

SUNDAY BEFORE THE
EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS



Icon of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross -- September 14th

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this 13th weekend after Pentecost, we also celebrate the Nativity of the Mother of God, Mary (September 8th), and the weekend before the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14th). These are major feasts in our Church and so we not only celebrate the first but also anticipate the second. They are, indeed, so interconnected. We celebrate the birth of Mary who voluntarily consented to be the instrument that God used to come into the world in the Person of Jesus. Her birth began the miracle of God taking on human nature and impacting human history.

While we only have information about Mary through tradition, that is through oral history, we know that she herself was born of a couple who had experienced sterility and so her birth was miraculous. Because of this very special birth, Joachim and Anna pledged to send Mary to the Temple to be raised. It was like a “finishing school” within the Jewish community. In the Temple she learned how to read, write and understand the Old Testament. She was acquainted with the promise that God made to the Jewish people, namely that He would

send someone to help them understand the meaning and purpose of life and secure freedom from subjugation.

Because we also anticipate the Exaltation of the Cross, we see that the Jewish people could not accept what Jesus revealed to them. He revealed that freedom comes from living a life in accord with what God intended when He created human beings.



God created human beings “incomplete” as it were. He wanted human beings to grow in their understanding of their relationship to Him and to others. He designed life in such a way that it would present humans the opportunities to grow and change – to fulfill their potential to truly be “His children,” that is spiritual beings that know how to love unconditionally and to

become involved in a continuous cycle of spiritual and psychological growth.

As we celebrate these feasts this weekend, let us remember that they have a message for us. The message shared with us: *How to live this earthly life so that we might become more like what God intended when He created us.* Let us see Mary and Jesus as true models for living our lives.

SIGNS OF A DYNAMIC EASTERN CHRISTIAN

In the last issue of the article I tried to share that in order to be a dynamic Eastern Christian, I must truly attempt to develop my relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I suggested that I have to see the Father as MY FATHER and what that can possibly mean. I suggested that I have to attempt to relate to Jesus as a SIBLING, He being my older brother.

Finally, I have to relate to the Holy Spirit as the power within me to truly learn how to relate to the Father and Son and extend LOVE to Them since the Spirit is the Power to Love. He, the Spirit is the force that keeps the Father and the Son in true relationship with one another. He is also the power that allows us to relate to Father, Son and Spirit.

What complicates this process is the relationship we have had in our human lives with our earthly fathers and our siblings. If the relationship has not been good, we may have to think in this manner: what would I like my ideal father and siblings to be like in my life? Of course I would like my father to protect me and to show me

how to navigate the challenges of life. I would my father's unconditional love and his help to grow. I cannot think of him as a judge or punisher. I would not fear my father but, rather love him and see that he truly cares for me. This is how I must come to see God the Father.



ST. MARY OF EGYPT

I must come to see God the Son as the sibling that always looks out for me and is there to help me grow and become all that I can be. He is also the person who shows me how to navigate life, especially my social life, since he has done it before me.

Of course this is all made possible because of the real powers God is sharing with me through His Spirit. Remember, all things are accomplished in Christ through the Spirit.

This is how a dynamic Eastern Christian thinks, I believe. God is truly Three Persons so are intimately involved in my life, doing everything in their power - if I let them - to help me navigate life and grow to become the person that I was created to be.

What do you think?

ST BASIL'S THOUGHTS ON GENESIS



ST BASIL THE GREAT

In the last issue I began sharing thoughts about the Seventh Day of creation - the day on which God ceased labor. God's cessation of labor narrated here was the prelude not to His departure from earth, but to His taking up residence in His temple - that temple being His newly made creation. This would be all the clearer to ancient readers, since each temple was considered a microcosm of the world.

The action of God's blessing and sanctifying the seventh day referred to His taking up residence as king over creation, resting in His cosmic temple. This would have been easier

for the ancients to discern than for us. Those cultures knew of a seven-day period as a preparation for God resting in His temple. For example, in Ugaritic mythology, Baal constructed his temple over seven days; at the Babylonian New Year festival, the god made a procession from outside the city before entering into his temple on the seventh day; in Sumerian literature we find the dedication ceremonies for a temple lasted seven days; and of course the Temple of Solomon was dedicated with sacrifices lasting seven days. The original readers of this story would naturally have regarded the seven days of creation as a prelude to the dedication of God's temple and His assuming residence there.

