

SUNDAY OF THE FATHERS OF THE FIRST SIX ECUMENICAL COUNCILS



Icon of the Holy Fathers

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

This weekend our readings are taken again from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans and Matthew's Gospel. At the end of the passage taken from Paul's letter to the Romans we read: *For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Faith in the hearts leads to justification, confession on the lips to salvation.* What a wonderful and succinct statement to guide us as we attempt to work with God to achieve our salvation.

So ask yourself: *Do I truly confess that Jesus is Lord? Do I truly believe that God raised Him from the dead? Do I truly believe that Jesus is God's revelation to me about how to lead this earthly life?* This passage calls us to truly attempt to define what we really believe. Does the story of Jesus make sense to you? Do you understand that Jesus is God's revelation on how we humans are to live in order to grow into the persons that God intended when He created us? Does this belief stir you to want to grow and change?

The Gospel passage that we share this weekend is about Jesus casting out the demons that possessed two men coming out of the tombs.

The important feature of this story is that the exorcisms show that Jesus liberates men from the fear of demons. Demons have no real power



and are instantly subdued by a word from Jesus. The power of God overcomes any other power. The significance of exorcism is not that the Christian should or should not believe in demons and their power, but that the Christian should treat demonic power as non-existent. There is only one power with which men must reckon, and that is the power of God.

Unlike other miracle stories, this story is an instance of the failure of a wonder to inspire faith - the local folks asked Jesus to leave and the Gospel makes no comment on the reasons. Matthew, unlike the story in Mark, omits the request of the men to follow Jesus and the commission Jesus gives them to proclaim the wonder.

Do you take time to proclaim the wonder of God in your life or do you look at the negative (i.e., challenges) events that come into your life as somehow acts of punishment? The only way that we can grow is by the challenges that present themselves to us and the way we handle them.

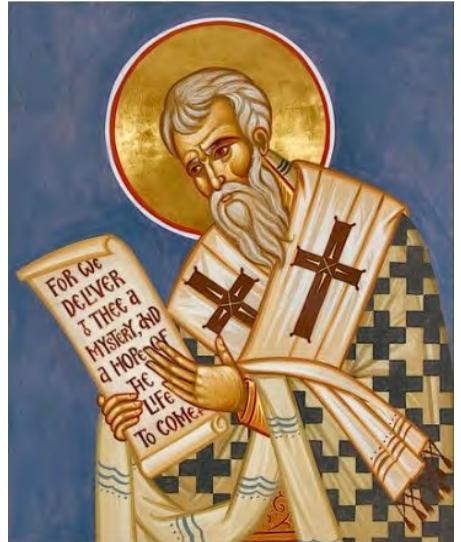
ON THE UNITY OF CHRIST

St Cyril poses a series of questions within the dialogue to make his friend understand the notion of the *Theotokos*: ‘then why did the Word, who is God, make a virgin the mother of his own flesh with a conception a pregnancy straight from the Holy Spirit?’ Furthermore Cyril conveys to his friend a further question of the same nature: ‘if they really believed that he was God, then why would they be afraid of calling her who gave him birth ‘Mother of God- I mean after the flesh?’ Cyril claims that to reject the title *Theotokos* is like joining forces with another heresy: *The denial of the Theotokos is logically the same as Arianism, those who refuse to confess that Mary is the Mother of God, do not appreciate the fullness of the Son’s participation with us, just as the Arians misunderstood the fullness of the Son’s participation in God.*

The quote above makes an interesting point, because if Nestorius was saying that Jesus was a perfect man, only a man, then he may have been implying the Arian view that He was only a Divine creation from God and not God Himself. However this idea seems conflicting with his theory of impassibility because God alone is impassible.

Cyril’s upholding of the title *Theotokos* is the safeguard to the **true union of God and man in Christ**, because it excludes the idea that Christ is either merely a God bearing man or a God who simply uses the body as an instrument.

