

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Ὁ ΧΡΙΣΤὸς εὐλογῶν τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους  
καὶ τοὺς δύο ἰχθύας



*Icon of Feeding the Five Thousand*

## A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this eighth weekend after Pentecost, our readings are taken from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians and again from St. Matthew's Gospel. Our Epistle readings finish our readings from Romans.

St. Paul established a Christian community in Corinth about the year 50 CE. According to his own testimony in this epistle, written around 56 CE, he wrote the letter because of the city's extreme moral depravity and its pagan cult, which included the practice of religious prostitution. It seems that the community's ills were reflected in the celebration of the eucharistic liturgy itself, when some members behaved clannishly, drank too freely at the agape and denied Christian social courtesies to the poor among the membership.

In the passage read, Paul writes: *The message of the cross is complete absurdity to those who are headed for ruin, but to us who are experiencing salvation it is the power of God.* The message of the Cross is, of course, one of unconditional love and forgiveness for others.

Our Gospel reading is the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand with five loaves and two fish. Truly the ceremonial with which Jesus blesses and distributes the food anticipates the Last Supper. Biblical scholars believe the incident is related less for the element of the miraculous than as



a symbol and an anticipation of the Eucharist and of the Messianic banquet. The association with the Eucharist is more explicit in John 6, where the multiplication of the loaves is followed by John's Eucharistic discourse. It is a Messianic sign and symbol that will find its fulfillment in the true Messianic banquet, which is the Eucharist.

Matthew has abbreviated here less sharply than elsewhere; but his abbreviations, achieved by the omission of some details and dialogue, have the effect of heightening the symbolic significance of the incident.

The message of the Cross and the message of the Eucharist are truly integrated. Christ destroyed Death by His own death and, if we join with Him in thanking the Father for the Gift of Life, we truly worship the Father.

The Eucharist is all about worship of the Father Who shares life with humanity. The Cross is all about the fact that since we share in God's own life, we are immortal - life is eternal!

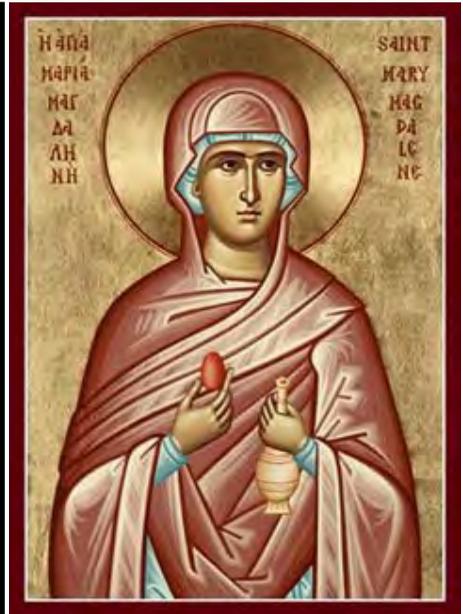
# SIGNS OF A DYNAMIC EASTERN CHRISTIAN

I recently presented research data that says that 7 percent of Catholics are accomplishing more than 80 percent of what we are doing today. Just imagine what 14 percent could do, not to mention what 21 percent or 35 percent could accomplish. Our potential is incredible. Our Catholic church, especially our Eastern Catholic Church, is a sleeping giant. We literally have the power to change the world.

Think about it. If we engaged just another 1 percent of our parishioners over the next year, transforming them into Dynamic Catholics, it would be a game changer. It would result in 11.4 percent more volunteer hours, which would allow other parishioners to be served and make our community more effective in a world that sorely needs some sane and true Christian influence. It would bring about a 11.4 percent increase in revenue, which would allow our parish to invest in powerful and important ministries that would further drive engagement. All this as a result of a shift from 7 percent to 8 percent - just 1 percent more highly engaged Catholics.

Think about what we could do if we could transform another 7 percent into highly engaged parishioners over the next seven years. One percent each year. It would not mean every person in the parish would be passionately interested and engaged - just 14 percent. And imagine the incredible outreach, service and spiritual development our parish could deliver.

This is the 1 percent that could change the world. If we can focus on engaging 1 percent more of our parishioners in a really intentional way each year, we can literally change the world.