It is significant that the seventh day is nowhere called "the Sabbath." That is because the term "Sabbath" inevitably referred to the Mosaic institution of rest in Israel, and that cultic obligation did not exist at the beginning of the world. The sacred text here says that *God kept* the seventh day; there is no suggestion that He then commanded mankind to keep it. Nor is there a shred of evidence in the Scriptures to suggest that Adam, Noah, or any of the Patriarchs ever kept the Sabbath. Whatever its cultural precedents in the ancient Near East, the Sabbath for the people of God made its first appearance as part of the Ten Commandments, given to Moses at the foot of Mount Sinai. At this later mandate, God rooted the Sabbath's significance in His primordial rest as narrated in Genesis and in Exodus. *Is this making sense?*

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



PANCAKE BREAKFAST

September 22nd

Mark your calendar and plan to join us for a PANCAKE BREAKFAST. Our Parish Council has decided to hold this event to mark the beginning of a new Church Year. There is a sign-up sheet in the vestibule. Please sign-up so that we know how many for whom we need to prepare. Thank You!

DIACONAL ORDINATION

Sunday, November 3rd

Bishop Benedict has confirmed that he will be at our parish on this date to ordain Leonard Mier a deacon. I would hope that all of our parishioners would save that date and plan on being here with us for this event. More information will be coming as we come closer to this date. This is an important event for our Parish Family.

***In the end, it's not the years
in your life that count.
It's the life in your years***

A CALL TO HOLINESS

As you may surmise, this article emphasizes much of the content of the other articles in this Bulletin. It is free-flowing and probably is a stream-consciousness type of article. It is an article that allows me to stress things that I have written in other articles in the Bulletin. It is, hopefully, an article that will allow you to also reflect upon what you have read here and let your thinking take you to where you need to be. Please always remember that it is not my intent to have you think like me. I share my thinking about things spiritual only to stimulate you thinking about things spiritual. The Holy Spirit works within you just as much as He does within me. He, the Spirit, is always calling us to think about our lives in relationship to God. Trust the Spirit Who has made His temple within you. My only exhortation is that you actually take the time to think about "What is the meaning and purpose of your life?" Searching for an answer to this question, I believe, is so very important and can make life so much more meaningful and rewarding, bringing you peace.

Too often, I think, our experiences with religion don't stimulate us to think about the meaning and purpose (Continued on page 8)

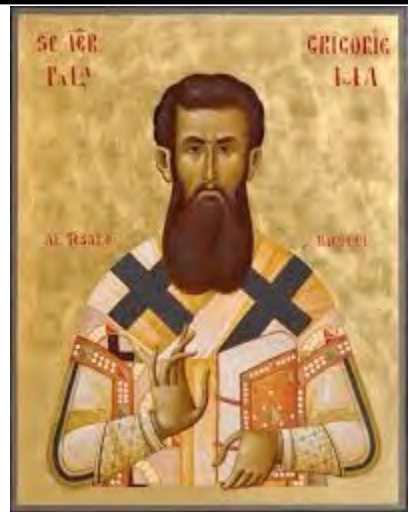


ST. GREGORY AND THE CENTRALITY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

The vision of the Divine light of Tabor stands at the very epicenter of St. Gregory Palamas' theology, permeating and informing his every word. Many of the Church Fathers wrote on the Transfiguration before Palamas. St. Gregory regarded himself as but a faithful continuator of their ascetic-theological tradition. None before him integrated the Taborian (Mount Tabor where the theophany took place) into the fabric of their theological vision in quite as comprehensive a manner as he did. It is, indeed, this all-encompassing Taborian perspective which constitutes Gregory's greatest contribution to the subject and which justifies his application as theologian *par excellence* of the divine Light of Tabor.

St. Gregory's fundamental concern, evident in all his works, is to affirm that even in this present life man is called to direct and unmediated communion with God Himself. Prayer is at one and the same time the chief means by which this communion is attained, and, in its truest form, the communion itself. Prayer as communion, prayer as theology, is nothing less than the face to Face encounter with the theandric Christ resplendent in His pre-eternal and divine glory - His Kingdom or Rule - just as He was revealed to His three disciples on Mount Tabor.

For St. Gregory, the divine Light of Tabor is unequivocally uncreated. It is a light, therefore, but a light that is radically unlike any created light known to man. Though perceptible to both the senses and the intellect, in the experience of deification that Uncreated Light of Christ transcends every aspect of our createdness, including the human senses and the human intellect. Hence, it is both suprasensible and supra-intellectual. Moreover, Gregory accuses 'those who wage war against the Light, that is, those who consider the Light to be both sensible and created, of basing



St. Gregory Palamas

their understanding not on Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition but on 'the rational word of the Greeks', on the wisdom that is, of this world.

Palamas' ascetic-theological approach is further witnessed to by the way that he reads the Bible. His interpretation of Scripture is inextricably bound up with Tradition (to which he constantly appeals), which is rooted in the personal experience of the saints, the Fathers of the Church. In support of his own position on the uncreatedness of the divine Light of Tabor, he focuses firstly on Christ.

