

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



*Icon of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:23-25)*

## A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this eleventh weekend after Pentecost, our readings are again taken from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians and St. Matthew's Gospel. Paul established the community in Corinth (circa 50 CE). He found that the community had many problems and, at one point, some of the community even turned against him. So in the passage we use as our Epistle this weekend, Paul makes a strong argument for his "rights as an apostle." He writes: "we put up with all sorts of hardships so as not to place any obstacle in the way of the Gospel of Christ."

The passage we use as our Gospel this weekend, presents one of Jesus' parables. He begins: "the reign of God may be said to be like a king who decided to settle accounts with his officials." I am sure everyone immediately recognizes the parable. The king writes off the debt of one of his officials who, in turn, refuses to write off the debt of others. The result is that the king severely punishes the merciless official.

What usually happens is that people seem to immediately relate to the ending of the parable which indicates that the king turned the merciless official over to the torturers. Thus, of course, making a case for God punishing our transgressions. This, I believe, skews the true meaning of the parable.

The true meaning of the parable, I believe, is that because God is constantly ready to show us mercy, we must be ready to show mercy to others. We cannot accept God's mercy if we are not ready to show mercy to others because we are incapable of being a person who can accept mercy. The general



natural rule is that we can only accept what we are willing and able to give. It is in the extending of mercy, love, respect and forgiveness to others that we develop the ability to accept mercy, love, respect and forgiveness for ourselves. It is a fool who thinks he can truly accept the love of others if he is incapable of extending love to others. I can only receive what I am willing and able to give (Most people refuse to really believe this and fool themselves to think that they can be loved when they are incapable of giving love to others). **THINK ABOUT THIS!**

# SIGNS OF A DYNAMIC EASTERN CHRISTIAN

As I suggested in the last issue of this article, I believe that a past definition of prayer can be very helpful: *The lifting of one's heart and mind to God.* This means that prayer can take place anywhere and at anytime. I truly believe that Dynamic Catholics constantly place themselves, regardless of the situation, in the presence of God. Dynamic Catholics see all of life being played out in the presence of God and in union and relationship with God. Prayer, as I see it, is part of a regular thought pattern which connects us to our Creator, Redeemer and Lord. God is always "gentle on my mind."

This means, however, that we cannot allow ourselves to become so concentrated on the things of this world that we can't allow ourselves to "think about" and "relate to" the spiritual dimension of life. For example, just looking at beautiful cloud formations and uttering a simple phrase like "O Lord, my God, how great You are - You make my life fuller by the beauty that You shower on creation."

I think that sometimes people become frightened by the word prayer. In the Hebrew bible the word prayer is an evolving **means** of interacting with **God**, most frequently through a spontaneous, individual, unorganized form of petitioning and/or thanking. In these instances, such as with Isaac, Moses, Samuel, and Job, the act of **praying** is a method of changing a situation for the better.

**Prayer** is, in the Christian faith and in many other spiritual traditions, a way of being and a way of relating. **Prayer** is a way of being: being in the moment, being present, being open. It is a way of learning to be ourselves. **Prayer** is a way of relating: to God, to ourselves, to those around us and helps to bring us to a deeper



## ST. MARY MAGDALENE

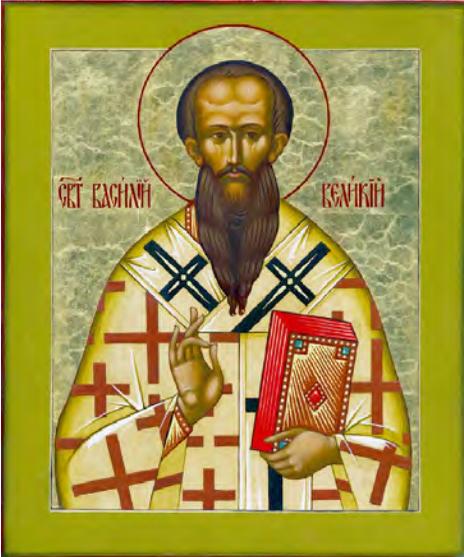
awareness of our place in creation.

Further, the basic forms of prayer can be praise, petition (supplication), intercession, and thanksgiving. However, anytime prayer becomes simply a rote procedure that we perform for whatever reason, its effectiveness is truly diminished.

Prayer is something I want to do because it want to always keep in touch with someone Who is important to me and my life. If you never talk to a friend, is the person still your friend?

