

SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY, OF THE ANCESTORS



Icon of the Nativity of Our Lord -- December 25th

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

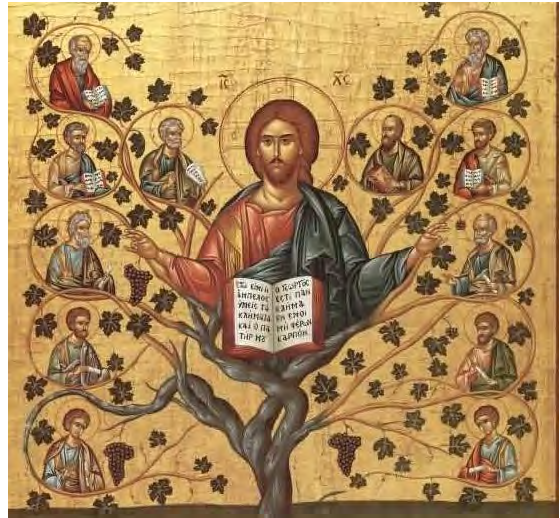
On this weekend before we celebrate the Birth of the God-Man Jesus, our readings are taken from Paul's Letter to the Hebrews and Matthew's Gospel. They both focus on the humans that came before Jesus.

Paul writes to the Hebrews about the "faith" of the Ancestors of Christ. While he highlights the strength of their faith, he states: *Yet despite the fact that all of these were approved because of their faith, they did not obtain what had been promised. God had made a better plan, a plan which included us.*

We have to realize that God could not become incarnate - take on human flesh - until humanity was prepared psychologically, intellectually and spiritually to eventually receive the message that God made through this event. Even though some were prepared to accept Jesus as someone sent by God, there were many who could not accept this and, therefore, were not able to understand God's revelation to humanity through this profound action.

Matthew and Luke both have accounts of the conception and the birth of Jesus and some incidents that followed the birth. Neither Mark nor John touch upon this period of the life of Jesus. The genealogies of Jesus found in both Matthew and Luke are not parallel, nor are there parallels elsewhere in their Gospels.

The genealogy in Matthew is to



show that Jesus is the Messiah, a term in the history of salvation that was begun with the promises to Abraham. Matthew takes the view of one source of the Pentateuch, which begins with Abraham. For Matthew Jesus is the king Messiah, the son of David, the Messiah of Israel and the son of Abraham. Luke, using a different source, traces Jesus' genealogy back to Adam.

Matthew's genealogy is deliberately compiled in 3 sets of 14 names; 14 is a multiple of 7. It is divided at the two critical points of Israelite history, the foundation of the monarchy of David and the collapse of the monarchy of Judah in the Babylonian conquest.

One of the important reasons for including Jesus' genealogy was to assert that Jesus was the awaited Messiah and that he was actually a human being.

REMEMBERING JESUS' ANCESTORS

The Sunday before Christmas is known in our Church as the Sunday of the Holy Genealogy - the Ancestors of Christ. On this day the Church commemorates the ancestors of Christ from Abraham to Joseph the Betrothed. Christ's full humanity meant not just that he possessed a human nature but that he had blood relatives, and that he came from a long family line.

One of the shortcomings of modern culture is the tendency to leave the past behind and focus on the now. This has resulted in people feeling rootless and incomplete.

In the Eastern Church we remember our ancestors because they are part of us. To remember our family and our family roots is to affirm our humanity; likewise, to overlook our family connections is to diminish our humanity. To remember is an act of love and faithfulness. We all came from somewhere. Our family heritage is a source of blessing and sometimes a source of pain. As Christians we have both a biological and a spiritual family lineage.