Do you understand his approach?

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

The Church does not have the custom of celebrating the earthly birthday of the Saints of God, but rather celebrates their heavenly birthday, that is, the day of their death, which, for them, is the beginning of eternal life. She does make exception, however, for the two greatest Saints in the Church - the most Pure Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptizer. We celebrate not only their heavenly birth, but also their birth on earth.

One of the great feasts we celebrate at the beginning of the Church Year is the feast of the Nativity of the most Holy Mother of God. As is evident from the words of the Tropar of this feast, it is a joyful and significant feast. It is joyful because it is the birthday of the Mother of God and highlights the beginning of the history of human salvation.

The chief source of information on the life of Mary is the Apocryphal book written around the year 170-180 CE called the *Proto-evangelium of James*. This book presented the basis for the institution of such feasts as the Conception of St. Anna, the Nativity of Mary, the Presentation in the Temple,

and feasts honoring Joachim and Anna.

From this book we learn that Mary was descended on her father's side from the royal house of David and on her mother's side from the priestly line of Aaron. Her parents lived in Nazareth and were also distinguished for the great holiness of their lives.

This feast is one of the most



ancient Marian feasts; so ancient, that the time of its appearance cannot truly be accurately determined. A tradition in Palestine recounts St. Helena, in the fourth century, building a church in Jerusalem honoring the feast of Mary's Nativity. The official introduction of this feast in the Byzantine empire is ascribed to Emperor Maurice (582-602 CE). The

8th day of September was selected as the day of this feast because on that day nine months were completed from December 9, the day on which the Church celebrates the conception of Mary by Anna. This day was selected because it marked the day on which a church in Jerusalem was consecrated in her honor. This feast is one of the twelve major feasts of our Church.

Schedule of Services

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

Sunday, September 8 - Nativity of Mary the Mother of God
10:00 AM - Special Intention

14th WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - TONE 5

Monday, September 9 - Synaxis of Joachim & Anna
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Tuesday, September 10 - Menodora & Others, Martyrs
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, September 11 - Theodora, Venerable
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Thursday, September 12 - Autonomous, Bishop-Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Friday, September 13 - Dedication of Resurrection Church
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday, September 14 - Exaltation of the Holy Cross
No Service Scheduled

Sunday, September 15 - Exaltation of the Holy Cross
10:00 AM - Special Intention

(Continued from page 5 - the Call to holiness)

of life, even though I believe that religion is all about the true meaning and purpose of human life. Why is that? Because we become so caught up in the stories that we never take the time to ask what the stories of Jesus and the saints are attempting to teach us.

I believe we that we are called to learn from the stories of the past. That is always how humans have behaved. The problem is that people don't learn from these stories - history - of the past. We tend to repeat and repeat the same things. SO, look at the story of Jesus, His mother and His followers and attempt to learn from the stories we hear about them. **DON'T JUST LISTEN TO THE STORIES.** Decide what the stories mean!



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

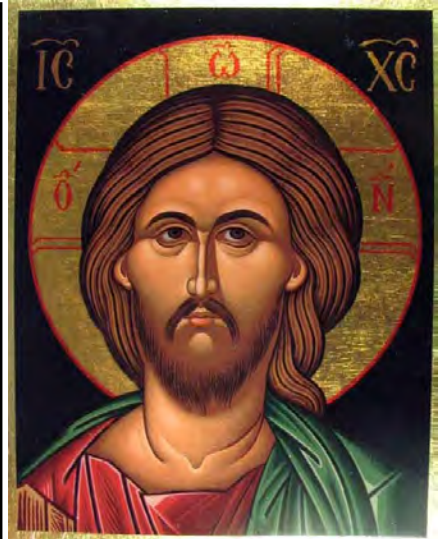
THIS IS MY BELOVED SON

As I shared in the last issue of this article, the stories in the New Testament (NT) were meant to be read in the context of the Eucharistic Liturgy. They are stories that are meant to inspire us to embrace the “Jesus way of living” in order to support our spiritual growth and development. The meaning of the story is what is important.

What is also important is that we see the story of the Transfiguration in the wider context of the Bible and what other stories come before and after it. If you want to reread the story of the Transfiguration, go to Mark 9:2-10, Matthew 17:1-9 and Luke 9:28-36.

The story in these narratives is very direct and powerful. Mark and Matthew get right to the point. The first sentence connects the main Transfiguration story with the biblical text that precedes it: here we hear that Jesus took Peter, John and James separately from the other disciples and led them to a mountain whose name is not given. Then both evangelists say simply that Jesus “was transfigured in front of them.” They add that his clothes became resplendent white. Matthew also writes that his face shone like the sun. Other than that, there is no attempt to explain what exactly the word *transfigured* means, as if the meaning and the special way in which this Transfiguration happened is already known to the people who hear the story. Luke’s Gospel, on the other hand, takes a slightly softer tone: it does not simply announce the Transfiguration, but it describes the change of the face of Jesus and his clothes.

