

SECOND SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST



*Icon of the Paralytic Lowered through the Roof*

## A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this second weekend of the Great Fast, our readings are taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews and Mark's account of the curing of the paralytic at Capernaum. There are many features of the Letter to the Hebrews that might suggest someone other than Paul being the author. The letter seeks to strengthen the practical faith of its recipients and appeals to them for perseverance despite harassment from forces outside the community.

In the section that we hear, Paul exhorts us to be faithful to what we hear, especially in the Gospels. The first part of the reading quotes extensively from the Psalms.

The story of the cure of the paralytic at Capernaum appears in all three Synoptic Gospels: Matthew (9:1-8) and Luke (5:17-26). Because of this, biblical scholars believe that this event actually took place. There are, of course, some differences to each of the stories presented. Matthew's Gospel retains the portion where the men carrying the paralytic actually open up a hole in the roof of the house where Jesus was staying. Luke does not include this point.

In each account, however, the Messianic secret is revealed, namely His ability to forgive sin. It is surprising that Jesus would have disclosed Himself so very early in his ministry as the Son of Man with authority to forgive sins, the more so since this



disclosure is made to hostile scribes. Perhaps this statement by Jesus is a parenthetical comment of the Church addressed to the Christian readers of the Gospels and explicating for them the significance of the healing. In that case these stories would form a perfect literary unity in which Jesus establishes the effectiveness of his forgiving word not by verbal claim but by a miracle whose import is accessible only to those with faith.

Hopefully as we hear this story we are filled with the understanding that our God is all-forgiving and that the work we must do is to learn how to accept His forgiveness and how to change our lives so that we might truly be worthy of His forgiveness and love. Let us strive to spiritually grow, becoming more like Jesus.

## CHRIST, TRUE GOD and TRUE MAN

In the last issue of this article, I introduced the idea of *kenosis* in relation to the Person of Jesus, the Christ - God truly emptying Himself in order to become incarnate as a human being. I suspect that most Christians haven't even heard about this aspect of the incarnation. St. Cyril of Alexandria examined this divine *kenosis* at length. God, he said, in incarnating himself, was not able to divest himself of his nature, otherwise he would no longer be God, and one would no longer be able to speak of the incarnation. This is because the subject of *kenosis* is not the divine nature, but the person of the Son. Now, the person perfects himself by the gift of self; the person distinguishes himself from nature, not to "pride himself on" his natural condition, but to renounce himself entirely; this is why the Son "did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped" or clung-to, but on the contrary, "made himself nothing" which is neither a sudden decision nor an act, but a manifestation of his very being, of his person, which is neither a willing of his own but his hypostatic reality itself as an expression of the Trinitarian will, a will of which the Father is the source, the Son, the obedient realization, and the Spirit the glorious fulfillment. Thus, there is a profound continuity between the personal being of the Son as renunciation and his earthly *kenosis*. Abandoning a glorious condition of which he never took advantage, he accepted shame, ignominy, and malediction. He took upon himself the objective conditions of sin. He submitted himself to our moral condition. Divesting himself of his royal prerogative, he buried his glory more and more in suffering and death. For He had to discover in His own flesh



how much humans had to change in order to come to true salvation.

Thus *kenosis* is the incarnation in its aspect of humility and death. But Christ completely keeps his divine nature and his exinanition is voluntary: while remaining God, he accepts becoming mortal out of love for us; for the only way to overcome death was to let it penetrate into God himself where it could find no room.

In the next issue I'll try to simplify some of this. The one thing is evident: God so loves us that He spared nothing to express His love for us!

