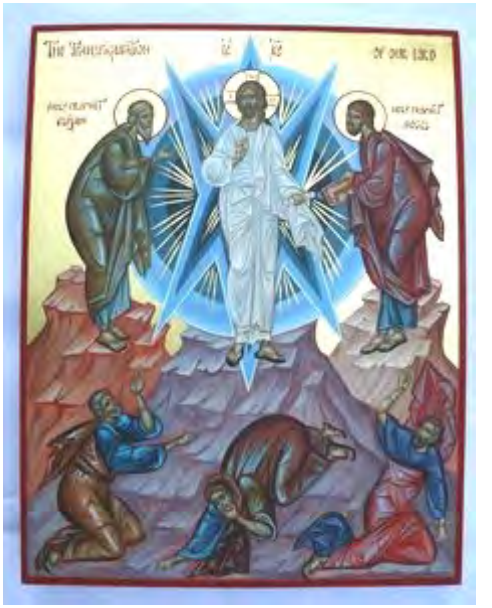
The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.

Vol. 65 No 23 Weekend of Pentecost June 8-9, 2019

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

If it is the case that salvation is the dominant theme of religions, then soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, occupies a privileged place in theology. One theologian has argued to this effect: "The whole of the theology is inherently developed from a soteriological point of view, salvation is not one of the main topics, along with the doctrine of God, Christ, church sacraments, eschatology and the like, it is rather the perspective from which all these subjects are interpreted". Even though this statement betrays the specific interest of Lutheran theology, as a general principle it holds.

The challenge to Christian theology, and therefore to Spirituality, is that the Christian church on earth is hopelessly divided in terms of doctrines, polities, tastes, leadership patterns and so on. All Christians, however, want to give their distinctive testimony to one and the same God and God's Son, the Savior of all, Jesus Christ. According to the Christian understanding, all people, whether within or outside of the church, have the very same need: to be saved from fear and judgment to love and safety. Even though we believe and live our Christian lives within our various traditions, we do not suffer or die merely as Baptists, Catholics, Orthodox or Pentecostals. Whether we like it or not, all Christians are on



THE TRANSFIGURATION

their way to the very same salvation provided by the same Almighty God. For Christian testimony to win any kind of credibility in an unbelieving and doubting world, we need a consensual understanding of salvation.

It is my contention that our Eastern Church presents the most comprehensive and coherent understanding of salvation.

There is Life in the Church because in the Church is the Spirit

My brothers and sisters, if you want the Holy Spirit to dwell in you, listen carefully. Our spirit, by means of which each individual lives, is called the soul. And look what the soul does in the body. It gives life to all the limbs. It sees with the eyes, hears with the ears, smells with the nose, speaks with the tongue, works with the hands, walks with the feet. It is present at one and the same time in all the limbs to make them live. It gives life to all the limbs and to each limb its function. It is not the eye that hears, not the ear that sees, not the eye or the ear that speaks. Yet they are nonetheless alive. The ear is alive, the tongue is alive. Their functions are different, the life is the same.

The Church of God is like that. By means of some believers she performs miracles, by means of others she teaches the truth; by means of some she keeps virginity, by means of others she respects marital fidelity. The tasks are different, the life is the same. What the soul is to the body of a human being, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, the Church. The Holy Spirit does for the whole Church what the soul does for the body of the individual. Look then and see what you ought to fear and what you ought to avoid. If the body suffers an amputation (for example of a finger or a hand or a foot) does the soul go with the limb that has been cut off? While it was in the body, that limb was alive; when it is cut off it loses its life. It is like that with Christians. They are alive only while they are in the Body. If they are cut off from the Body, the Holy Spirit is no longer with them.

St. Augustine of Hippo