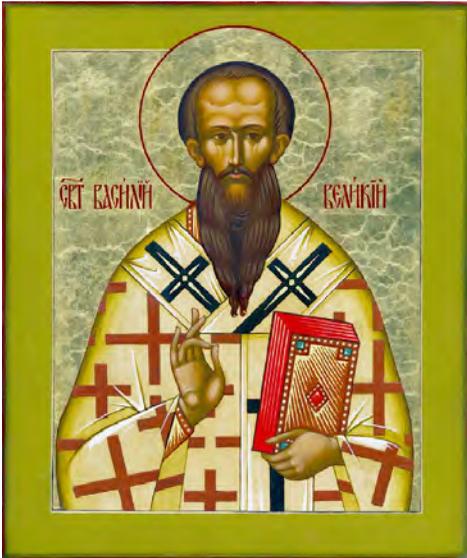


## ST. MARY MAGDALENE

So the big question is, how do we go about increasing the number of Dynamic Catholics in our parish. The questions must be: *What makes the 7% different. What do the 7% do, think and believe that is different from what the 93% do, think and believe?*

There are many things that make the 7% different from the rest of Catholics. There are several, however, things that the 7% have in common. In the coming weeks I propose to address these differences and point out what the signs are of Dynamic Eastern Christians.

## ST BASIL'S THOUGHTS ON GENESIS



### ST BASIL THE GREAT

I ended the last issue of this article by suggesting that the gods of the pagan world at the time Genesis was written, always contained the words with a “divine council.” We find reference to this “divine council” in the Old Testament (OT). We find it again in Psalm 89:5, where Yahweh is described as praised “in the assembly of the holy ones,” which is probably why His abode is referred to as the “mount of assembly” in Isaiah 14:13. The angels, the sons of God, stand about Him (Job 1:6; 2:1), and they were present at the creation of the world and shouted for joy (Job 38:7). It was as part of this

council that Yahweh spoke when He asked the question, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” and was answered by Isaiah (Is 6:8). Psalm 29:1 urges the members of His council (literally “sons of Gods,” *bene elim*) to ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength. For the ancient Israelite readers, nothing would be more natural than the thought of their Lord speaking and ruling from within a heavenly court. It is God in whose image Man is made (just as it is Yahweh who sends Isaiah in Is 6:8), but He speaks in the plural as ruler of His heavenly council.

We must also examine the question of what it means to be made according to God’s *image and likeness* (in Hebrew, His *tselem* and *demut*). Once again we must extract ourselves from the Hellenistic mindset and reenter the Hebrew world of the ancient Near East. The terms “image” and “likeness” are here used more or less interchangeably, but the emphasis clearly falls on the former term, since it alone is repeated twice in the next verse.

In that ancient world, an image was a physical model of something - in the OT, usually a model or statue of the pagan god, an idol (thus its usage in such passages as Numbers 33:52, where Israel is commanded to destroy all the carved images and molten images of the pagans when they invade Canaan). In the pagan thought of the ancient Near East, the deity’s work was done through its image and in some measure partook of the deity’s essence. Even to this day in Islam you cannot take pictures of others since their spirit is somehow captured by the image.

# St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



## THE TRANSFIGURATION

*Tuesday, August 6th - 7 PM*

This coming Tuesday we will be celebrating one of the 12 Major Feasts of our Church, the TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD. There will be an evening Liturgy at 7:00 PM. If you would like to sanctify this day, please attend. We will also celebrate this feast on SUNDAY AUGUST 11th since it is within the octave of the feast. Fruit will be blessed on both days.

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## A REMINDER

We are also within the period of preparing for the feast of the DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD. It is a fast period which lasts until August 14th. Take time to prepare yourself for this feast. It will be celebrated on Thursday August 15th in the evening and again on Sunday August 18th.

*Don't allow your past or present condition to control you.  
It's just a process that you're going through to get you to the next level*

## A CALL TO HOLINESS

In the last installment of this article, I raised the idea that the Call to Holiness is really a call to accept "life" as God intended it and created it to be. One of the ideas that seems to skew our understanding of life is the thought, I really think generated by the Genesis story, that God created humans 'perfect' and that somehow the original couple screwed things up and made us imperfect. Humans don't want to accept the fact that God created us imperfect and that that imperfection was good because it allowed for humans to freely and voluntarily strive toward perfection (even though perfection is an impossibility. Only God is perfect).



It seems that God saw the process of change as contributing to humankind's growth towards a greater likeness of Jesus and that this process can lead to the free and voluntary return of love to God. Indeed God did not create robots that were incapable of making mistakes and learning from their mistakes. He created fallible human beings that can freely learn and grow, therefore freely and voluntarily cooperate with God in growing in His likeness and returning His love.