**THINK ABOUT THIS!**

## ST BASIL'S THOUGHTS ON GENESIS



### ST BASIL THE GREAT

Man received the world as a gift from God, and like a good ruler he was called to protect and nurture it. As we will learn in the second creation story, (*did you realize that there is more than one creation story in the Old Testament?*), *adam* (mankind) has the *adamah* (the ground, the soil) as his natural ecological partner.

In blessing Man, God gave the gift of food. With the word *behold*, God showed them the whole world that He had made (one can almost see the wave of His hand as He shows them the world) and offer it to them as their sustenance. To human beings and to all the animals,

God gave every green plant for food. The image is one of primeval harmony; carnivores are nowhere in sight.

The narrator sums up the story of creation by saying that God saw everything that He had made, and it was not just good, but very good. This declaration of emphatic goodness and usefulness is preceded by **behold!** as if inviting everyone to wonder in amazement at the greatness of God's handiwork. Such a wonderful day, containing as it did the making of God's vice-regents and creation's stewards, is described not simply as "a sixth day" (as the other days were described with the indefinite article), but **THE Sixth Day**. This was the day no one would ever forget.

### DAY SEVEN

And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the hosts of them. And on the seventh day God finished His work that He had made, and He ceased on the seventh day from all His work that He had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it God rested from all His work which in creating He had made.

Then the narrator reaches his climax on Day Seven. At last the heavens and the earth (i.e., everything) were finished, and all the host of them. The word host is the Hebrew *sabah*. It is the usual word for "army," and in the plural it forms part of an almost technical title for God: Yahweh is *Yahweh Sabaoth*, "the Lord of Hosts,": king of the heavenly armies of angels. One catches a glimpse of their glory in the stars, and the phrase "heaven and all their hosts" refers to the stars shining in the night sky.

# St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



## COMING FEASTS

*Thursday, August 29th*

While the Beheading of St. John the Baptizer is not a major feast, I would just draw your attention to the fact that this coming Thursday we remember that he was beheaded for speaking the truth to King Herod. He spoke the truth even though it realized that Herod might kill him. He is truly a wonderful example for us. Remember him on this day.

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## NEW CHURCH YEAR

*Sunday, September 1st*

## BIRTH OF MARY

*Sunday, September 8th*

## EXALTATION OF THE CROSS

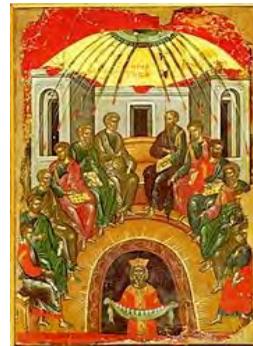
*Saturday, September 14th*

The Birth of the Mother of God and the Exaltation of the Cross are major feasts. Mary's birth actually falls on a Sunday and the Exaltation on Saturday. We will celebrate the Exaltation on Sunday, September 15th

***Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail***

## A CALL TO HOLINESS

The call to holiness is a call to see ourselves as God's creation. One member recently emailed me and shared what she derived from a recent Liturgy. During the Liturgy we used the Prokimenon: *How may are your works, O Lord. In wisdom you have made them all.* She then went on to say that it "struck her" that however I may question or doubt myself, this verse says that I am who I am, flaws and shortcomings and all, because in His wisdom, He knew this is who I needed to be. A comforting and strengthening thought for sure.



So the call to holiness is a call to see our selves as "defective" human beings BUT, rather, as beings created by God, out of love, to be exactly who we are in order that we might spiritually grow and learn how to freely and voluntarily return His love.

One of the important things in life is to learn to "accept ourselves" as God created us. Each of us have "rough edges" which we can smooth down. These rough edges, however, are the right rough edges so that we can truly grow if we put our hearts and minds to the process of personal transformation - the true purpose of human, earthly life.

*(Continued on page 8)*

## INQUIRING MINDS: QUESTIONS FROM READERS

I would continue sharing thoughts about the meaning of “only-begotten” that is used in our Divine Liturgy and also in Scripture.

Jesus Himself declared, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). He prayed that after His suffering He would be restored to the glory He had with the Father before the world was created (John 17:5).

The apostle Paul explained the connection between this unity between the Father and Son and the incarnation of Jesus by noting that even though Jesus was God by nature, He took on human nature in order to reveal to us how to live. Hebrews 1:6 calls Jesus God’s “firstborn,” not to emphasize a point of origin but to underscore His supremacy over all creation.

There was never a time when Jesus did not exist as God. He has always been the Son, sharing the same glory and substance as the Father. There was a time, however, when Jesus did not have a human nature. The eternal Son took to Himself a human nature when He was born of the Virgin Mary.

The Greek term *monogenes* is used nine times in the New Testament and can mean “one of a kind” or “unique”. For example, Luke uses the term three times to refer to an only child (Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38). The writer of Hebrews uses the term to refer to Isaac, the only son of Abraham and Sarah, the son of the promise (Hebrews 11:17). Modern translations generally translate this word



*monogenes* in John 3:16 as "one and only Son" or "only Son" to reflect this definition.

But does this mean Jesus was somehow born or created by God the Father? It does not. Instead, the emphasis is on Jesus as one in unique relationship with the Father. The Bible often uses Father and Son with God and Jesus to explain their relationship in terms we can better understand as humans, but this does not mean Jesus was created by God the Father. The Son and Spirit have always been just as the Father has always been.

## THE FIRST ECUMENICAL COUNCIL: NICAEA (325)

In 381 this process of rapprochement resulted, through the help of the pro-Nicene emperor Theodosius, in the Council of Constantinople. This council (although our knowledge of it is amazingly patchy) promulgated a revised version of Nicaea's creed, which removed the phrase 'from the Father's essence'; added, in anti-Marcellan vein, 'and his kingdom shall have no end'; and added clauses on the Spirit to insist (though without directly asserting that the Spirit was God) that 'with the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified'.

So we see that the Fathers continued to finesse the wording of the Creed, believing that each individual word and phrase dictated something about our belief in God and Jesus. It was a painstaking process.

Also, as we know that the Emperor was the head of Church and State, Theodosius also promulgated a decree in the eastern half of the empire, *Episcopis tradi* (Bishop's tradition) that defined Christian orthodoxy by reference to the basic logic of Trinitarian belief (neither dividing the essence nor confusing the persons) and by pointing to a list of those with whom one should be in communion.

The theologies which came during the 360-80 period to recognize each other as orthodox and to interpret Nicaea within the context of confessing God to be mysteriously one and three we can refer to as



'pro-Nicene'. These theologies were not identical, but shared a common commitment to the beliefs that God was one power, nature and activity; that there could be no degrees in divinity; that the divine persons were irreducible although all sharers in the divine being without any ontological hierarchy; that human beings would always fail to comprehend God and that one could only make progress toward knowledge and love of God through entering a discipline and practice that would reshape the imagination. The theologies of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory Nazianzen are three key examples of pro-Nicene theologies, as are the western theologies of figures such as Eusebius of Vercelli, Ambrose and Augustine of Hippo, and the theologies of the later Athanasius, Didymus the Blind and Cyril of Alexandria. Theologies such as those of Athanasius and Hilary of Poitiers show many of the features of these later theologies but not all.

# Schedule of Services

**Sunday, August 25 - Eleventh Weekend After Pentecost - TONE 2**  
**10:00 AM - Special Intention**

## 12th WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - TONE 3

**Monday, August 26 - Adrian & Natalie, Martyrs**  
**8:00 AM - Special Intention**

Tuesday, August 27 - Poemen, Venerable  
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, August 28 - Moses the Ethiopian, Venerable  
No Service Scheduled

**Thursday, August 29 - Beheading of John the Baptizer**  
**8:00 AM - Special Intention**

**Friday, August 30 - Alexander, John & Paul, Patriarchs**  
**8:00 AM - Special Intention**

Saturday, August 31 - Deposition of Mary's Cincture  
No Service Scheduled

**Sunday, September 1 - 12th Weekend After Pentecost - TONE 3**  
**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

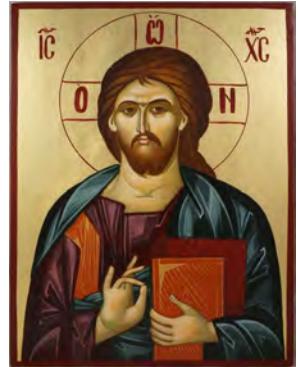
Rafic Vawter  
313.624.9867

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

If you ask yourself: *Why am I here? What is the purpose and meaning of my life?* I think you will have to come to realize that you are here, created as you are, in order to accomplish the one main task: Personal, Spiritual Transformation and Change.

**GROWTH** is what all of God's creation is about. Things grow!

We humans have to **GROW**. The only way we can grow is to open our hearts and minds to the revelation given to us by God through the Person of Jesus: *Change your hearts and minds for the Kingdom of God is at hand.* Most frequently this means putting away the "crazy" and ill-informed ideas we have about life. **WHAT IS LIFE REALLY ALL ABOUT?**



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

## THIS IS MY BELOVED SON

In the last issue of this article, I suggested that Jesus taught things that went beyond the legalistic understanding of tradition and ended with the question: *Does Jesus have the authority to do this?* This is precisely what the image of Him writing on the ground suggests (i.e., the story wherein Jesus was confronted by others with the question whether a woman “caught in shame” should be stoned (of course she was coerced by men to perform acts which they then wanted to stone her for (sounds like our modern society, doesn't it with the ME-TOO movement).

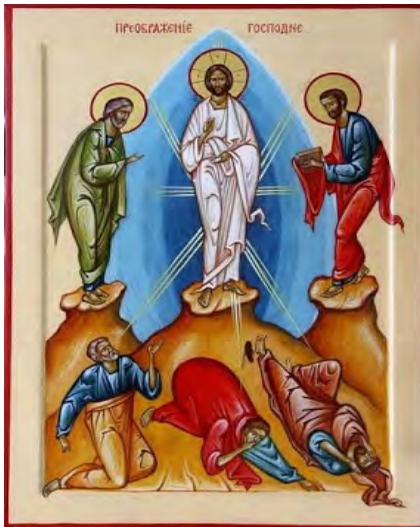
There is only one other instance in Scripture where God has written something with His finger: the two tablets of the laws that was given to Moses were written “with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18 and Deuteronomy 9:10). We can make the connection with Jesus in John 8 in an iconological way only. Here we have the image of Jesus the Teacher, whom the scribes and the Pharisees wanted to consult about a matter of the law. The Johannine narrative portrays Him in this way precisely to show Him as the origin of the Mosaic Law - and

therefore what follows is given with the authority of God the Lawgiver. The image of Jesus stooping down and writing on the ground with his finger reveals much more than a historical or philological analysis of the passage would. Yet this is something we would understand only if we can start thinking in images. Perhaps in this way we respond to the mystery of God, at the same time we can try to preserve it.

Christianity was understood from its beginning as a journey whose destination is the kingdom of heaven. The teachings, the traditions, the liturgy, and the doctrines are nothing more than travel

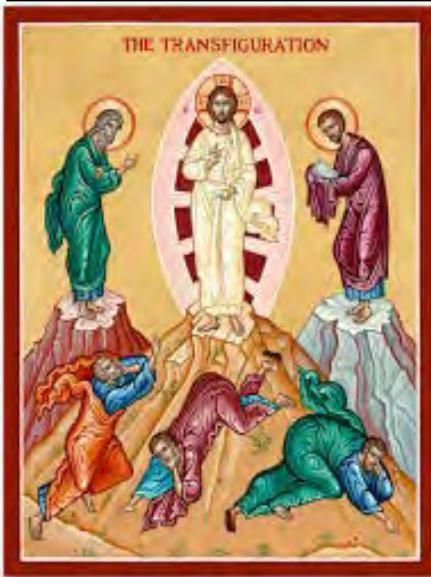
directions in this journey, some of which come from people who have made part of the journey. The destination, however, is known only through God, and while it is necessary for us to have the will and desire to walk in the way of God, it is not our own strength that can carry us to the end, but the strength of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, in this metaphor of salvation as a journey, perhaps the closest thing we have to a map is the Gospel.

*How do you see the journey of life?*



### THE TRANSFIGURATION

## UNDERSTANDING THEOSIS - DEIFICATION



I have been sharing in this article Maximus' the Confessor's understanding of the "divinization" process. It is all about become more like Jesus and His Divine Nature, but it doesn't mean becoming Jesus or taking on Divine Nature. "Divine Essence" or "nature" remains totally and completely inaccessible, but humanity is able to rise "above nature," into a new mode of existence, that is, the human being inherits by grace that which belongs to God by nature. Maximus the Confessor attempt to explain this in a variety of ways. One of the ways that He explains this process is this:

We shall become that which in no way results from our natural ability, since our human nature has no faculty for grasping what transcends nature. For nothing created is by its nature capable of inducing deification, since it is incapable of comprehending God. Intrinsically it is only by the grace of God that deification is bestowed proportionately on created being. Grace alone illuminates human nature with supernatural light, and by the superiority of its glory, elevates our nature above its proper limits.

So by our very nature and our abilities we can never truly become like Jesus. We can become more like Him, however, because of God's help and blessings. He desires us to become like Jesus because He know that if we do, we come to see the truly meaning and purpose of life and we are transformed (i.e., *personal transformation and change is the true purpose of this earthly existence*).

