

SUNDAY AFTER THE
EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS



Icon of Saints Nikitas, Bessarion and Philotheos -- September 15h

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

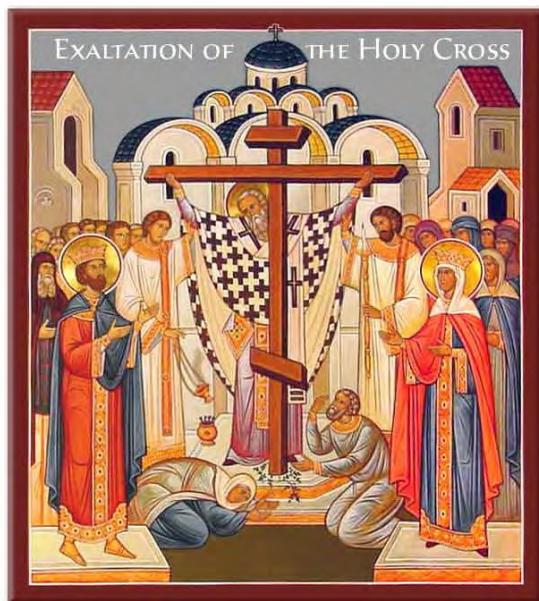
On this 14th weekend after Pentecost, we also celebrate the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14th) since it is a feast with a seven-day “octave”. The appointed reading for our Divine Liturgy are taken from Paul’s Letter to the Galatians and Mark’s Gospel.

Paul advances the idea that we are justified before God not by keeping rules and regulations but by imitating Jesus Christ. His way of living is God’s intended way for humans to live. In fact Paul asserts that “Christ is living in me,” which implies that Paul has made the Jesus way, his way.

The portion of Mark’s Gospel that is read presents the “Doctrine of the Cross.” Simply stated it says: *If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in my steps.*

The biggest problem that most people seem to have is identifying what can be considered *their cross* and what it means to “take up their cross.” I would agree that at times it can be confusing and deceptive.

For example, an abusive marriage would be considered a cross. Does this doctrine therefore mean that I must stay in such a marriage? Absolutely not, although it would encourage a person to first try to rectify the marriage. In this case, the cross might mean gathering up the courage to leave the marriage, facing all the various challenges that are a consequence of such a choice.



I like to think that my crosses are the challenges that I have to face in life. It is important, I think, that we face life’s challenges with *trust in God* just as Jesus did. He did not allow fear of death, betrayal and abandonment to fill Him with fear and attempt to run away from the cross. This meant that He had to refuse to deny what He taught or give up the way that He lived. He lived as an itinerate teacher who did all in His power to support those who came to Him for help!

I truly believe that the challenges each of us must face in life are designed to help us spiritually grow. How we respond to these challenges makes a difference. Believe that the challenges in your life are “gifts” from life to help you transform yourself.

SIGNS OF A DYNAMIC EASTERN CHRISTIAN

The second sign of a dynamic Eastern Christian is their willingness to engage in “discovering more about their faith.” This amounts to engaging in “study” of our Church, its rituals and doctrines. Some of this can be accomplished, for example, by reading this Bulletin. I try to present topics that cover the total range of our faith. It is very important to note that we, as Eastern Christians, do have a different approach to the Catholic Faith.

For example, as you are very aware, we dropped the *filioque* which the Western Church added to the Nicene Creed since the original Creed didn't have this.

What am I talking about? In the Western Church, in accord with their understanding of our Triune God, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father AND THE SON. The Eastern Church does not see it in that way. She says that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father JUST AS THE SON PROCEEDS FROM THE FATHER. The Eastern Church, as she has come to understand the Trinity, sees the Father as the source of life in the Trinity and

therefore both Son and Spirit must proceed from Him.

Is this just splitting hairs and a matter of semantics? No. For both the Eastern and Western Churches it was, and still is, a real source of theological disagreement. Is one right and the other wrong? No! It is all a matter of how you understand God. For me, the role of the Father as the source of LIFE is important since each Person in the Trinity has a very specific role. Both are right. The problem we always have is that there is a great tendency among humans to believe that only one can be right and the other wrong.

This is why STUDY is very important. We have to decide how we understand the content of our faith as expressed by our Church.

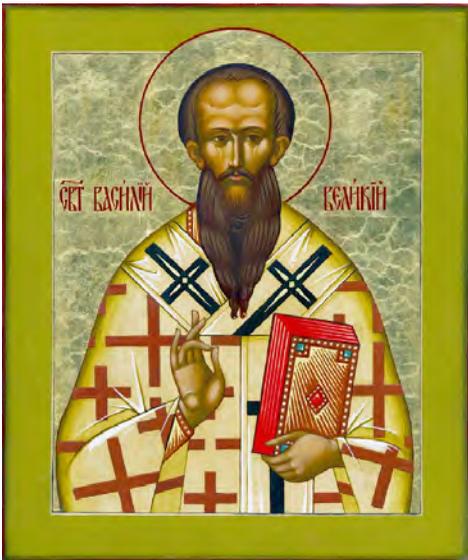
STUDY means that I actually make time to read about and think about my faith. I tell myself that it is important that I actually know what it is when I say that I'm Eastern Catholic!

Further, all of our doctrines are truly interconnected. I will, in the next issue, also highlight some differences between East and West.



ST. MARY OF EGYPT

ST BASIL'S THOUGHTS ON GENESIS



ST BASIL THE GREAT

When Israel kept the Sabbath, they acknowledged God's sovereignty over creation. They entered into a kind of temporal temple, joining God as He rested from His work of creation and took up His task of governing the world as its king. But the text in Genesis describes the roots of this later Sabbath, not its institutional and cultic establishment.

What about the six days of creation and modern science. Perusing the first creation story of Genesis, it is clear that we are reading literature from the ancient Near East, for it shares the same cosmology as other creation stories from that time.

We see the same dark watery abyss of chaos before creation, the same observational approach to the world. The ancients observed the physical phenomena in the world around them and concluded that there was a sea above them, for from where else could all that rain come? And they concluded that the sky must be solid, for how else could the liquid rain be held aloft when it wasn't raining? In other words, the ancients held what we could call (perhaps a bit condescendingly) a prescientific approach to the world.

God, in inspiring and moving the narrator of the Genesis creation stories, was not concerned to correct the ancient cosmologies the narrator inherited from his culture, nor to give lessons in science. The Scriptures were content to let the ancients keep intact their prescientific cosmology and other ideas (such as their belief that man thought with his heart rather than with his brain). The Scriptures had other concerns, and more important ones.

Our modern problem as Christians comes when we try to import our scientific understanding back into the Bible and impose upon the ancient text our own modern cosmology and science. We assume that for the Scriptures to be "true" they must be true to modern science and conformable to all the scientific advances made since the time of Moses. Though even here we are inconsistent, for we have no problem interpreting a text that declares man thinks with his heart as a poetic statement and not a medical one, but we have difficulty interpreting the creation stories with the same generosity of spirit.

Hopefully this is making sense.

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



Pancake
Breakfast



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!

NOVEMBER 3rd

Len Mier's diaconal ordination.
Please be here!



A CALL TO HOLINESS

The call to holiness, as I have tried to express it, is a call to coming to grips with the true "meaning" and "purpose" of our lives. In order to do this we must first ask ourselves: *Why did God decide to create human beings?* He could have just created the universe and be done with it. The question is *Why God needed to create humanity.* Indeed humanity has seldom truly brought Him honor and glory. Then, despite His coming into our world to help us understand how to live, we still don't seem to have truly gotten His message straight. Just consider how many wars humans have managed to wage throughout recorded history and how we have mistreated His creation.



So why did He create humanity?

As I have thought about it I have come to the conclusion the true unconditional love, by its very nature, has to be shared with others. When love is truly present in a person's heart and being, they must reach out to express love to others. Since the Divine Force that binds Father, Son and Spirit into one being is LOVE, it must be expressed to others - it cannot just be kept to itself. So, the reason God created humanity is to share His love and, hopefully, also

(Continued on page 8)

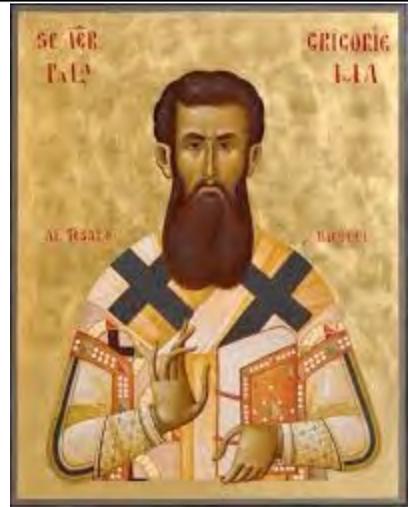
ST. GREGORY AND THE CENTRALITY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

St. Gregory argues that Christ had Himself identified the Light of Tabor with the Kingdom of God. He writes:

The Kingdom of God is neither a servant nor created; for it alone is without master and unconquerable, and beyond all time and age. It is neither possible for the Kingdom of God to have a beginning nor to be subject to corruption. For it is, we believe, the inheritance of those who are being saved.

The Transfiguration Light is, therefore, the very same Light in which Christ will shine at His Second Coming. Echoing Clement of Alexandria, Palamas insists that the Light of Christ is His eternal glory and not a light which has been added to Him; one, that is, which He did not previously possess but which was assumed at the Transfiguration. It is wrong to conceive of the divine Light which shone around Christ as a phantasm or a symbol that comes into being and then passes out of existence. Christ's Transfiguration was not a 'flash-in-the-pan' glorification. Such a view, argues Gregory, would imply that there are now three natures glorified in Christ: the divine, the human and then that of the light. But although concealed beneath His flesh until His Transfiguration, Christ (the Light of Light) always possessed the light which was revealed on Tabor. Thus, since this light is divine, being that of the Godhead, it must also be uncreated. Gregory's fundamental gnoseological presupposition here is, of course, based on the sharp distinction between the created and the uncreated, in which there is no room for a third, metaphysical category. Hence, if the Light of Tabor is divine, then it must also be uncreated, since by definition all things divine are also uncreated.

In considering why Christ had taken the chiefs of the Apostles up to a high mount apart, Palamas



St. Gregory Palamas

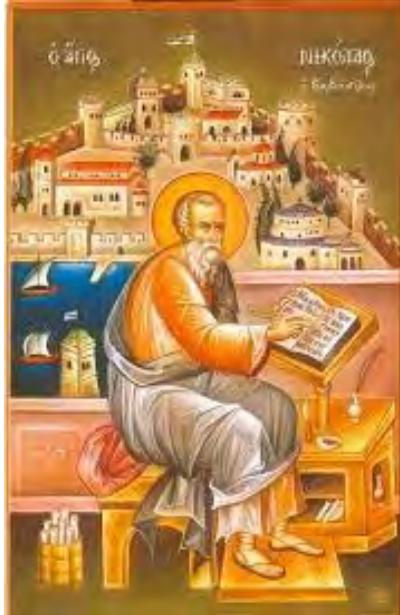
concludes that it must have been in order to make a mystical disclosure. In refuting the idea that this disclosure was merely one of a created light, he asks a long series of rhetorical questions which I shall share in the next issue.

Remember that in our Creed we pray with regards Christ: *Son of God, the only-begotten, born of the Father before all ages, Light of light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father through Whom all things were made.* Hopefully you see the connection.

SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY: THE CYCLE OF LIFE

I thought that I would start an article on the seven MYSTERIES (Sacraments) of our Church. In his book on *The Life in Christ* - a commentary on baptism, chrismation and communion - St. Nicholas Cabasilas writes: *It is possible for the saints in this present world, not only to be disposed and prepared for eternal life in Christ, but also even now to live and act according to it.* The Kingdom of God, an anticipation of the eschatological fulfillment, is already accessible in the Body of Christ: this possibility of "being in Christ" of "participating" in divine life - the "natural" state of humanity - is, for the Byzantines, essentially manifested in the sacraments or *mysteria*, of the Church. These sacraments are understood less as isolated acts through which a "particular:" grace is bestowed upon individuals by properly appointed ministers acting with the proper intention, and more as the aspects of a unique mystery of the Church, in which God shares divine life with humanity, redeeming man from sin and death and bestowing upon him the glory of immortality.

Byzantine theology ignores



St. Nicholas Cabasilas

the Western distinction between "sacraments" and "sacramentals," and never formally committed itself to any strict limitation of the number of sacraments (although traditionally seven are recognized). In the patristic period there was no technical term to designate "sacraments" as a specific category of church acts: the term *mysterion* was used primarily in the wider and general sense of *mystery of salvation*, and only in a subsidiary manner to designate the particular actions which bestow salvation. In this second sense, it was used concurrently with such terms as "rites" or "sanctifications." Theodore the Studite in the ninth century gives a list of six sacraments: the *holy illumination* (baptism), the *synaxis* (Eucharist), the holy chrism, ordination, monastic tonsure and the service of burial. The doctrine of seven sacraments appears for the first time - very characteristically - in the Profession of Faith required from Emperor Michael Paleologus by Pope Clement IV in 1267. The Profession had been prepared, of course, by Latin theologians.

I think that, if you follow this article, you will find it interesting.

Schedule of Services

Sunday, September 15 - Exaltation of the Holy Cross - Tone 5
10:00 AM - Special Intention

15th WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - TONE 6

Monday, September 16 - Euphemia, Great Martyr
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Tuesday, September 17 - Sophia & Others, Martyrs
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, September 18 - Eumenius, Bishop
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Thursday, September 19 - Trophimus & Others, Martyrs
No Service Scheduled

Friday, September 20 - Eustace & Others, Martyrs
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday, September 21 - Condratus, Apostle
No Service Scheduled

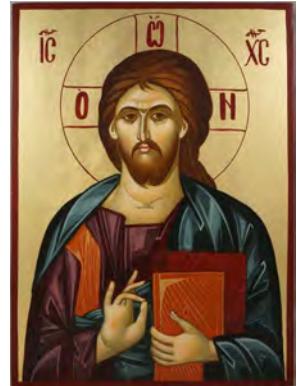
Sunday, September 22 - 15th Weekend after Pentecost - Tone 6
10:00 AM - Special Intention

(Continued from page 5 - the Call to holiness)

have is love returned. He also knows that when a human being freely returns love to another person, they discover their meaning and purpose.

Now in order to make it possible that humans could freely return His love, He had to create them with **FREE WILL** - He had to take the chance that His love would not be returned. Thus we humans have the ability to freely return or not return God's love. The fact that He gives us a choice expresses His genuine, unconditional love for us.

It seem that in our modern world there are very few humans who extend "unconditional" love to anyone, let alone God. What does unconditional love mean to you? Think about this!



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

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

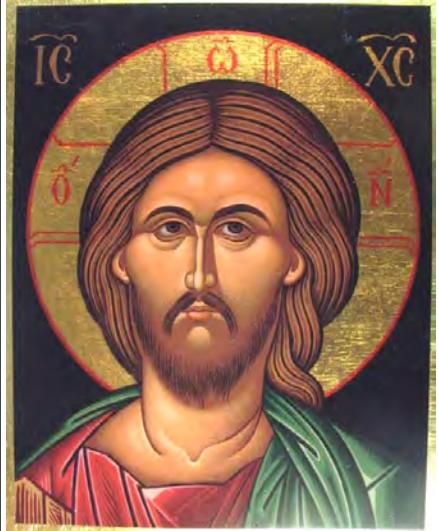
THIS IS MY BELOVED SON

I ended this article in the last issue by saying that the texts about the Transfiguration have an incomplete feel to them: the events are related almost in a hurry, as if the evangelists have given up hope to do justice to the description of the event with their words.

In the context of the Eucharistic gathering, the Transfiguration narrative reveals to a community of believers an additional aspect of the kingdom of God. Those who hear these Gospel texts are hearing them already present together as the community of God in Christ. They are there for the sacraments of the church, for the grace that comes from God through the Church, and hearing these readings they understand that an important event took place long ago. Taken by themselves (without St. Paul - as we will soon see), the Transfiguration as an event can be confusing. It is important to remember, then, that this teaching is intended to prepare the way for the partaking of the sacramental body and blood of Christ. When the Gospel of the Transfiguration is read in the Eucharistic gathering, the whole day is a feast and a celebration of the Transfiguration, including especially composed services of Vespers and Matins, with many hymns dedicated to it. After the reading of the Gospel and the sermon, very few other things will remind us of the Transfiguration. The focus shifts to the experience of the sacramental resurrected body of Christ.

Let us consider this passage from later in the canon of the New Testament (NT), as well. The Transfiguration is also mentioned in the second epistle of Peter:

For we did not follow cunningly devised fable—when we made known to you the power and



coming of our Lord Jesus, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. (2 Peter 1:16-19).

Indeed there is great meaning to this event when seen within the context of the Divine Liturgy.

THEOLOGY AS A SPIRITUAL STATE OF THE PERSON

Theology, that is knowledge of God, is a gift of Christ as the result of faith. With this gift, the believer is harmoniously joined to the Body of Christ, the Church. There is an initial faith, and there is also a perfect faith. Initial faith is the turning of our life towards the Lord. For anyone who wishes to search for God, the journey starts at believing that 'he is and becomes a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.'

Faith is perfect when it comes from the heart and 'works by love', when it inspires a passion for Christ.

According to one Elder's experience, the way to faith is prepared by the grace of mindfulness of death. When this grace visits man it is accompanied by a strange inner feeling that takes its abode

in the 'deep heart.' It convinces one 'of the futility of any and every acquisition on earth.' Simultaneously, a certain contemplation of the intellect dominates, which presents the whole of cosmic being as under the control of an imminent and unavoidable death.

I believe that when we truly realize that we will die and have to face our

feelings about death, we will begin to understand the meaning of life. Death is, we believe, only a transition to a different way of living. Here is where our faith is so important. Our faith tells us that life is eternal; that we humans are immortal; that we, because we have been brought into existence because God shares His life with us, shall never fall into nothingness. This is a belief. Can I prove it? No! But it is a

belief that is truly supported by the story of Jesus Christ. I can either choose to believe this OR I can choose to believe that life has no specific meaning or purpose. I, personally, refuse to believe this and I truly believe that my Church refuses to believe this.

Our Church tells us in so many ways that life is eternal and that we shall be

in an eternal cycle of growing in our relationship with our Creator-God. This is. According to our theology, the true meaning and purpose of human life. God would not be so inconsiderate to create us and then not have thought of the meaning and purpose of His ultimate creation. It comes down to **WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?**





THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНИЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 65 No 37 14h WEEKEND AFTER PENTECOST September 14-15, 2019

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST



The Eastern Christian's spiritual life (life in the Spirit) is intimately connected with the Church's faith and worship. While we may consider them separately, we must know that they are essentially related, simply different aspects of the same reality. *Theology* for the Eastern Christian is an abstract knowledge of the truth, but a knowledge flowing from a *living experience* of God, not from thought about Him or any

logical consequences derived from intellectual analysis. Eastern Christianity does not see truth as primarily and intellectual reality deduced rationally, but as something experienced with the "eyes of the Spirit." Theology that does not flow from and/or lead to a deep union with God is merely speculation and may be dangerous and harmful.

This is why, in the Eastern Tradition, only three saints are call "the Theologian": St. John the Apostle and Evangelist, St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. Symeon the New Theologian. Their writings reflect a deep personal union with God. They manifest a knowledge of the "heart" or "spirit" flowing from an experience of union with God.

Likewise, Liturgy must be understood as an experience of the divine realities, a participation in the mystery of salvation. By the Holy Spirit, Christ God prays and acts in and through His Body, the Church. As Christians participate in the Liturgy, they experience the "Truth," "know" God by experience and participate in the life of the Trinity, which the risen Christ communicates to them in and through the Spirit.

Our liturgical celebrations teach us the Church's Theology. Our spirituality is a living out of this sound Theology, which is experienced and manifested in sound Liturgy. All are expressions of Tradition, an ongoing life in the Spirit, an experience of the same basic reality.

Exalting the Cross

For each of us, salvation means no more and no less than taking up daily the same cross of Christ, accepting each day what it brings as the will of God, offering back to God each morning all the joys, works, and sufferings of that day. But those are abstract words. What it means, in practice, is spelled out as always by the poor old body. It means getting up each morning and going to bed exhausted. It means the routine, not the spectacular. It can mean drudgery, pain, putting aside pleasures, happiness, or the love the human heart craves until another time, so that what is necessary at the moment can be done.

It means working for others, touching the lives of others, through the medium of the body. How many times, tired and worn

out and near collapse from the slave labor conditions of the camps, did I think I could not ask another step of the body, did I think in pain and irony of those words "The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak"? Truly, man is a creature composed of body and soul, and we work out our salvation in this vale of tears through the medium of the flesh.

It is the first gift God and our parents fashion for us; it sustains and supports us through a long life and makes possible both joys and sorrows; and when at last we are parted from it in death, it surely deserves whatever rest it can get before it rises to be glorified at the last judgment.

Father Walter J. Ciszek, S.J.