

FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST
SUNDAY OF THE HOLY IMAGES



Icon of Holy Images

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On the first weekend of the Great Fast, our readings are taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews and St. John's Gospel. In St. Paul's letter, he highlights the *faith* of the forefathers of Christ and then diminishes this faith as adequate to truly be transformative to us who have lived after Jesus Christ. The revelation of God through Jesus Christ is truly and completely supportive of personal transformation.

He recounts the faith of Moses and then of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and all the prophets, who accomplished many things, but fell short of the revelation of God to humankind about the meaning and purpose of life. He asserts that God had a much greater revelation, namely Jesus Christ. God Himself spoke through Jesus about the meaning and purpose of life.

Our second reading, taken from St. John's Gospel, is about the calling of Nathaniel, who was brought to the Lord by Philip. Supportively, Philip has been accepted by the Lord and so He focuses upon Nathanael. This is very interesting in itself. Why wouldn't the Lord also focus upon the faith of Philip who brought Nathanael to the Lord.

Again we must understand that what is important about this passage is the calling of OTHERS to the Lord. This signals us with something that is crucial and which many of us shy



away from, namely our calling to bring others to Christ. Of course it is all about the way that we do it.

Have you ever brought anyone to belief in Christ? If not, why not? This is the primary purpose of the followers of Jesus.

The problem is that we cannot bring others to Christ by "preaching" to them. We must influence them by the way that we treat them and talk to them. BUT, as followers of Jesus we must make an attempt to bring to Him - we must show them that belief in Jesus provides us with the true means of discovering the meaning and purpose of our lives.

CHRIST, TRUE GOD and TRUE MAN

There is a famous “kenotic” (i.e., Kenosis: the relinquishment of divine attributes by Jesus Christ in becoming human) in St. Paul’s Letter to the Philippians (Phil 2: 5-11) which defines the exinanition (i.e., an emptying or enfeebling) of the Word: being “in the form of God”, that is to say, in the very condition of God, being divine in nature, he emptied himself, divested himself, humbled himself in taking the form of a servant. The Son of God, by a prodigious abasement, by the mystery of his *kenosis* descends in a self-humbling condition - in the sense, not of the original nothingness, but of the empty abyss opened up by the fall of man. To the integral plenitude of his divine nature, he unites paradoxically the no less complete “unfullness” of fallen human nature.

This passage must be compared to the text of Isaiah on “the man of sorrows” (Is 53:3), on the prediction, scandalous for so many Israelites, not of a Messiah of glory but of a “servant of Yahweh,” suffering and humiliated, in silence he “had made himself a sacrifice for sin” and “he was pierced for our transgressions.

What is this all saying. What is attempting to say is that God, in freely choosing to become incarnate as a human being, showed infinite humility in taking on “limited, human nature” out of love for humankind. He thought it entirely worthwhile to do this because of His love for humans.

Jesus did not come as some mighty conqueror to right injustices and to punish the wicked. If He did that than He could never have shown us how we must live if we desire to spiritually grow. Rather, He came as a servant and did everything in His power to show love and



kindness to all other humans, thereby become a true model for us.

God’s love for His creation required Him to do this. When we truly love, there is nothing we won’t do to help those we love. The same is true with God. He is not some supreme potentate who only demands obedience under the pain of punishment. Rather, He is a loving Father who has spared nothing in order to express His love for His children.

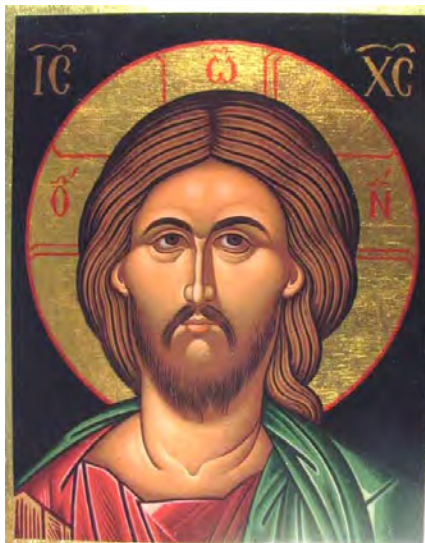
Many could not accept Jesus as a servant and therefore rejected Him. They wanted someone to destroy their enemies!

THIS IS MY BELOVED SON

The work of Jesus - His baptism and His transfiguration - is about making God and the kingdom of heaven *present* among us and inside us.