We remember the aforementioned names, those in the Old Testament who were related to Christ by blood, and those who spoke of His Birth as a man. In the Divine Liturgy, we read of Jesus Christ's lineage from the Gospel of Saint Matthew. In this way, the Church shows us that God truly became a man, taking on human



nature. He was not a ghost, an apparition, a myth, a distant imagined god, or the abstract god of philosophers; such a god does not have a family tree. Our God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He has flesh, blood and human ancestors - many of whom sinned greatly, but like David, also repented greatly. Yet, all of these righteous ones in every age had been well-pleasing to God because they loved Him. By taking on human nature, the Son of God became like us in all ways, in flesh and blood, in mind and soul, and in heart and will. He differed from us in only one way: He did not sin.

Jesus was real! He lived in history. He was God's revelation to us!

THOUGHTS ON GENESIS

I ended the last issue of this article stating that Paul's purpose in writing that Christ was the new Adam, was not to assert the historicity of Adam but, rather, to emphasize the centrality of Christ. One may rephrase Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:22 thus: *In the same way as the story of Genesis related how all died in Adam, in the same way all now actually find life in Christ.* The Genesis story, historical or not, sets up the parallel Paul can use in describing what Christ has done.

But surely something is lost if Paul, as well as teaching about the centrality of Christ, teaches that death entered the world through sin. Don't his words in Romans 5:12f about death coming into the world through sin lose something if death had nothing to do with human sin? Granted that his teaching about Christ is not dependent on the historicity of Adam, what about his teaching about death?

We must first consider what Paul means when he says that death entered the world through sin. What kind of death? Death as experienced by human beings, certainly. But what about the death of plants, trees and other flora? Does Paul's assertion that death entered the world through sin mean that before human sin occurred, leaves didn't fall and plants didn't die? Or what about the death of animals? Must we interpret Paul as saying that before Adam's sin animals didn't die? That carnivores did not exist? That the teeth of the lion, clearly designed for eating meat, were only used



to graze upon grass? Texts such as Isaiah 11:6-9 are not relevant, for those texts are clearly poetic, describing the peace God will send with the Kingdom. They were not intended to be understood as teaching zoology.

When the new Testament refers to death, therefore, it refers to death as *human beings* experience it; this does not encompass the death of animals. For the animals (as for leaves on a tree) death comes not as an intruder and an enemy, but as the completion and fulfillment of the cycle of life; not as a tragedy or something fearful, but as the closing of a circle.

There is much to be learned from this commentary on Genesis.

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



CHRISTMASTIME SCHEDULE

We will be celebrating **only one** Divine Liturgy for Christmas, on Christmas Day itself. It will also be live-streamed.

CHRISTMAS DAY DIVINE LITURGY

DECEMBER 25th @ 10:00 AM

Live-streamed

SYNAXIS OF THE THEOTOKOS

DECEMBER 26th @ 10:00 AM

Live-streamed

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

DECEMBER 27th @ 10:00 AM

Live-streamed

We continue with our limited seating capacity even during this sacred time. We can seat about 30 persons.

2021 CALENDARS AVAILABLE

Our 2021 Parish Calendars are now available. I would, at the same time, notify our members that our solemn celebration of THEOPHANY, that is the Baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan, will be celebrated On Sunday, January 10th when water will be blessed. Deacon Lenard and I will live-stream the Liturgy on the actual feast, January 6th.

This year, 2020 Donations will be received up to January 10th

LIVING A NEW LIFE

As I have tried to express in the past articles of his article, we are called to not only “freely return God’s love” but also to decided how we want to live as human beings.



This requires, however, that we understand what it means to be a human being.

What does it mean to be a human being? It means being a persons who understands that he is created in the image of God and that He is called to perfect this image by growing in the “LIKENES” of Jesus Who is the very concrete image of God.

Jesus presents with a way of living which is God-like! It can be summarized very easily:

- 1 Love your neighbors as yourself including your idea of your enemies; (This is one of the more challenging of the directives);
- 2 Reach out to those who are less fortunate than us (this truly has a way of changing us); and
- 3 Accept life as it is presented to us. Do not accept life as it is frequently presented to us.