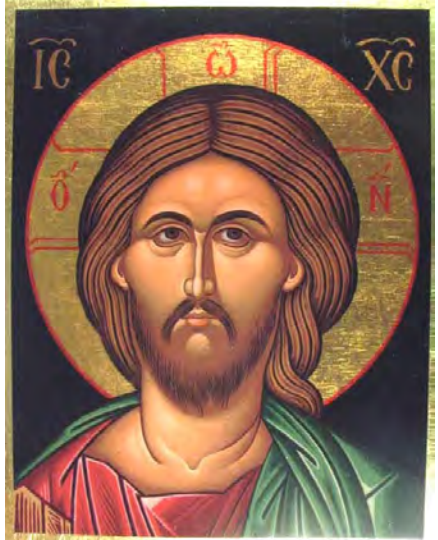
## THIS IS MY BELOVED SON

I ended the last issue of this article by sharing this thought: By identifying ourselves as Christians, we become personally involved in something that touches on, informs, and transforms every aspect of our being. A Christian is someone who is in love with God, who falls deeper into this divine love, and who tries to live every moment in the presence of the divine lover, the God who is known to have only one passion: his strong love for humankind. The confession of faith we make at our baptism is only the beginning of the Christian life, or rather the beginning of a continuous change in Christ.

Something changes in us when we are baptized. The change that happens is a continuous transfiguration that sometimes can be seen by others.

The tradition of the church speaks of the *good change* of the Christian, which may be seen in the fragrant relics of the saints, centuries after their death. What a mystery this is! Similarly, the Transfiguration of Christ never ceases to be a great mystery - and it presents itself as a fulfillment of the one and only baptism that is confessed in the Creed. What was first revealed to us in the Jordan River has the power to continually transform us.

One of the most salient elements in the Transfiguration is the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. The luminous cloud, the light that shone from the face of Jesus, and even the change in his appearance, were results of the operation of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit always reveals Christ: we read the Bible correctly if we read it in the Holy Spirit. Similarly, we recognize the church as the body of Christ if we are guided by the Holy Spirit. And the complete revelation of the divinity of Jesus



Christ on Mount Tabor to Peter, John and James was also a work of the Holy Spirit.

Although we know the miraculous even on Mount Tabor as the Transfiguration of Christ, there was no change in Christ. What changed was that the Holy Spirit affected the way the three apostles saw their teacher. For the first time they could see His divinity, although He was always God, even when His divinity was hidden. The real change was not in the face or the clothes of Christ, but in the way Peter, John and James became, by the power of the Holy Spirit, aware of the divinity of the Father shining through Christ.

# St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



## Great Fast

### SOUP AND SALAD LUNCHEON

Next Sunday, March 15th



Why not plan on joining us next Sunday after the Divine Liturgy and share some Lenten Soup and Salad. Next week marks the half-way point of the

Great Fast. If you will join us, take time to add your name to the list that is available on the list that is available in the Vestibule. ALSO, if you would like to bring a favorite soup, please call

JANET DICKY - 586.755.3129

MARY LaDOUCEUR - 313.278.7378

We only ask that that soup or salad be free of any meat or dairy products.

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## EASTER FLOWERS

Thanks to all who already donated for Easter Flowers. Didn't realize that the envelope was in the packet so early. There is still time, however, to donate.

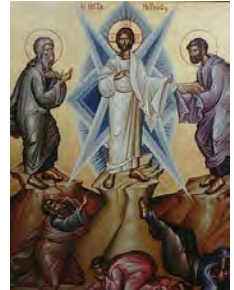
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## REMEMBER OUR FOOD DRIVE

***Change your life today. Don't gamble on the future, act now, without delay***

## THE NEW LIFE

I would, as I usually do in this article, raise a question which, I hope, my readers will take the time to answer for themselves. This is the question: *What do you think happens after our earthly death?*



I find that people have so many different fantasies about life after death. I purposely highlight the word "fantasies". I raise this question because we are preparing to celebrate the DEATH and RESURRECTION of Jesus who is the archetype of human beings. Saying that He is the archetype of what we have created to be, means that we, like Him, will go through the same process. At least this is what our religion calls us to believe. If this is true, and I believe that it is, what does this mean? Will we somehow just float through eternity just "being" without any activity?

When I look around at the universe I realize that nothing, as I shared in last week's Bulletin, is STATIC, that is without constant changing. The whole universe is VERY DYNAMIC. So what does this mean for us? Are we too in a continuous cycle of changing and growing?