Love that is not 'voluntary' and 'free' is really and truly not love. True love requires the freedom to extend love and take the risk of not being loved in return. That is exactly *(Continued on page 8)*

## OUR MOST IMPORTANT DOCTRINE: THE TRIUNE GOD

Who is God for you? I have found that people, whether they are aware of it or not, have many different, unconscious ideas about who God is and that these ideas greatly influence them. I think that it is important that we ask ourselves: *how do I experience the idea of God, and then how is this idea transformed into my religious experience of God.*

A precondition of religiosity is to believe that God exists for, as St. Paul states: “for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). One author, Duro Susnjic says, “there is faith if man meets God”

I have found that humans have many “myths” about God. These myths are formed by: (1) what our families or social group have told us about God; (2) what we have read or studied about God; (3) what our church (if we go to church) tells us about God; and (4) our own personal desires about who we really want God to be. Needless to say, these all influence our experiences of God as we live through the challenges of life. And then our experiences of God further shape who we think that He is.

I have found that in our modern world people seem to make every effort to make God in their image. People want God to react to things as they do. People want a God who will accept their values and react to things in life as they do. They really don't want a real God who is totally different from them.



I believe, however, that it is important that we try to understand our ideas about God. Why? Because our idea of God, if we don't totally reject the idea of a God, can truly influence our daily lives. Our idea of Who He is can either bring us peace or fear.

As every person differs in something from another, it is logical that our experiences of the holy and our statements about the divine will be different too. Do you really want to know who you think God is? Search your heart and mind! What are your beliefs about God? What kind of being is He and what role does He play in your daily life?

## THE FIRST ECUMENICAL COUNCIL: NICAEA (325)

After the Council of Nicaea, around 350 CE, the controversy shifted considerably, in part because of the stance of the emperor Constantius. Constantius, (a son of Constantine who came to control the whole empire of the 350-3 period) broadly supported the position of those who moved towards a theology which was strongly anti-Marcellan and very suspicious of any theologies which did not distinguish clearly and hierarchically between Father and Son. The last few years of the decade (especially after the Sirmium 'manifesto' of 357 and the councils of 359-60) the leaders of this group advocated a theology we can term as 'Homoian'. Homoians argued that the Son is 'like' (*homoios*) the Father although distinct and ontologically inferior. They increasingly claimed to reject any explanation of the Father/Son relationship that used any form of 'essence' terminology. This attempt to ban essence terminology was not an irenic (a part of Christian theology concerned with reconciling different denominations and sects) move, but one which tried to rule out some readings of some traditional terminologies (such as describing the Son as 'light from light') in favor of a more strongly subordinationist picture.

So far, hopefully you, my readers, can we see how greatly the Church struggled to come to a real and true understanding of Who Jesus Is and, as a result, Who God Is. The early Church



was not ready to abandon the Jewish idea of Monotheism (ONE GOD) and came to an understanding of how this one God could also take on a human form in the Person of Jesus.

The most subordinationist wing of this theological movement was represented by Aetius and his disciple Eunomius. They both insisted that Father and Son were unlike if one wanted to talk about 'essence': although there are other ways in which it is appropriate to speak of likeness between them. Their teaching was unacceptable to many within the broad eastern tradition. Their teaching seems also to have affected perception of the Homoian movement generally and produced a strong reaction. During the 370s and 380s Eunomians increasingly became a distinct ecclesial group with their own bishops and churches.

Truly it wasn't until the **Council of Chalcedon** (451 CE) that the Church pronounced what She truly believes about Jesus and God in Trinity.

# Schedule of Services

**Sunday, August 4 - Eighth Weekend After Pentecost - TONE 7**  
**10:00 AM - Noah Patrick Semak; Semak Family**

## **NINTH WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - TONE 8**

**Monday, August 5 - Eusignius, Martyr**  
No Service Scheduled

**Tuesday, August 6 - Feast of the Transfiguration**  
**7:00 PM - Special Intention**

**Wednesday, August 7 - Domitus, Venerable Martyr**  
No Service Scheduled

**Thursday, August 8 - Emilian, Bishop-Confessor**  
**8:00 AM - Special Intention**

**Friday, August 9 - Matthias, Apostle**  
**8:00 AM - Special Intention**

**Saturday, August 10 - Lawrence, Archdeacon-Martyr**  
No Service Scheduled

**Sunday, August 11 - Ninth Weekend After Pentecost - TONE 8**  
**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 - the Call to holiness)*

the type of love that God extends to us. His love is freely given and unconditional. He calls us to return the same kind of love.