With difficult theological questions like that, Fr. Zacharias, a simple monk, would respond when meeting questions, presuppositions, objections and all sorts of expectations from visiting student: he talked about the exchange of life between human and God at the chalice of the Eucharist. He talked with reverence and respect, as if this exchange of life is a usual part of his routine: "I bring to the chalice all I can, my entire being, and I prepare for this, and I receive in return the entire life of Christ." Zacharias always delivered this claim with a humble simplicity. He looked at the chalice as the source and the center of his life. He thought of the entire Scripture and tradition as his preparation for the exchange of life. He kept his mind and his heart in the Baptism of the Jordan River daily and this gave meaning to his own baptism. He kept his mind and his heart in the mountain of the Transfiguration, and that transfigured him every day.

Baptism is a powerful thing. According to the Bible, we are to understand our baptism in two different ways: as a rebirth (according to John's Gospel), and as a death and resurrection (according to St. Paul). In the Eastern tradition we understand this when we watch a baptism rite being performed in a traditional manner: the baptized is submerged under the water three times, he or she symbolically dies and is resurrected three times, emerging from the water as a new person, as if born from another womb, this time from the womb of the church, naked, ready to be clothed in white clothes,



symbolizing that "All you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

There is something about baptism that suggests that the newly baptized has entered into a different way of being. To say that we recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of God, whose death and resurrection we share through our membership in his ecclesial body, is not so much a statement of faith as it is an incomprehensible statement that cannot be proven. More than anything else it reflects a leap of faith.

By identifying ourselves as Christians, we become personally involved in something that transforms every aspect of our being.

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



GREAT FEAST OUTREACH

Begins Today

As announced last week, our Great Fast Outreach, a Food Drive for St. Patrick's Senior Center in the Cass Corridor, begins today. This drive will continue during the entire Great Fast. The food will be delivered before or immediately after Easter. Again I would share that this is not a means for us to empty our pantries of dry food stuff which out of date. Please make sure that all donated food stuff has an expiration date that has already passed. Thank you for participating in this Christian Outreach.



**Open your eyes, look within.
Are you satisfied with
the life you're living?**

THE NEW LIFE

Hopefully if you have been reading this article regularly, you are developing your own idea about the New Life that we have been given through our initiation into a



religious that sees the journey of life as a journey of spiritual growth that leads to our "ascension" to the Heavenly Father. Life is not about gaining an eternal reward or avoiding an eternal punishment. It is about spiritual growth and personal transformation.

I cannot emphasize enough that the Eastern approach to spirituality focuses on personal transformation and change which is truly the real meaning and purpose of this earthly life. This approach answers the question: *Why am I here on earth and why do I go through the experience of death?* It also answer the question about what awaits us after earthly life.

If you are reading this, ask yourself this question: *What do I believe comes after earthly life? What is life after earthly death like?*

While I cannot give you a direct answer to (Continued on page 8)

A PRAYER A DAY DURING THE GREAT FAST

SUNDAY, MARCH 1st

Heavenly Father, on this first weekend of the Great Fast, the Church shares the Gospel story of the calling of Philip and Nathanael. In this story Christ calls Nathanael a “person without guile”, which means a person of innocence, honest intent, and pure motives, whose life reflects the simple practice of conforming his daily actions to principles of integrity. Help me to become such a person. I know that this is the kind of person I need to be if I am to be like Jesus. I know that I cannot accomplish this, however, without Your Spirit’s guidance and assistance. Therefore I ask Your help and I pledge my willingness to work to achieve this. I make this prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

MONDAY, MARCH 2nd

Heavenly Father, as I enter this second week of the Great Fast, I am aware of how much I must do to become Your child. I know that I must change some of my attitudes and the way that I think. I beg Your help and assistance. I believe You truly want me to spiritually grow and all that I have to do is to cooperate with Your Spirit within me. Help me to do this. Help me to see that personal transformation and change is the true meaning and purpose of my life and that I cannot, for the sake of my salvation, put anything else before this. Be with me in my efforts. I make this prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

TUESDAY, MARCH 3rd

Heavenly Father, I would implore Your help to bring more silence into my life. I still find that the noise of this world assaults me on all sides and I cannot yet seem to find the quiet that I realize I need to come into true communication with You. Silence for me the noise of the world around me and take away my tendency to make the world such a great part of my life. Help me to find the tranquility that I know I need to truly be at peace with myself, with others and with my world. I ask Your Spirit within me to guide and bring me to a place of peace. I make this prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4th

Heavenly Father, I beg You to help me discover and accept a true understanding of Who You are. I frequently want and expect You to act as I would to the events of life. I realize that when I do this, I try to create You in MY image and likeness which, I know, is wrong. Too frequently I want You to respond to the events of life and others as I would. I know You are completely beyond this. So help me to truly accept You as You are – my Lord and my God. Help me not to insist that You judge the events of life as I do but, rather, as you would. I make this prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN**

Always ask Our Heavenly Father to help you persevere in your efforts to change yourself.