*(Continued on page 8)*

# A PRAYER A DAY DURING THE GREAT FAST

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## **SUNDAY, MARCH 8<sup>TH</sup>**

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.**

## **MONDAY, MARCH 9<sup>TH</sup>**

Heavenly Father, I ask You to grant me the insight to determine at least one thing I can change to grow in my likeness of Jesus. Grant me the courage to undertake this change. I believe that with Your help I can. Strengthen my resolve. Help me to remember that I am never too old to change. My attitudes about life and others, I know, can keep me from bringing about true change. Help me to discover the joy that I truly believe awaits me if I make a genuine effort to spiritually growth. I know that spiritual growth can provide me with a true understanding of the real meaning and purpose of my life. I make this prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

## **TUESDAY, MARCH 10<sup>TH</sup>**

Heavenly Father, we have already come to the third week of the Great Fast. I beg Your help to achieve greater interior peace. I have tried to make a good start to this time of preparation, but I realize that I still have not achieved the essential interior peace needed for real spiritual growth. I need the help of Your Spirit. May Your Spirit instill in me the desire to increase my "communion" with You by coming into deeper communion with my fellowmen. I know that if I can unconditionally love others who I can see, I will increase my ability to love You Who I cannot see. This is my sincerest prayer and wish. I make this prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

## **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11<sup>TH</sup>**

Heavenly Father, today our Church remembers a Father of the Church, Sophronius of Jerusalem. We use his powerful prayer to bless water on Theophany. In this prayer I hear: "O Lord, enlighten the eyes of my understanding that I may make bold to sing the praises of Your measureless goodness and Your might. Let my supplication be acceptable", so that my sins may not prevent You Holy Spirit, Who I truly believe is within me, from guiding my life. Help me to cooperate with Your Spirit and working diligently on transforming my life, growing in my LIKENESS of Jesus. I know that I can only do this with the help and assistance of Your Spirit. I make this prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

# A PRAYER A DAY DURING THE GREAT FAST

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## **THURSDAY, MARCH 12<sup>th</sup>**

Heavenly Father help me to be truly sincere in my efforts at observing this Great Fast. Help me to realize why the Church calls me to enter this fast and why I should observe it. Help me to understand that as I concentrate more intensely on my spiritual life, I prepare myself to understand more completely the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection and to truly celebrate the revelation that these events make to me about my own human life. Help me to realize that Christ's death on the Cross is meaningless without His resurrection and His resurrection reveals to me that human life is immortal, hopefully giving me great cause to rejoice and celebrate. I make this prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

## **FRIDAY, MARCH 13<sup>th</sup>**

Heavenly Father, the mid-point of the Great Fast is rapidly approaching. Help me to renew my efforts, making this a time of spiritual growth. Help me to realize that the things I have chosen to observe this Fast are to increase my self-discipline, helping me concentrate on my spiritual life. It is easy to become distracted by the events of life and forget that the reason You have given me this earthly existence is to help me spiritually grow. You, Heavenly Father, allow life to present opportunities and challenges that can bring about growth. Help me to come to a deeper understanding of this and freely embrace these challenges as real opportunities to spiritually grow. I make this prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

## **SATURDAY, MARCH 14<sup>th</sup>**

Heavenly Father help me to think about the true meaning and purpose of my life. I know that this Great Fast is meant to help me prepare myself for the celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I truly believe that He is God's revelation about the meaning and purpose of human life. Therefore, help me to think about what He attempted to teach me by the way He lived. Help me to discover ways that I can begin to more closely imitate the way that He lived. Help me to grow in my desire to live like He lived and to love like He loved. Help me to truly become His disciple. I make this prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

## **SUNDAY, MARCH 15<sup>th</sup>**

Heavenly Father, I bow before the Cross of Your Son Jesus and I praise His glorious resurrection. I know that He had to die in order to "conquer Death" and reveal that human life is immortal. As I venerate the Cross, help me to comprehend what it reveals. First it reveals that Death is only a means of making a transition to a different way of living. Second it reveals resurrection, telling me that I have an eternity to build my relationship with You, my true God. As I venerate the Cross of Your Son, allow me to embrace the revelation that it shares with me. Jesus embraced death to reveal to me true life. I make this prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

***I bow to Your Cross, O Master, and I  
praise Your holy Resurrection***

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

### **THIRD WEEK OF THE GREAT FAST - TONE 7**

Monday, March 9 - 40 Martyrs of Sebaste  
*No Service Scheduled*

Tuesday, March 10 - Condratus & Others, Martyrs  
*No Service Scheduled*

Wednesday, March 11 - Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem  
*No Service Scheduled*

Thursday, March 12 - Theophane, Venerable-Confessor  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Friday, March 13 - Translation of Nicephorus' Relics**  
**7:00 PM - Presanctified Liturgy**

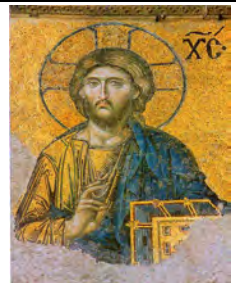
Saturday, March 14 - Benedict, Abbot  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Sunday, March 13 - Third Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 7**  
**10:00 AM + Liturgy of St. Basil the Great**

*(Continued from page 5 - The New Life)*

For some reason, people seem to want to believe that after we die we never have to worry about personal change again. To me that would be the worst of scenarios. That is why I personally have strongly attempted to convince others that personal change and transformation, while we may, at times, find it difficult, is preferable to a state of dormition or hibernation (*which is what it would be if we stop growing after this earthly life*). To me that would be absolutely boring and tragic. I want to continue to grow and change. Growth and change makes a person, I believe, feel alive! Growth is a wonderful thing. So, instead of resisting it, why not embrace it and discover what it really means to be alive. The rest of the universe is experiencing it. Why not us!

**THINK AB OUT THIS**



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



# THOUGHTS ON THE GREAT FAST

Fasting is one of the oldest and most venerable practices in the Church which came to us through an “uninterrupted tradition.” The fast that we are presently observing is called the Great Fast not only on account of its duration (seven weeks) but mainly on account of its importance for the spiritual renewal of the faithful. The Great Fast can be described as a forty-day period of prayer, penance, and spiritual exercises in preparation for the proper celebration of Easter.

The Great Fast, as we know it today, is the result of a most complicated historical development, not all stages of which have been, so far, sufficiently explained. It seems that in the second century, the Church knew only a very short fast (a day or two) before the Pasch. During the third century, the pre-paschal fast was extended to the entire week known to us as the Passion or Holy Week. The first mention of the Forty Days Fast is made in the fifth canon of the Council of Nicaea (325). From that time, the Forty Days Fast is discussed by many Church Fathers and St. Athanasius (d. 373) does not hesitate to say: “Anyone who neglects to observe the Forty Days Fast is not worthy to

celebrate the Easter Festival.” The Synod of Laodicaea (about 360) imposed the strict obligation of fasting for forty days before Easter for the first time. By the end of the fourth century, the Great Fast was generally observed by the entire Church.

Historically, we trace the institution of the Great Fast to the fourth century but it is impossible to determine when, where, and why this venerable practice



was established. Its origin must be sought in connection with the institution of the catechuminate. The primitive Church, having established Easter as a solemn day of Baptism, submitted those to be baptized to an intensive spiritual training during the pre-paschal period. To encourage them, the sponsors, relatives, and

friends of the catechumens gradually began to take part in their daily exercises, as witnessed by St. Justin Martyr: “Those who believe in the truth of our teaching, first of all, promise to live according to that teaching. Then we teach them how to pray and entreat God with fasting for the remission of their sins ; and we (the faithful) pray and fast with them too.”

I shall continue sharing about the Great Fast during this time for your edification.

## ST BASIL'S THOUGHTS ON GENESIS



### ST BASIL THE GREAT

In the last issue of this article, I ended by suggesting that the second “creation story” found in Genesis offers certain lessons on human nature, gender, marriage and even Christology. We see this in the lack of proper names for the two characters: the male character is referred to simply as *man* (Hebrew *adam*) or as *the man* (Hebrew *ha-adam*). The female character does not yet have a name; she is referred to as *woman* (Hebrew *ishah*) or as the man’s *ishah* (i.e., his woman/wife).

By this reference to the male simply as “man,” the archetypal nature of the story

is accentuated, whereas it is obscured if the Hebrew for “man” is rendered as the proper name “Adam”. It was thus not just the first *adam* who was made from the dust; we *all* were made from the dust (Psalm 103:14). It was not just the first *ishah* who was bone of her husband’s bone and flesh of his flesh; every husband and wife are thus united as one single flesh. The archetypal nature of the story makes it more relevant to our situation, not less. The story of course reads as if it were a biography (all stories read that way, even allegories such as *Pilgrim’s Progress* and the Lord’s parables), but it speaks fundamental truths about the creation and nature of all men.

The first truth the story proclaims is the lofty nature of man/*adam*. Though man is formed from the humble dust of the earth (and dust is always an image of humility; compare Psalms 103:14; 113:7), yet God made him with special care. God may have formed the animals from the ground, even as He formed man from the ground - the same words for both *formed* and *ground* are used in both Genesis 2:19, 7 - but even so the man occupied an incomparably higher place. Even apart from the assertion of the first creation story that mankind was made in God’s image, we can see clearly from this second story that the man was special. Of no other creature was it said that Yahweh Himself blew into his nostrils to give him life.

Given the special care God lavished on him, we are not surprised to see that God took him and placed him in His royal garden to tend it as His priest.



# THE EASTERN HERALD

## СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.  
Vol. 67 No 10      SECOND WEEKEND OF THE GREAT FAST      March 7-8, 2020

### THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

The spirituality of the Christian East is all about actualizing our “potential” to grow in the LIKENESS of God as seen in the Person of Jesus. Our form of Christianity places a whole different emphasis on what life is all about. It encourages us not to think in terms of “rewards” and “punishments” but, rather, spiritual growth. As God created us, growth is only truly accomplished by building on our strengths and learning from our weaknesses and mistakes. Therefore, God doesn’t need to punish our mistakes. He only lovingly encourages us to learn from our mistakes.

Further, if we truly come to an understanding about life, we discover that it is immortal, and therefore eternal. Our earthly existence is a real opportunity to grow in our LIKENESS of Jesus. Now is the time to act and to grow. Spiritual growth is truly an “eternal quest” granted to us by our loving Heavenly Father because His intent in creating us was to have beings that can voluntarily grow in our awareness of His love and, therefore, freely return His love. There is truly nothing in our religion which suggests that we have but one, real opportunity



to grow in our LIKENESS of God. Even if earthly life grants us 100 or more years, we cannot in any way think that that is sufficient time to completely be transformed in our likeness of Jesus.

This doesn’t mean, however, that we shouldn’t take every opportunity during this present lifetime to grow in our likeness of Jesus. This life is given to us to spiritually grow. **NOW IS THE TIME.** We have to think this way so that we can be focused in the present moment on this task. If we don’t try during this lifetime to spiritually grow, what makes us think that we will change in another lifetime?

**SO NOW IS THE TIME. THE GREAT FAST IS THE TIME.** Ask yourself: *What am I doing right now to increase my spiritual growth?*

## *Confidence in God*

A story is told of a very tired traveler who came upon the banks of a river. There was no bridge by which he could cross. It was winter, and the surface of the river was covered with ice. He wondered whether or not the ice would bear his weight. Finally, after much hesitation and fear, he got down on his knees and began, very cautiously, to creep across the surface of the ice, hoping that the ice would support him.

When he was about halfway across the river he heard the sound of bells behind him. From the other side of the river there came a sled filled with people and pulled by four horses. They whisked across the frozen river, passing right by the traveler who was still crawling

across the river on his hands and knees.

This story illustrates how some people go through life. Some stand on the banks of indecision, unable to make up their minds about the course to take. Others crawl along in constant fear, unable to find the courage to carry a cross or face a challenge. There are those, however, who allow their Faith to be their guide. They face challenges, problems, and uncertainties knowing that God directs every step.

When we face rivers of difficulties, we do not have to be indecisive, nor do we have to creep through life in fear. God has promised to help, and with God's help we can make our way to the other side, safely.