If we place ourselves in the gathering of the faithful, where these texts would have been read aloud and prayed in the Eucharist gathering, we immediately realize that they



guide us into something unusual, something that has little to do with what Jesus says, and more with what he does or what happens to him. There is much that is not given in words here. There is a lot that is not explained.

The whole story has something elusive about it, making it sound like a shared secret. The separate ascent to the mountain, the white cloud, the mysterious light, the voice from heaven, and any of the other parts of the story are not described in detail. The texts have an incomplete feel to them. The events are related almost in a hurry. So what can we discern from this story?

THEOLOGY AS A SPIRITUAL STATE OF THE PERSON

For man, God is the eternal event that has no beginning. If God had not wished to create man and make him a partaker and communicant of His perfection and His life before the world began, He would have remained for ever unknown to all created beings and an incomprehensible mystery. Christ, the Son and Word of the eternal Father, Whose incarnation constitutes the solid foundation of Christianity's knowledge of God, is the bearer of every revelation of the Divine Event.

Revelation of the true God is 'not after man.' It infinitely surpasses man's measure and for this reason our Lord Jesus condescended to become our 'only Teacher'. In His Person He bore the fulness of the knowledge of God and testified: 'All things are delivered

unto me of my Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father, neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' He vouchsafed to show us in familiar and understandable words the way to the eternal truth, and He 'made know unto us' all that He heard from His Heavenly Father. He

spoke about the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven 'in parables' and 'proverbs'. Nevertheless, He sent 'another Comforter, that He may abide with us for ever' to remind us of His words, to explain His parables and to interpret His proverbs. In other words, Christ became for our sake the unique source and incomparable source of authentic theology.

However, by 'suffering death', Christ

inherited all the nations and made 'friends', with whom He shares the knowledge of God and His counsels. Christ's friends are also partakers in the mystery of His theology. He imparts the anointing of is Holy Spirit to them, that they may be taught of God, and have the right understanding to know and confirm the testimony of the



true God. By their heavenly life and words, Christ's friends, the saints of all ages, also become theological events, who keep the light of faith burning and the sensation of the personal God alive in the world.

It is my hope that my sharing will keep alive within my readers the truth of God's presence within us.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНИЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 65 No 36 13th WEEKEND AFTER PENTECOST September 7-8, 2019

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

The spirituality of the Christian East is founded on the important idea of personal transformation and change. This is all based on the initial message of John the Baptizer and then Jesus: *Change your hearts and minds for the Kingdom of God is at hand.* It is founded on the primary idea that *life's journey is an ascension to the Heavenly Father* - that this earthly life is all about growing and changing so that we might ever-more imitate Jesus Christ

Who is the prototype of what humans are supposed to be like in order to be what the Father intended when He created them.

Earthly life is all about growing in our relationship to God through our ability to develop "authentic" and "true" relationships with others. The Divine Plan involves us experiencing the challenges of earthy life which are designed to facilitate our growth and change.

God provides us an example: Jesus Christ. God provides us with the power and ability - the potentiality - to grow spiritually and become more like Jesus. God came into human history in the Person of the Son, Jesus, to provide us with a model of how we are to live in order to accomplish the true purpose of human life, namely real spiritual growth.



This earthly life is but a part of an eternal process of spiritual and psychological growth. If indeed God created us as beings that have the potential to return His unconditional love, then this earthly existence, with all of its true and real opportunities to grow, makes a whole lot of sense.

Ask yourself this question: *What is the purpose of this earthly life?* All things have a purpose! What is the purpose of your existence? I think this is a very important question that each of us must ask ourselves at some point in time. ***Think about this!***

Confession, the Forgiveness of Sins

“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. [Jesus] said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.’” (John 20:19-23)

There, the risen Christ gives to His disciples the power of binding and loosing sins – a juridical power. This task of binding and loosing was transmitted from the apostles to their successors, the bishops. In the early church, the

administration of penance was something public; it didn't involve the private giving of counsel or advice. It was something exceptional. You hoped, by God's mercy, that you wouldn't have to be involved in penance. Indeed, the penances that were imposed were by our standards extremely severe. It often requires a leap of the imagination on our part to think of how life was in the ancient church. For example, for fornication – I mean, sex outside of marriage – St. Gregory of Nyssa assigns a penance of nine years without communion. St. Basil is a little more merciful, he says seven years without communion. Finally, in the sixth and seventh century, in the canonical legislation of St. John the Faster, it's been reduced to two years. Even so, by our standard, that may well seem severe.

Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware)