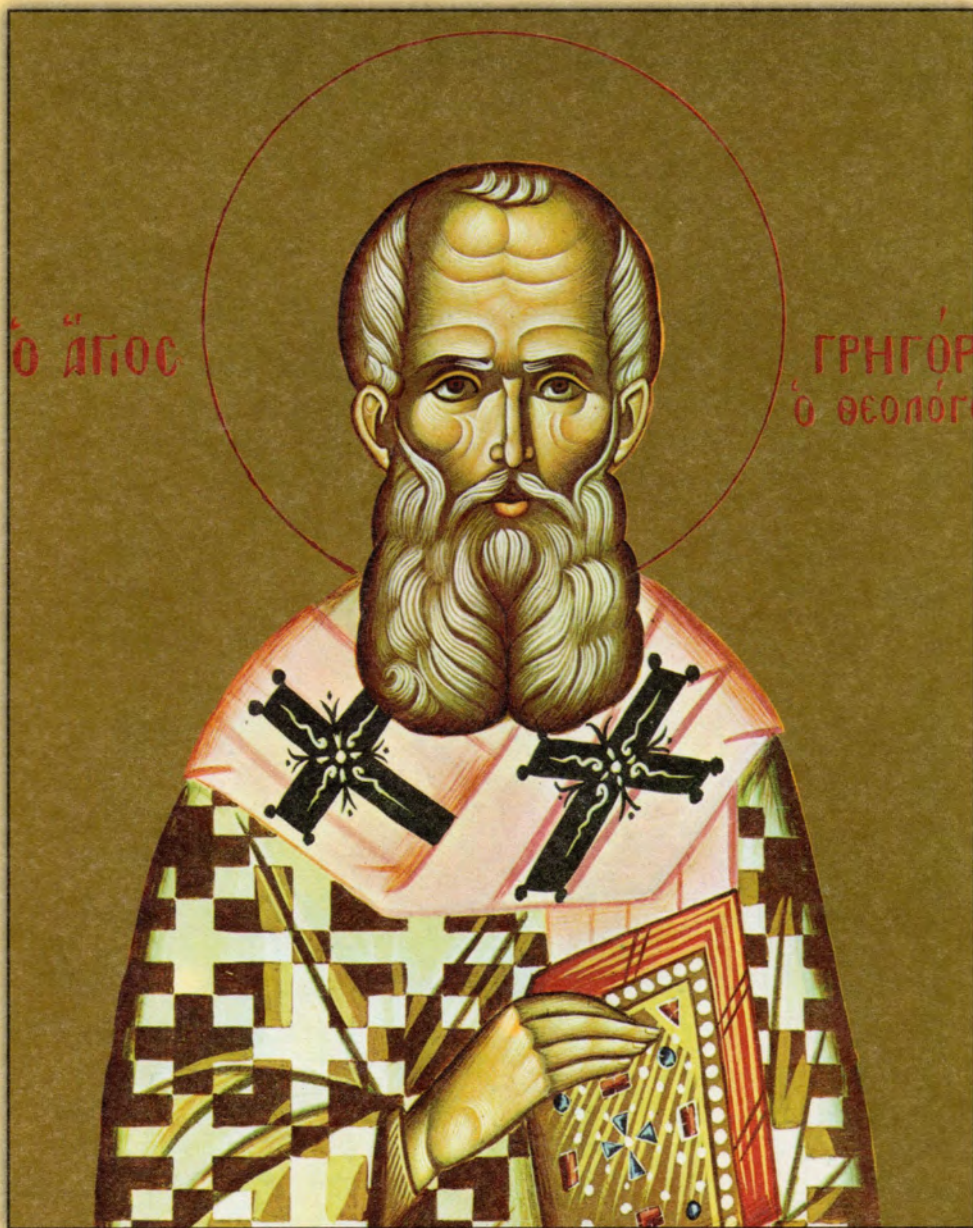


THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
SUNDAY OF ZACCHAEUS



Icon of Saint Gregory the Theologian -- January 25th

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this 33rd weekend after Pentecost, we begin a five-week, pre-lenten sequence that highlights the facets of *metanoia*. This is the first week which remembers the story of Zacchaeus and his desire to see the Lord.

One of the primary prerequisites for *metanoia*, that is the change of our hearts and minds, is **THE DESIRE** to embrace the true meaning and purpose of life. We have been given this earthly life for one purpose, namely to **SPIRITUALLY GROW**, that is to become true children of God - to become more like Jesus Christ.

The problem I see is that most people feel that they cannot become like Jesus since He is God and Man. This is a fallacy. The way that Jesus lived was not guided by His divinity but, rather, by His personal, human choice to truly become a Son of His Heavenly Father, His Abba.

Our doctrine about Jesus Christ is that His Divine Nature, namely His Divine Personhood, did not dictate how He acted as a human. While His Divine Personhood joined Him to His humanity, it did not rob Him of a free, human will.

Part of His willingness to live as He lived and teach what He taught, was due to the faith and beliefs His mother and family taught Him. They were pious Jews and believed in the One True God. He realized, however, that His religion was too much based on “keeping laws” and that His religion also rejected people that did not belong to His Jewish, ethnic group. He saw how His people rejected all others rather than the select group that governed His religion (somewhat like our current United



States which believes we are the strongest and only free people in the world and rejecting all other cultures as less noble). What a fallacy.

We may be the wealthiest nation in the world (although I presently reject this notion), we are not the most **MORAL** nation in the world. We seem to have developed the “arrogance” of the “Chosen People.”

Jesus came to change that idea. If we don’t accept this premise, we are as “blind” as the man in today’s Gospel. We should ask God to cure us of our blindness. We are only a “small” part of humanity. Let us embrace the way of Jesus, changing our hearts and minds to see the reality of our humanity.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF EASTERN CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

I ended this article in the last issue by sharing how we are like the “fruit” that we bless on the Transfiguration feast. I shared that at the very center of our being is a “life-seed” which is from God. Much like the fruit that we bless, we can eat it or transform it into something else (e.g. grapes into wine or fruit into preserves). By the power of the Holy Spirit sent from the Father, we can be transfigured into more genuine children of God.

Just as we mature mentally, emotionally, physically in ordinary life, we can spiritually grow. We can be set apart in Christ, born again through the Holy Mysteries. And we can mature in this new life through our work of prayer and practice of virtue. Living this new life will lead us to deification, the complete fulfillment of our nature as offspring of the Father.

An apt image of this transfiguration given by God Himself, is the burning bush on Mt. Sinai. An ordinary weed is gloriously transfigured and made beautiful by the fire of God’s Presence in it. It remains a weak plant - it does not become a rosebush - and is not destroyed, but penetrated and glorified. In the same way, our life in

Christ is meant to transfigure us: we are to radiate the divine nature in which God chooses to give us a share.

Another building block of our spirituality is the life-style we choose for our communion with God. All Christians live out the same life in Christ, are nourished by the same Mysteries, Scripture and Tradition and function as one communion in the Holy Spirit. However, that same life will be lived out slightly differently according to the way of life one chooses and the ministries to which he/she is invited, the manner in which he/she serves the body.

The “normal” way of life for the Christian is to live in relationship with God and others.

Human beings are not *individuals*, but rather *persons*. We are called to live in communion, to become ourselves in relationships, thus mirroring the mystery of the Trinity in whose image we have been created. According to the Scripture, the first thing with which God was not pleased in creation was individualism: “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.”

The building block: freely choosing to live in communion with others.



CHRIST, TRUE GOD and TRUE MAN

In order to truly understand who Christ is, we must look at the Dogma of Chalcedon (*This was the fourth ecumenical council of the Christian Church convoked by the emperor Marcian, 451, to finalize a true expression of what the Church believes about Jesus Christ*). The Trinity is present in the very intellectual structure of the christological dogma, that is, in the distinction between person and nature. The Trinity is one nature in three persons; Christ is a single person in two natures. The Divinity and humanity, however separate they may appear by that infinite distance that hollowed out between the created and the uncreated, are reconciled in the unity of one person.

Between triadology and Christology there is a link, *consubstantiality*: for the term *homoousios* destined first to clarify the unity of Father and Son within the Trinity, is found again in the christological dogma definitively formulated at Chalcedon. On the one hand, Christ is consubstantial with the Father by his divinity; on the other, he is consubstantial with us by his humanity. There are therefore two consubstantialities, but a single consubstantial, one single person, at once true God and true man. The *hypostasis* embraces the two natures: it remains one while becoming the other, without the divinity's being transformed into humanity, nor humanity being transformed into divinity.

I would, at this point, have my readers reread the above paragraph. It is very profound and, at first reading, difficult to comprehend. It is the foundation, however, of our dogma about the true Person of Jesus Christ since we believe He is truly and fully God and truly and fully human.



The dogma of Chalcedon, which specified this christological mystery of the two in one, is the outcome of a long fight against the temptations to rationalize the incarnation by conjuring away either the divinity or the humanity of Christ.

When all is said and done, the issue is not to attempt to fully understand this mystery but, rather, to believe it. We have the language that conveys the dimensions of this mystery, but we must always remember, Jesus Christ still remains a mystery brought into history to reveal to us who we are meant to be as human beings.

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



OUR LITURGICAL CALENDAR

Next Weekend, February 2nd

Next weekend we will celebrate not only the Encounter of Our Lord with Simeon but also the Publican and Pharisee, one of the five weeks of preparation for the Great Fast. There will be a special group of proper prayers.

ADULT DISCUSSION GROUP

It is my hope to hold Adult Discussion sessions as a part of our pre-lenten and lenten preparation for Easter. As I have done in the past, the discussion sessions will be based on an article that I present before the discussion takes place. Those interested will find an article on "*Understanding the Holy Trinity*" on the table in the Vestibule.

2019 FINANCIAL REPORT

I am pleased to present our 2019 Financial Report. I would thank all of our members who have helped to make the upkeep of our Parish possible through their generosity.

*To see a world in a grain of sand
and a heaven in a wildflower,
hold infinity in the palm of your hand
and eternity in an hour*

THE NEW LIFE

What is there in this "New Life" that would in any way compel me to attempt making this the focus of my life. It's enough that I have to deal with the vicissitudes of life.



Why would God then expect me to engage in personal transformation and change. He would challenge me to engage in spiritually growing because He knows that if I would engage in such activities I would find the true meaning and purpose of my life! I would see how I fit into all creation! I would find the fullness of life and see that I'm truly loved.

WOW! I would think that everyone would want to pursue this, especially given the challenges of life. Wouldn't you want to discover why you are here? Wouldn't you like to understand why life is the way that it is? Wouldn't you want to know that there is much more meaning to life that you currently think?

Engaging in spiritual growth through a life that strives to become more like Jesus Christ can give you answers to these questions. (Continued on page 8)

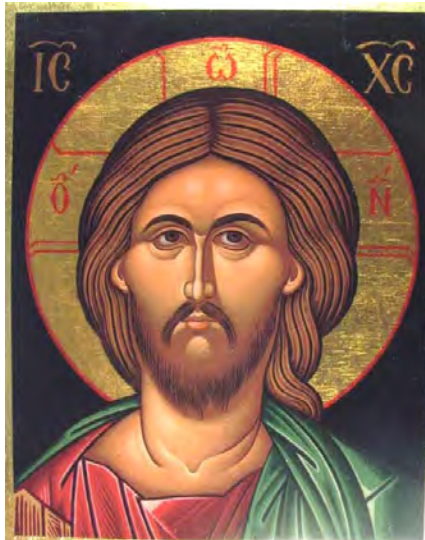
THIS IS MY BELOVED SON

The actualization of our baptism is a process of transformation in Christ, a transfiguration in him that has a lot in common with his own Baptism and Transfiguration. For this reason, as we try to truly understand the significance of the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ for us, we should extend our view and explore the significance of his Baptism.

All four Gospels share the story of Jesus' Baptism by John in the River Jordan. This is one of the reasons why we accept that this event actually took place. Plus, also, we know that John was Jesus' cousin. The connection between the Transfiguration and the Baptism of Christ jumps off the pages of the Gospels. There are two very similar phrasings: the voice of the Father, which was heard in the Transfiguration and the Baptism, have identical words: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am pleased (Mt 3:17, Mk 1:11, and Lk 3:22). The three Transfiguration narratives repeat this phrase and then add the words "listen to him" (Mt 17:5, Mk 9:7 & Lk 9:35).

The voice of the Father makes both of these events exceptional in all Scripture. This is no small thing: the Father is always difficult to approach and impossible to describe, and although in the Old Testament the voice of God is occasionally heard, this is extremely rare in the New Testament. This rare event shows that there is a deep connection between the Transfiguration and the Baptism of Christ.

In both cases the voice reveals something about the relationship between the Father and the Son, and how the Son reveals the Father to the world. In both events we are given a glimpse of the Trinity, a revelation of what God is, as much as it is possible for us to grasp this. The



Baptism of Christ is a theophany, a means of revelation of the Godhead, the manifestation of God's glory to the world.

This is a revelation of the entire Trinity. The Baptism of Christ did not merely demonstrate the divinity of Christ to the crowd gathered in Jordan, but it also showed the common activity of Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father was made manifest as the one from whom everything else flows. He identified Jesus as the Son, and sent forth the Holy Spirit.

Do you realize that we humans are created in the likeness of the TRIUNE GOD - a loving community.

DISCOVERING GOD'S DREAM FOR YOU

I don't know if you, my readers, every had the idea that God has a "DREAM FOR US". Consciously, subconsciously, semiconsciously, we are all preoccupied with this attempt to be more perfectly who we really are at the essence of our being. But think of it in this way: A tree does not try to make all of its branches straight. It is perfect in its imperfection, perfectly imperfect. And yet it does change and grow over time.

God us perfectly in our own imperfection and He saw that this was good. He saw that our imperfections can help us to grow in our "likeness" of His Son, Jesus Christ. The problem is, as I see it, that even religion has drawn our attention to our imperfection and judged that as bad. Thus, the worrisome task in the Western world to become perfect.

In Eastern Spirituality, the imperfections that we encounter within ourselves is the loving gift of God and life to help us grow. If we didn't haven any imperfections, we would have no reason to change and grow. Our personal imperfections are not a deficit but, rather, a gift to help us know how to spiritually grow.

If we find, for example, that it is difficult for us to "unconditionally love others", we know where we have to work to change ourselves. If we find it difficult to live life without anxiety, we know where we must learn how to live life in order to achieve the peace that life is supposed to deliver us. If we find that we have a real tendency to "judge others," we know where we have to grow.

All of us come into life with certain personal dispositions because of our family backgrounds and our early childhood experiences. These are incredible resources



that can help us to spiritually grow even though they don't really appear to be helpful.

Life, I truly believe, helps us to spiritually grow if only we embrace the experiences of life. They are only meant, when we take into account the fact of eternity, to help us grow and to spiritually grow. The challenges of life are not punishments. They are opportunities to grow spiritually, psychologically and emotionally.

Do you see life in this way? Does this make sense to you? If life is about "growth" (that is spiritually, psychological and emotional growth), then this should make absolute sense to any person. That is my true and absolute belief.

We are here to change and grow. That only takes place as we respond to challenges!

St. Michael the Archangel
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Rev. Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Pastor

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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

Rev Deacon Leonard Mier
313.584-6795

Greg & Esther Petrovich
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday, January 26 - 33rd Week after Pentecost - Tone 8
10:00 AM - Special Intention

34th WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - TONE 1

Monday, January 27 - Translation of St. John Chrysostom's Relics
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, January 28 - Ephrem the Syrian, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, January 29 - Translation of St. Ignatius' Relics
No Service Scheduled

Thursday, January 30 - Three Holy Hierarchs
7:00 PM—Special Intention

Friday, January 31 - Cyrus & John, Unmercenaries
No Service Scheduled

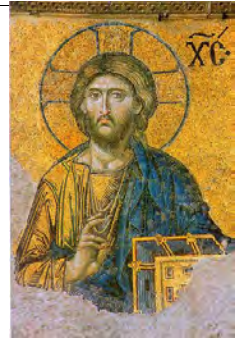
Saturday, February 1 - Tryphon, Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Sunday, February 2 - Presentation - Publican & Pharisee - Tone 1
10:00 AM - Special Intention

(Continued from page 5 - The New Life)

There is a real and sensible reason why we are here right now and why life is the way that it is. It is all for us to discover. The problem is that we usually want life to be exactly the way that we have envisioned it. That is not why we have been created by God and how God has designed life for us humans on earth.

Life is not about what we want it to be! Life is all about what God wants life to lead us to be! This is the mistake, according to Genesis, that Adam and Eve consistently made: they wanted to be in control of life and to make life the way that they wanted it to be. That, of course, makes us "controllers" of our lives instead of the grateful recipients of life. You and I don't have any "right" to life. It is a gift given to us by the Creator. We have to discover what He thinks what life should mean to us.



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

THE COURAGE TO PRAY

So part of our courage to pray is to present ourselves to God honestly and without any deception. We must be honestly ourselves. That means, in most instances that we must be able to say to God that we don't really know ourselves - that we haven't come to a true and realistic understanding of ourselves. Otherwise we can't truly come to a true encounter with our God.

How do we present to God our true and real selves? We must have reflected upon who we are and who we think we are. How do we know who we are? It takes a lot of simple and honest reflection. We have to know first that we are not perfect. We have to know what our prejudices are and what our hang-ups are. We have to truly reflect upon how we are not living as Jesus lived and how we are.

This means that, if we have listened to our modern media as many do, we see that the world is not living in according to the principles that Christ presented as a revelation from God the Father. When media or other sources tell us to "hate" others as "enemies", we have to reject this way of thinking so that we don't become taken in by the populous and reject the teachings of Jesus. We have to be willing to say that, although our society looks at the world in this way, we refuse to look at the world in this manner. If we don't, we will never be able to truly connect to God in prayer. Prayer requires that we see the world as God sees it. That means He doesn't see humanity as groups of good and bad people who are opposed to each other, but rather as people who have differences. This doesn't negate the fact that all people are a part of the same humanity that God has created!



We have to first say that God has created humanity to grow in His image and likeness and we have to not castigate those who do not think as we do.

The conflict in our world is due to several things. First, who has the power and the money! Second, who has the true understanding of our relationship with our God. Third, which group controls the other group, so that we only think as one humanity!

Life is not simple! But in order to pray, we must be truly committed to the idea that God has joined Himself to humanity and that He loves all humans as Himself. Do you truly understand this?

ST BASIL'S THOUGHTS ON GENESIS

ST BASIL THE GREAT

In the last issue of this article, I got to the part where God is said to have created woman from the rib of man. For the first time a note of discord is sounded. Until now everything that God had made was declared very good. Now we learn that something in the world was *not* good - namely **that the man should be alone**. In the context of the creation stories, “good” means “functional, able to fulfill its appointed use in society.” Thus in declaring that man’s aloneness was not good, the narrator does not suggest that the man was lonely and required a soulmate to ease his

pain. Rather, the narrator explains that if the man was to perform his functions of multiplying and subduing the earth and of caring for the Edenic garden shrine, he would require help. The declaration of “not good” refers here to the man’s function, not to his psychological state.

His helper had to be **fir for him** - corresponding to his nature and need. The Hebrew term for *helper* is *ezer*; the term for *fit* is *kenegdo*. The term *helper* itself implies no inferiority on the part of the helper, for it is often applied to God, the great Helper of His people. The term *fit* here literally means “standing opposite,” and it not only refers to the requirement that the man’s helper must match him and correspond to him, but also carries nuances of complementarity.

According, **out of the ground Yahweh God formed every living thing of the field** (i.e., every beast; compare Genesis 1:30) **and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them**. The act of naming the creatures involved more than simply placing verbal labels upon them. It also involved the man’s recognition of their essential nature and thus of their potentiality (or otherwise) to become “a helper fit for him.” This does not mean, of course, that the main goal of the help was simple companionship.

When you start looking at Genesis in this manner, you quickly move away from it being an “historical account” of creation but, rather, a religious understanding of the meaning and purpose of creation.

I hope that all this is making more sense!



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНИЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 67 No 4 WEEKEND OF ZACCHAEUS January 25-26, 2020

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

I am truly driven by the beginning of this pre-sequence to Lent, which speaks to our understanding of true repentance (*metanoia*), to think about our Eastern Spirituality. It requires us to truly shed the spirituality of “the Christian West” and embrace our Eastern spirituality. It calls us to not think about life as keeping rules but to see life as a process of ‘GROWTH’. Our Eastern approach to spirituality is as “catholic” as the western approach. It is just simply very different.

Nothing that we will be called to do during the Great Fast is by obligation. Rather, it is a call from God to “freely” and “voluntarily” embrace the time before Easter as a time of personal growth and transformation. I believe this “free will” approach is more Intune with the Jesus approach to human growth. He always stressed “faith” and “voluntary” response to life. He never forced any of those who benefited from His loving blessings, to involuntarily believe in Him. He drew everyone to Him by His love. He tried to demonstrate to all what love for others can accomplish. This was probably due to the fact that He truly loved Himself and saw the benefit of loving others as Himself.

One of the things that we have to do is to draw from His true experiences of life with others. That is how He grew as a human person. He saw what it did to others to truly love them and to speak to their “equality” with all other

human persons. This is the transformative element of His message. As we try with all of our power to love others unconditionally and to accept them, we are changed. Jesus was changed by this very same experience and He became changed by this effort and truly achieved eternal life.

I wonder how many of my readers understand this? We are changed by the way that we choose to live. Eternal is ours if we live like Jesus!

Playing Dress-Up?

On Halloween we have the opportunity to enjoy and chuckle at children dressed up so innocently in their costumes. Without any hesitation most of them go eagerly from door to door. As adults, most of us would be too self-conscious; we don't like to think that people might be laughing at us.

Zacchaeus played dress-up his whole life, trying to be somebody he wasn't and not admitting what he really was - a small-in-stature, overdressed cheat. He chose to ignore the laughter he heard behind his back.

Yet it is to Zacchaeus' house that Jesus chooses to go. Jesus, surrounded by a crowd, looks up and sees Zacchaeus sitting ridiculously in

a sycamore tree. But Jesus doesn't laugh. Instead He invites himself to dinner.

And what happens there? Zacchaeus becomes a changed person. He finds his real self. He takes off his costume. He admits to being a cheat. He makes reparation by giving half to the poor and returning fourfold to those he has extorted. For that the gift of salvation becomes his.

We should ask ourselves what costumes we need to take off, how we can respond to Jesus' wanting to come into our lives and hearts. We need to start now, for Saint Paul says that the day of the Lord is at hand.