A PRAYER A DAY DURING THE GREAT FAST

THURSDAY, MARCH 5th

Heavenly Father, it is already the second week of the Fast and I still haven't adjusted to it. I ask You to help me become a more peaceful person and put aside the hectic things of my life. While I desire to achieve true interior peace, I know that I cannot achieve that without Your help and that of Your Holy Spirit. Help me to open my heart and mind to His presence in my life and to allow Him to bring peace to me. I also ask Your help to declutter my thinking and to strive to focus on my spiritual life before anything else. It's hard to let go. I need Your help. I make this prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

FRIDAY, MARCH 6th

Heavenly Father, today our Church remembers the 42 Martyrs of Ammorium. When I think about how many persons in history have surrendered their lives because of their belief in Your Son Jesus, I am embarrassed, realizing how reticent I am to just change my life and become more like Him. Help me to be inspired by the martyrs and grow in my courage and desire to do all in my power to embrace personal change and transformation. Help me to truly desire to make real inroads in accomplishing this change! Help me to truly desire to become Your child and grow in my likeness of Jesus. Help me to know what and how to change. I make this prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

HAVE MERCY ON ME A SINNER!

SATURDAY, MARCH 7th

Heavenly Father, today our Church calls me to remember all the souls who have gone on into eternity before me. Help me first to remember all the deceased of my family, my deceased friends and the deceased of my parish. I beg You to grant them blessed repose and continued grow in their relationship with You. In turn I would ask them to help me bring my prayer to You for Your help to grow my desire to change myself, making me ever a little more like Jesus. In remembering them, I am strengthened in my belief in life after death and encourage to do all I can during this lifetime to spiritually grow. I make this prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

SUNDAY, MARCH 8th

Heavenly Father, on this weekend of the Great Fast, the Church remembers St. Gregory Palamas. He sought spiritual growth before earthly honors and used the Jesus Prayer to bring him interior peace and silence. The prayer he said was: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.* As I struggle with my ability to achieve personal, interior peace, help me, Father, to use this Jesus Prayer and allow it to transform me as it transformed St. Gregory. He has shown us that inner silence of this kind makes us capable of listening to the whispers of the divine within us because, as Luke writes: "The kingdom of God is within you." I make this prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

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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, March 1 - First Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 5
10:00 AM + Special Intention

SECOND WEEK OF THE GREAT FAST - TONE 6

Monday, March 2 - Theodotus, Bishop-Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, March 3 - Eutropius & Others, Martyrs
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, March 4 - Gerasimus, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Thursday, March 5 - Conon, Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Friday, March 6 - 42 Martyrs of Ammorium
7:00 PM - Presanctified Liturgy

Saturday, March 7 - Priest Martyrs of Cherson
No Service Scheduled

Sunday, March 8 - Second Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 6
10:00 AM + Ihor Perchuk in Ukraine; Jaraslava Zalopanyj

(Continued from page 5 - The New Life)

powerful questions, I do know that since Jesus, after His death, was recognized by many in His glorified body, that this gives us some insight into what happens to us after our transition from earthly life. His resurrection as a man tells us that we continue to exist in some way and that eternity that we enter into is not some static place, but, rather, a very dynamic existence. So don't expect, after you exist this earthly life, that you will spend the rest of eternity on a cloud playing a harp (heha). As I understand earthly-life-after-earthly-death, we continue in a process of spiritual growth and perfection which is designed to lead us ever more closely to a LIKENESS of Jesus. All creation seems to be involved in this continuous evolution to a more perfect expression of what it is. ***What do you make of all of this?***



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

THE COURAGE TO PRAY

One of the most important dispositions we must adopt as we enter into prayer is the disposition of that of a child of God. We stand before our Heavenly Father and we should not fear standing before Him but, rather, think about His great love for us. He loves us so very much that He conceived who we are from all eternity and, out of His love, He is sharing His very life and Spirit with us. So we need to stand in “awe” and “love” before Him and make our first prayer a prayer of thanksgiving for the Gift of Life and creating us in His IMAGE and giving us the potential to grow in Hi LIKENESS.

If we stand before God in fear, we cannot express our love for Him and accept His love for us. We will never attempt to grow in our LIKENESS of Him if we fear that He will punish us for our failings and weaknesses. If He wanted perfect beings that were without failings, He would have created us that way. The only way that we learn and grow is by making mistakes.

So we approach God as a child approaches a “good” and “loving” father. One of the very unfortunate things in our culture is that many parents believe that the only way they can raise good children is to make them afraid of being punished. True behavior modification, it has been discovered, is when we expend ten times more effort in rewarding good behavior than spending time on punishing bad behavior.

I believe that God is this kind of parent. He spends time rewarding us for good behavior rather than waiting to catch us being bad. He knows that doesn't really work in changing behavior. Plus, He is a loving Father.



So, is this the attitude you have when entering into prayer? If not, why not?

I also believe that one of the things we have to do when entering into prayer is to forget about always “asking” for something that we want. How loving is that communication. Is God only someone that we go to for favors?

Rather prayer is a time to praise and honor God and thank Him for the many good things He has showered upon us. What kind of relationship is it when all we do is “ASK” to receive a favor from Him. Truly He already knows what we need and allows life to only give us what is good for us.

ST BASIL'S THOUGHTS ON GENESIS



ST BASIL THE GREAT

The narrative that follows the portion that I presented in the last Bulletin, closes with the cultural observation that because of closeness, an *ish* (i.e., a man) shall leave his father and mother and cling to his own *ishah* (i.e., his woman/wife), and they shall become one flesh, a single organism. The verb rendered here *cling* is the Hebrew *dabaq*, the same verb used in Job 38:38 to describe how clods of earth stick after the rain. It thus describes no mere conjunction but a complete joining into one. Sociologically this statement seems problematic, for in Israel the woman left her family to

join the man, not vice versa. (This is also true in Hindu culture where the woman is required to leave her family and become a servant to the family of her husband). But the statement should be regarded not as a sociological observation, but as a spiritual one - that is, the man's inner connection to his wife is stronger and more ontologically (i.e., based upon being or existence) basic than his previous connection to his family - a mighty link indeed.

This description of the creation of woman is remarkable when considered in the culture of its time. Ancient creation stories did not narrate a separate creation for woman but subsumed this topic under the creation of the man. Here woman is deemed worthy of separate consideration. the foundation has been laid for a theology most modern cultures have even yet not been able to internalize and express.

The story of the creation of the man and his woman concludes with the statement they are **both nude and not ashamed**. All was innocent and good. The word rendered **nude** is the Hebrew *arom*. It contains hints of vulnerability - a vulnerability we will see exploited in the next chapter.

This second creation story offers certain lessons on human nature, gender, marriage - and even Christology. We can draw upon the text for these lessons because the text does not narrate the biographies of two individuals so much as the origins of two archetypes.

Hopefully my readers are getting a whole different idea about Genesis and the true meaning of Genesis.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 67 No 9 FIRST WEEKEND OF THE GREAT FAST February 29-March 1, 2020

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

In the last issue of this article, I truly tried to challenge my readers to think about the meaning and purpose of their lives. What many may not want to accept is that their meaning and purpose is intimately connected with helping others find their meaning and purpose of their lives. We are called to be conduits whereby others can truly process why they are here. Of course, we first just come to a real understanding of this ourselves. We must actually ask ourselves whether we understand and accept the real meaning of our personal lives. We must ask ourselves and find an adequate answer to this question: *Why am I here and what is this life all about?*

The problem, as I see it, is that so many people just try to “LIVE THEIR LIVES” without asking the fundamental questions: *Why do I exist? Why am I here on the planet earth? What is the purpose of my life? Is this earthly all there is to Life?*

I wonder how you answer these very simple questions? I truly believe that spiritual growth is directly connected to coming to some “realistic” answers to these questions! I believe that if you can answer these questions with some kernel of confidence if you believe that you are on the path of personal transformation. I would guess that many people never



wonder why they are alive and why they live in the way that they do. They just live life, having no comprehension about what life is all about. I do truly believe that our Christian message, Who is truly Jesus

Christ, gives us answers to these very basic, human questions.

I do believe that many people do not even ask themselves these very basic questions. I hope that you, if you read this, are not one of those persons. Life is about asking questions and searching for answers that truly make sense. I do believe that Christianity makes sense.

The Image of God Within Us

A story is told that when Leonardo da Vinci painted "The Last Supper" he sought out men who could be living models for Our Lord and the apostles for his painting. Each model had to have a face that expressed da Vinci's vision of the particular man he would represent. One day, da Vinci saw a young man who had the features of love, tenderness, caring, innocence, compassion, and kindness. This man would be his model for Jesus.

However, years went by and the painting was still not complete. Da Vinci could not find the right face for Judas. He was looking for a man whose face was streaked with despair, wickedness, greed, and sin. Ten years after starting the picture, he found a man in prison whose face had all the qualities for which he had been search-

ing. This prisoner, then, would be the model for Judas.

As da Vinci worked, he noticed the prisoner growing more and more uneasy. He asked the prisoner, "What seems to trouble you so much?" The man began sobbing and said, "Don't you remember me? Ten years ago I was your model for Jesus!" The once innocent youth had turned his back on Christ and had begun living a sinful life. The face that had once radiated love, now showed misery. The expression of hope was replaced by despair. The light of Christ within him had grown dim.

On this first Sunday of the Great Fast, let us ask ourselves, "What do others see in our face?" Is ours a face of kindness and love, or of despair and misery?