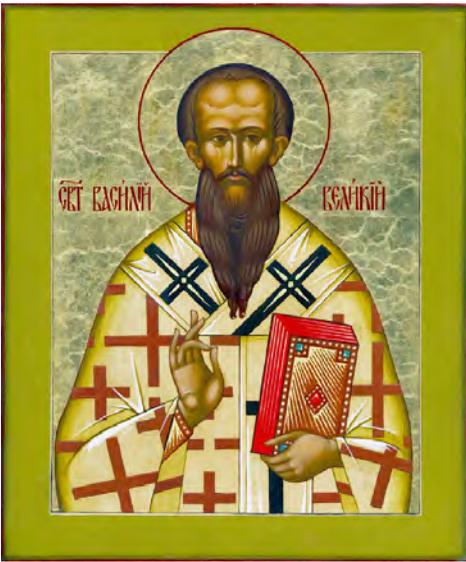
The unity of Christ by St Cyril is a powerful teaching. The unity of Christ is a notion of interchange and transformation, in which God has inaugurated its purpose for transfiguration. Cyril’s Christology is certainly a paradigm for



ST CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

the life of each and every contemporary Christian. We uphold in every Divine Liturgy the ideas of union expressed by St Cyril when we hear the hymn of the *only begotten Son and Word of God*. The **unity of the two natures of Christ** is an example of the relationship we ought to embrace with God. The evilness and confused sayings of Nestorius signifies the way by which we who live within the church can be caught up in the snares and traps of the devil from a delusional mind which lead us to spiritual darkness. The union of God and Jesus is a model for our relationship with God.

ST BASIL'S THOUGHTS ON GENESIS



ST BASIL THE GREAT

In the last issue I shared with you, my readers, that on day five God created *tanninim*, that is creatures of chaos. In pagan mythologies they symbolized rebellion, and even in the Old Testament they still savored a menace. The terrible Leviathan was one of these creatures, as was Rahab and God warred against them.

Here the narrator declares that even these creatures are simply another part of God's handiwork. Unlike in pagan Near Eastern mythologies, they are not God's rivals or foes. God has no rivals. Even the terrible *tanninim* of the deep were made by God and form part

of His world. Nothing in the world can be considered as on the edges of His sovereignty. He rules over all, and His care keeps harmony throughout the cosmos. The sea, considered a liminal place of chaos by most, was simply another place where His creative love could be seen.

With the creation of animate beings teeming in the waters and flying across the face of the firmament, God speaks for the first time directly to His creation, and it is a word of blessing. He *blessed them* (i.e., bestowed upon them life, vitality, fertility) and commanded them to manifest this blessing by being fruitful. They were to increase in number and fill the waters in the seas and multiply on the earth - even the dreaded *tanninim*!. The terrible Leviathan, dreaded by mankind as the fearless king over all the sons of pride was simply another part of God's harmonious whole, created to play in the waters.

And God said on DAY SIX, "Let the earth bring forth animate beings according to their kinds - animals and creeping things and living things of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. And God made the living things of the earth according to their kinds and the animals according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. Then God said, "Let us make Man in our image, after our likeness., And let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the animals and over all the earth and over every creeping things that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image.

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



CONGRATULATIONS

Reverend Subdeacon
LENARD MIER, JR

It is with great joy that I extend, on behalf of the entire Parish Family, our heart-felt *Congratulations* to Lenard on his ordination to the minor orders: Acolyte, Reader and Subdiaconate. Len has done very well in all of his seminary course work. It is a pleasure to have him in our parish and, hopefully, within a few short months he will be our deacon. Please remember to take the time to congratulate him.

NEW TOPICS

I'm looking for some new topics to address in this Bulletin. What would you like me to address? If you have any suggested topics that I can address in Bulletin articles, please let me know. Drop a note in the collection basket or:
WRuchgy@gmail.com

A CALL TO HOLINESS

The call to holiness is a call to truly TRUST in God that He will be true to His promise to always be with us and help us navigate the difficulties of life. Unfortunately, most people want God to **rescue** them from the challenges of life. God does not rescue us but, rather, goes through the challenges of life with us. To rescue us from the challenges of life would deprive us of the opportunities to change and grow. Although people don't like to think about this, without challenges we would never grow. It is the challenges of life that require us - force us, as it were - to change. A life without challenges would result in us always staying the same.



Life is about personal change! The goal of this earthly life is to grow and change, becoming more and more like Jesus and more and more like the person God intended when He created us. In order to achieve this, we **HAVE TO CHANGE**. Change is not bad. It may be uncomfortable, but it is not bad. We humans don't like to change because we don't know what the outcome will be.

Its very similar to our thoughts about death. We humans tend to fear death because we haven't come to a real understanding of what might come after death. God, through Jesus, has revealed to us that "life is eternal" and that we will continue to live after our earthly death and continue to grow as children of God.

(Continued on page 8)

OUR MOST IMPORTANT DOCTRINE: THE TRIUNE GOD

It is probably in the context of the doctrine of the “ENERGY THAT IS GOD” that one should understand a unique passage in Palamas, where he seems inspired by the Augustinian “psychological” image of the Trinity. Palamas writes: *The Spirit of the Word from on high is like the mysterious love of the Father toward the Word mysteriously begotten; it is that possessed by the Word, the beloved Son, toward the Father who begat Him; this the Son does insofar as He comes from the Father conjointly with this love, and this love rests naturally upon him.* Since the whole approach to the Trinity in Palamas is different from Augustine’s, it is certainly the result of the personalistic interpretation, which can be given to the “psychological” image being used here to suggest the Trinitarian mystery: love unites the three divine hypostases and pours out, through their common divine “energy” or “action,” upon those worthy to receive it.

So think about this. God is, first and foremost, this great energy which we call love. It is so powerful that it has to express itself in three distinct persons and has to “create” because love must be expressed. Love is always creative. It brings other things, other persons, into existence. Love cannot be contained - it must be expressed. So God, Who is truly the source of the energy of love, must share this love. That is the nature of love. God’s love results in our creation!

The distinction - a real distinction - between divine “essence” and divine “energy” is made unavoidable in the context of the doctrine of “deification,” which implies a “participation” of created man in the uncreated life of God, whose essence remains transcendent and totally unparticipable. All these aspects of the



doctrine of God will, in fact, be faced simultaneously during the controversies between Gregory Palamas and his adversaries in the fourteenth century. His conclusion, necessarily, is that “three elements belong to God: essence, energy and the triad of the divine hypostases.

Because Gregory is very, very difficult to comprehend, many Western Christians have rejected him. It is hard, I know, to conceive God as “energy” that is, somehow, contained in three Persons. And yet when we look at our own lives, we understand that “energy” is that which brings us and sustains us in existence. We are, through some mysterious way, energy that is captured in flesh and form. Not unlike God Himself.

THE FIRST ECUMENICAL COUNCIL: NICAEA (325)

So the Council of Nicaea set in place the beginnings of how the followers of Jesus understood God. Probably in the year 318 a controversy erupted in Alexandria between a priest, Arius, and his bishop Alexander. This controversy concerned the relationship between God the Father and the Son or Word. Alexander taught that the Son, although 'between created and uncreated', was always with the Father and eternally generated from the Father. Arius objected, emphasizing that there was only one God, the Father, and the Son existed by the will of the Father from 'before the ages' but not eternally and without sharing the Father's being. Thus this initial controversy concerned questions both of the status of the Word or Son of God and about the very nature of God.