If we envision God as a punishing master (probably like a slave owner), we can never freely return His love. The fear we will have of His punishment will keep us from freely loving Him. He does not demand that we love Him. He only freely loves us, providing us multiple opportunities to develop our ability to freely return His love without fear that He will punish us if we don't return His love. This is the kind of God that I believe in and that I worship and offer praise, glory and honor. **What about you?**



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

## THIS IS MY BELOVED SON

I recently came across a little book written by Andreas Andreopoulos called This is My Beloved Son: The Transfiguration of Christ. I have found that it has much to offer and helps me to share with my readers. For it is hard for me to write on matters that neither my reason, nor my understanding, nor even my convictions have any hope of truly grasping. It is hard to take any part of the story of Jesus and explain it to others, as if I fully understand it myself, or to pretend to analyze it as if it were an abstract philosophical idea. But then, none of those abilities play any role in the presence of God. Instead, we can only try to respond in a way that recognizes his presence in the world, Scripture, life and the mysteries of the Church.

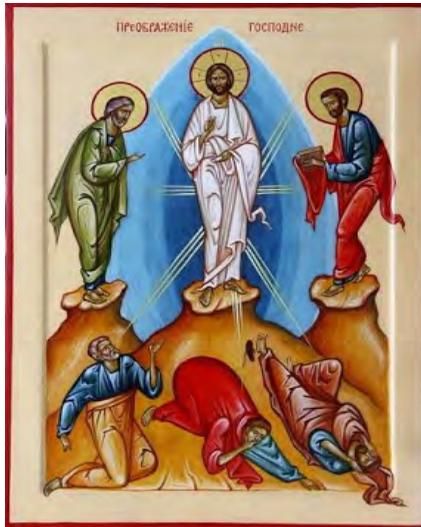
I have come across a number of books that examine Christ's Transfiguration from a strictly biblical perspective or that discuss its reception and effect within early and later Christianity. There are also accounts of saints who experienced the continuous Transfiguration of Christ - the mystical experience of the outpouring of the light of God - as it

was imparted to them. But I believe that a different approach, the approach that Andreas took, is much more rewarding. His book is a combination of what he knows about the sources and the tradition of the Transfiguration and then also including his faith and intuition. Much that follows will be directly from him.

He writes that it is hard to approach and consider the mystery of the Cross or the Resurrection, but perhaps these events are so big and so deeply embedded in history that our mind has a different way of dealing with them. The Crucifixion as the last public act of Jesus, and the Resurrection as the

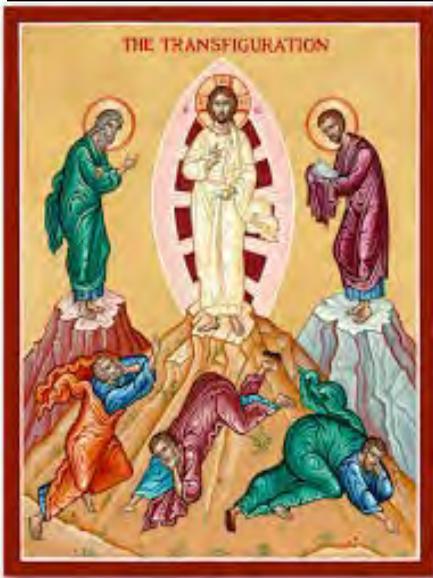
core of the Good News of the gospel, are events that decisively shaped Christianity. Momentous as they may be, we absorb and in some way accept them for what they are as we encounter the Christian faith and narrative for the first time. In this way they are not as surprising or unanticipated as some of the less prominent biblical narratives.

The story of the Transfiguration, on the other hand, communicates something more unexpected. This is what the author explores.



### THE TRANSFIGURATION

## UNDERSTANDING THEOSIS - DEIFICATION



One of the Fathers of the Eastern Church who made a serious impact on our true understanding of *Theosis* or *divinization* or *deification*, was Maximus the Confessor. For him, the essential conditions for fulfilling the divinizing process are the magnanimous divine initiative and willing human cooperation. Maximus in his writings unceasingly glorified divine love expressed through grace, which “out of human beings makes us gods.... Nothing is more truly Godlike than divine love, nothing more mysterious, nothing more apt to raise up human beings to deification.” The

greatest testament to love of God for humankind is the incarnation, whereby the Creator of nature himself... *has clothed himself with our nature, without change uniting it hypostatically to himself, in order to check what has been borne away, and gather it to himself, so that, gathered to himself, our nature may no longer have any difference from him in its inclination. In this way he clearly establishes the all-glorious way of love, which is truly divine and deifying and leads to God.*

Think about this. Maximus declares that God, by joining himself to human nature, actually provides human nature with the potential to grow in its likeness to Jesus, the Divine-Man. This act of God did not allow mankind to assume divine nature, but allows humankind to grow in the likeness of God as a human being which is Jesus Christ.