Hence, divinization involves the mode of nature, rather than its governing principle. Human nature is taken to extraordinary heights through a new, divine, mode of being which sustains the *logos* proper to created nature:

God becomes to the soul (and through the soul to the body) what the soul is to the body...so that the soul receives changelessness and the body immortality; hence, the whole man...is divinized....He remains wholly man in soul and body by nature, and becomes wholly God in body and soul by grace and by the unparalleled divine radiance of blessed glory.

The mystery of life. We are created humans and called to become more than human, that is beings that realize the "divine spark of life" that is within us, making us immortal beings. Life is all about "growing" and "becoming" who our God intended when He created us.



# THE EASTERN HERALD

## СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.  
Vol. 65 No 34 11th WEEKEND AFTER PENTECOST August 24-25, 2019

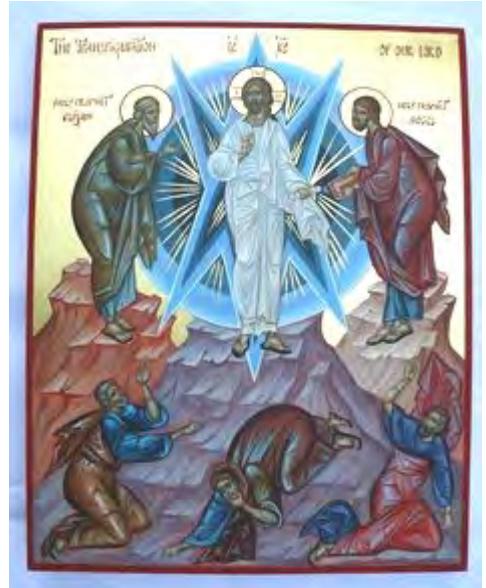
### THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

The doctrine of salvation, according to our Eastern spirituality, cannot be expressed in Christological terms alone but requires pneumatological grounding as well. We cannot just express it in terms of Jesus but must include the Father and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is always present in the actions of the Father, Son or Spirit. They always act as ONE.

Even though it would be foolish to neglect the rich history of Christian tradition concerning Christian thinking about salvation, it would be equally shortsighted to be content only with past formulations of our understanding of salvation. The critical task of Christian theology is to express the living tradition in a way that not only makes sense in the present context but even points to the future.

There are several short-comings in the traditional theology of salvation that need to be addressed in light of the new challenges of the third millennium. When regard to the doctrines of deification and justification, the following two topics need to be restudied and elaborated for the Christian witness to make sense in the ever-changing world: (1) the relation of soteriology (study of salvation) to the world's context and (2) the relation of deification and justification by faith to other religions..

For example, what truly constitutes



### THE TRANSFIGURATION

deification or justification in today's performance-oriented societies? How does the message of deification and justification manifest itself in the light of global interaction, or in relation to social injustice or the internet?

So I would ask you, my readers, what your thoughts are about deification and/or justification? Do you see them as the same or different?

## *Condemn Ourselves for Our Sins, and to Forgive Others*

Two things therefore does He here require, both to condemn ourselves for our sins, and to forgive others; and the former for the sake of the latter, that this may become more easy (for he who considers his own sins is more indulgent to his fellow-servant); and not merely to forgive with the lips, but from the heart.

Let us not then thrust the sword into ourselves by being revengeful. For what grief has he who has grieved you inflicted upon you, like you will work unto yourself by keeping your anger in mind, and drawing upon yourself the sentence from God to condemn you? For if indeed you are watchful, and keepest yourself under control, the evil will come round upon his head, and it will be he that will suffer harm; but if you should continue indignant, and displeased, then yourself will undergo the harm not from him, but from yourself.

For if we be willing, no one shall be able to injure us, but even our enemies shall advantage us in the

greatest degree. And why do I speak of men? For what can be more wicked than the devil; yet nevertheless, even hence have we a great opportunity of approving ourselves; and Job shows it. But if the devil has become a cause of crowns, why are you afraid of a man as an enemy?

See then how much you gain, bearing meekly the spiteful acts of your enemies. First and greatest, deliverance from sins; secondly, fortitude and patience; thirdly, mildness and benevolence; for he that knows not how to be angry with them that grieve him, much more will he be ready to serve them that love him. Fourthly, to be free from anger continually, to which nothing can be equal. For of him that is free from anger, it is quite clear that he is delivered also from the despondency hence arising, and will not spend his life on vain labors and sorrows.

*St. John Chrysostom*