After some initial meetings in Alexandria and elsewhere, in CE 325 a council of bishops (mostly from the eastern half of the Roman empire) met at the behest of the emperor Constantine at the city of Nicaea to deal with a number of controversial issues including this dispute. The council issued a creed which said that the Son was generated 'from the essence of the Father' and was hence *homoousios* (the same thing or being or essence) with the Father. The creed also condemned anyone who said that the Son was from an *ousia* or *hypostasis* other than that of the Father. Arius was condemned and



exiled. This dispute reflected and, in turn, stimulated tension between different theological trajectories present at the time it erupted. Many of these eastern trajectories owed much to the development of different trends found in Origen's thought. Some of these trends emphasized the closeness between Father and Son and the Son's sharing of the Father's being by the deployment of unitarian language and with often strongly material analogies (e.g., the Son as light from light). Other trajectories focused on the distinctions between Father and Son and emphasized the special status of the Father as alone 'true God.' All of these trajectories shared a basic understanding of the way theology focused around attention to the text of Scripture.

It was not an easy thing to come up with a new concept of ONE GOD being composed of THREE DISTINCT PERSONS Who all shared in the very same essence and nature. What a wondrous revelation.

Schedule of Services

Sunday, July 14 - Fifth Weekend After Pentecost - Tone 4
10:00 AM - Special Intention

SIXTH WEEKEND AFTER PENTECOST - TONE 5

Monday, July 15 - Vladimir the Great, Equal to the Apostle
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Tuesday, July 16 - Athenogenes, Bishop-Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, July 17 - Marina, Great Martyr
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Thursday, July 18 - Hyacinth & Emilian, Martyrs
No Service Scheduled

Friday, July 19 - Macrina, Venerable
8:00 AM - Special Intention

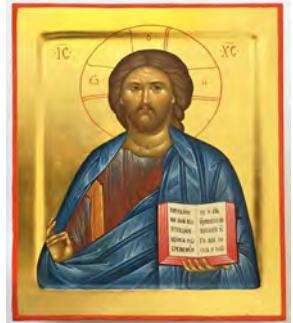
Saturday, July 20 - Elijah, Great-Prophet
No Service Scheduled

Sunday, July 21 - Sixth Weekend After Pentecost - Tone 5
10:00 AM - Special Intention

(Continued from page 5 - the Call to holiness)

It is my firm belief that life is an eternal experience of growing and changing, becoming ever more like the persons God intended when He created us. This cannot be achieved in one short earthly lifetime. So we are involved in an eternal process of growing. The more that we achieve during this lifetime, the more satisfied we will be in the next lifetime.

I know that this might be difficult to comprehend and understand. But think about it. Life does not end according to our beliefs. Life goes on. So what does this mean? I don't believe we are going to sit on a cloud and play a harp for the rest of eternity. I hope that you, my readers, don't think that either.



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Pastor

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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
248.431.9554

Leo & Mary LaDouceur
313.278.7378

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Greg & Esther Petrovich
734.453-4354

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313.624.9867

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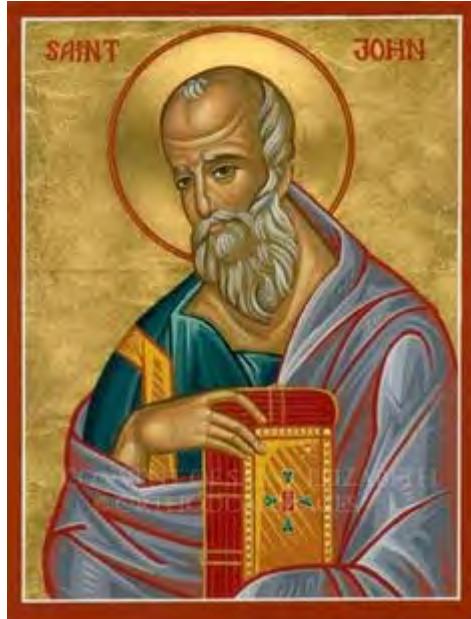
MORE ABOUT ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

The Johannine Christ, it seems, differs radically from the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels. In John we find no parables, no simple moral instruction, no controversy on the terrain of law and practice that caused the people of Galilee to hail Jesus as a prophet.

Instead we have allegories, involved symbolism, a truly technical and subtle vocabulary and a series of magisterial pronouncements: *I am the bread... the light... the door... the shepherd... the resurrection... the way... the vine.* All these characteristics can be readily duplicated in the “revelations” of the various “saviors” of Hellenistic religions. Such characteristics are appealed to in the

“Gnostic” explanation of the world of Johannine ideas that is still encountered in some scholars’ interpretations of John. The Evangelist has been presumed to have done for Christianity what Philo of Alexandria had done for Judaism, that is to say, to have translated it into Greek philosophy. The link between the Hellenistic speculation and the originally Jewish origins of Christianity

has been found in some authors and Mandaeism, a strange sect which still survives in Iraq, combining Jewish, Christian, Muslim and pagan strains of thought in a kind of theosophical system, and which gives some evidence of having had a Palestinian origin.



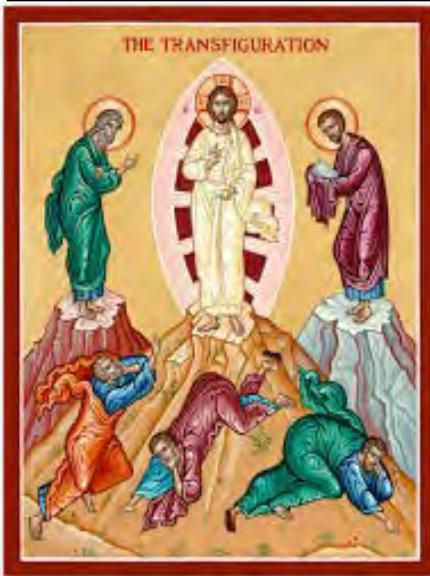
ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

That John possesses considerable verbal similarity with the documents of these alien ways of thought is undeniable. The Evangelist has certainly taken account of the Hellenistic milieu in which he lived and in which his Gospel was intended to circulate. Does the relationship go any deeper than this? Most scholars replied in the negative and recent developments have

vindicated their judgment.

Since 1946 we have for the first time been in a position to evaluate Gnosticism from its own sources. In that year a complete Gnostic library was discovered at Chenoboskion in southern Egypt, including many works previously known only by reference in the writings of the Church Fathers, affording virtually a complete dossier on Gnosticism.

UNDERSTANDING THEOSIS - DEIFICATION



Some of the ending thoughts in the last issue of this article were: *The goal of life is to come to resemble God. In order to do this, it is necessary to repudiate sensuality and selfishness. Spiritual progress means imitating God, taking on God's righteous, rational and controlled nature. This results in an actual transformation, even taking on God's incorruption.*

Philo of Alexandria is one of the most interesting Middle Platonic thinkers, utilizing both Platonic and Stoic terms and allegorizing, while remaining connected to Jewish monotheism. Philo

draws heavily upon Plato and the interpreters of Plato for ethics and metaphysics alike. Philo uses the adjective *Theosis* to speak of God's justice and mercy, as we might expect, but also to describe the special status of biblical figures, especially, Moses, who was "a piece of work beautiful and godlike, a model for those who are willing to copy it".

But imitation of God is possible for anyone: solitude is an opportunity for "those who desire to find God, to become like his blessed and happy nature." Those draw near to God "who regard it as their goal to be fully conformed to God who begat them." People are "nearly related to God." God "made man partaker of kinship with Himself in mind and reason." The human intellect is "an impression of, or a fragment or a ray of that blessed nature."

More than the average person, however, the prophet is a "friend of God," and "would naturally partake of God himself." Moses, again, was "full of the divine spirit and under the influence of that spirit." This is not just spiritualizing language for a purely mental experience. Philo believe that the human mind is temporarily "removed at the arrival of the divine Spirit, but is again restored to its previous habitation when that Spirit departs." Thus there are two kinds of *Theosis* in Philo: prophetic oraculation, which is an extraordinary but momentary divinization; and the gradual divinization or "conforming to God" that results from lifelong practice of reason and piety.

However we look at *Theosis*, it is a process of growing in our likeness of Jesus, Who is the "image of God." We grow in His likeness when we begin to think and act more like Him. Of course we have to want to do this!



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

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

Vol. 65 No 28

Fifth Weekend After Pentecost

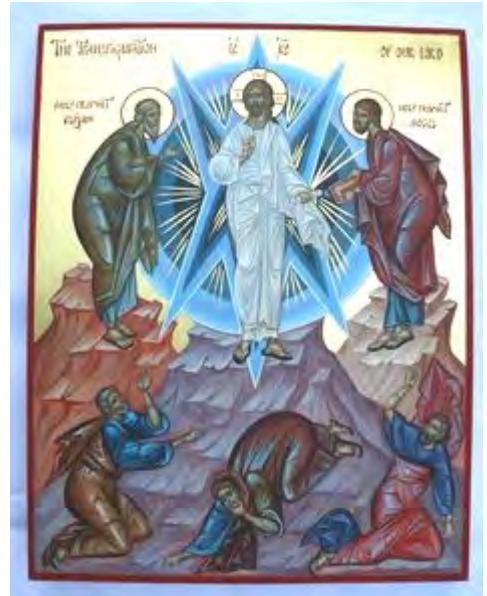
July 13-14, 2019

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

Union with God, as God's greatest gift to the human race and the ultimate goal of human existence, has always been a prime consideration in the teachings on salvation of the church fathers, especially in the East. The Eastern doctrine of deification is based on a mystical-apophatic worldview and method in theology. The fact that doctrines do not emerge in a vacuum should alert us to contextual factors in shaping the form and content of Christian ideas. It is clear that the doctrine of justification in its Protestant form is shaped by the earlier Medieval feudal society with its hierarchical, judicial outlook.

What I am saying is that Christian ideas about human salvation grow in the context of what is prevalent in the society in which they emerge. For example, Western Christianity has been greatly influenced by the advance of the "scientific method." This method tends to define all things and to search for data to support the ideas advanced.

In Eastern Christianity, there is no real attempt to justify ideas with data or "physical proof". It is all a matter of faith. The Eastern Church realizes that we can never truly understand God and the ways of God because He is beyond "comprehension". He is the ultimate "mystery" and we can only believe what He has revealed through Jesus



THE TRANSFIGURATION

or disbelieve the revelation. Beliefs based on evidence do not require "faith." Faith means that I accept and hold as true those things that I do not truly understand but which are not contradictory to sensible beliefs. It is important that each of us decides what we actually believe. It does make a difference. Beliefs change our experience of life!

Authority of the Council - Authority of the Church

The authority of the Councils is based also on their ecclesiological grounding. A council is not an independent, autonomous body, additional, coming from outside, acting unilaterally. It is not the product of accidental circumstances in history and imposed afterwards. It is closely, or rather organically, related with the very essence of the Church. This body of Christ is a living organism, destined to grow, to face difficulties during this process, to be implanted in other regions of the world needing inculturalization and a certain adaptation.

Such embodiment and multifaceted ministry creates problems, tensions, even divisions and in spite of the good will of the local bish-

op and pastors, the convocation of a major assembly is considered as a natural instrument, salutary and indispensable.

The official voice of the catholicity and the koinonia of all the other sister churches, in harmony and guided by the Spirit, would only provide the new assessments, possible remedies and solutions. The functioning of such a council was such that the opinions and requests at issue found expression from the very womb of the Church. Once the decision was made, the people had a part in receiving it and publicizing it (Acts 15:22) as is seen in the first assembly of Jerusalem.

Metropolitan Emilianos