We humans have the potential to grow in our likeness of Jesus. This potential is given to us because of God’s incarnation - God taking on human nature and endowing it with the power of His Spirit to grow, change and become more like God.

The Confessor rejoices in the incarnation as the opening up of previously hidden ways by which the human being may finally arrive at the fullness of God, Himself. Maximus is acutely aware, nonetheless, of the reciprocal responsibility on the part of the human being. He avers with confidence that “our salvation is contingent upon our will,” and “the mystery of salvation belongs to those who desire it, not to those who are forced to submit to it. “

Again this Eastern approach preserves our human nature with its free will and yet allows for our deeper union with God.



# THE EASTERN HERALD

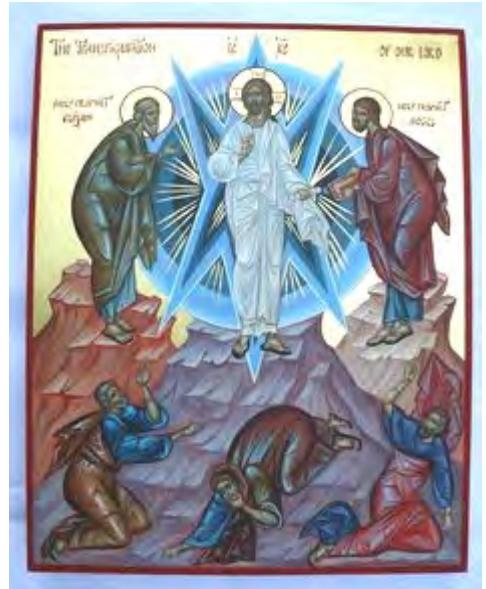
## СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.  
Vol. 65 No 31 THE EIGHTH WEEKEND AFTER PENTECOST August 3-4, 2019

### THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

I have been sharing thoughts about the Eastern doctrine of deification - *Theosis* (life's purpose is to actualize the potential we have to become more like Jesus). As I pointed out, in Western Catholicism this is seen as the doctrine of justification (Jesus died to make things right between God and man). One author has written: *Justification by faith easily becomes an abstract declaration of divine permissiveness that leaves secularized persons to work out their own spiritual ruin with a foolishly happy conscience. Theosis emphasizes the fact that salvation is a cooperative act between God and man. God always initiates and man either chooses to cooperate with God or exercises free will and refuses to cooperate with God.*

One wonders whether the difficulty in the Western church to listen carefully to the passionate appeal of the Eastern church for humans to necessarily change, the result being growing in the likeness of Christ, has been hampered by the term "deification" itself, apart from its strict meaning. As ancient as the term is, it has always been looked at with some suspicion. Many Westerners have wondered whether it borders on idolatry or some physical understanding of spirituality not unlike Catholic theology's view of sacramental transubstantiation (the changing of the very



### THE TRANSFIGURATION

substance of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ). Of course, the Eastern emphasis on a more positive anthropology and distinctive definition of sin and its results have also made their Western counterparts less willing to hear about sanctification as an integral part of salvation.

I wonder what you believe? What is salvation all about for you? Think about it.

### *They All Ate and Were Satisfied*

Our Lord in a desert place changed a few loaves into many, and at Cana turned water into wine. Thus before the time came to give men and women His own Body and Blood to feed on, He accustomed their palates to His bread and wine, giving them a taste of transitory bread and wine to teach them to delight in His Life-giving Body and Blood.

He gave them things of little value for nothing to make them understand that His supreme gift would be given yet more freely. He gave them for nothing what they could have bought from Him, what in fact they wanted to buy, to teach them that He asked them for no payment.

When it was not permitted them to give Him the price of bread and wine, which they could have done, they certainly could not pay Him for His Body and Blood.

Moreover, as well as giving freely He lovingly coaxed us, offering us these small things without charge to attract us and cause us to go and receive something greater and beyond all price. He awakened our desire by things pleasing to the palate in order to draw us to that which gives life to the soul. He gave a sweet taste to the wine he created to show how great is the treasure hidden in His Life-giving Blood.

*St. Ephrem the Syrian*