We must discern (*Continued on page 8*)

HOW TO PERSONALLY EXPERIENCE THE DIVINE LITURGY

It has been my experience that each and every time I am privileged to serve the Divine Liturgy, I can derive a new message, a new insight. Of course I believe that God gives each of us a “message” when we freely attend the Divine Liturgy as well as new insights about our lives.

For example, each Divine Liturgy begins with a declaration: *Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.* As we use it in the liturgy, the word “blessed” means feeling gratitude for His Kingdom. We have to mean this word, however, if it is to have any real meaning.

Immediately upon making this statement, we begin the Great Litany, the Litany of Peace. There are 13 petitions that the Deacon offers for which we are thankful. Of course these have no meaning if we do not have peace in our own heart. One very important petition is that we ask God to deliver us from “all affliction, wrath and need.” So we lay our requests before God, believing that if we come into more intimate contact with Jesus through Holy Communion, we might have true internal peace.

The priest ends this series of petitions by asking God, on our behalf, to bestow on us and all praying with us, His *abundant mercies and benefits.* We dare to ask this of God only after we have asserted that His might



is beyond description; His glory surpassing our understanding, His mercies without limit and His love for us that is beyond expression.

Asking for Him to grant us peace, we express our thoughts about Him. One of the major components of Who He Is that *His love for us is beyond expression.* If we mean this, then how can we ever be fearful of Him. His focus is not on attempting to catch us breaking one of His commandments but, rather, to help us come to deeper love for Him and a much, clearer understanding of the meaning and purpose of life.

The Divine Liturgy is meant to be uplifting, filling us with ever greater hope and love. If we only attend it because we feel that it is an obligation, it will never accomplish its purpose. Hopefully people want to come to the Divine Liturgy because it is uplifting, providing them with hope and a clearer image of Who God Really Is.

BECOMING AN ADULT CHILD OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER

I truly believe that many “fear” to be “adult children” of the Heavenly Father. What does it mean to “trust” the Heavenly Father so much that we can be an adult? People find it hard to believe that the Heavenly Father is truly tolerant to our adult decisions. This, I believe, is all based on the true idea of a certain FEAR OF PUNISHMENT. I think that so many of us have been filled with the idea that our God is a “punishing” God that we can’t really trust Him to accept us as Adult Children. This is a very Protestant idea.

Now I will note that to be an adult child of God I can’t just want to do whatever I want. I must be, first of all, focused on the fact that this present life is meant to help us to “freely choose” how to live like Christ. If you don’t freely choose to live like Christ, then you might have some fears.

Of course people will ask me: What does it mean to live like Christ? It means basing your life on your beliefs and not on the mores of your society. It means that when you hear people judging others and hating others that you refuse to accept this as the way that you want to live. It means that you

attempt to look at life as a journey of “personal transformation”, of personal change.

Now for many persons, personal change is difficult. Why? Because they don’t see why personal change is truly needed. They don’t question their lives and they don’t assess their lives in accord of the way that Jesus lived.

Each day I have to ask myself, *Did live like Jesus lived?* If I have to answer NO, then I have to decide what I’m going to do about that.

A part of the spiritual growth process is an “ongoing assessment” of how I’m living like Jesus.

I know that many people, at times myself, don’t like to do personal assessments. An assessment of how

we are living is critical if we want to be an ADULT CHILD in the Father’s Kingdom. We have to know how we are doing and how we must change in order to accomplish the goal of living like Jesus Christ.

REMEMBER, Jesus was truly MAN as well as TRULY GOD. His divinity did not dictate how He treated other human beings. He treated them in accord with His humanity. He was an ADULT CHILD of the Father.



Schedule of Services

St. Michael the Archangel
Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church
6340 Chase Road
Dearborn, MI 48126

Rev. Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Pastor

Rectory: (313) 582-1424
Cell: (313) 580-4412
WRuchgy@gmail.com

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Sundays @ 10:00 AM
Ukrainian & English

Weekdays @ 8:00 AM
English

SACRAMENTS

Penance
By Appointment

Baptism & Matrimony
*In most instances membership
required for six months*

Funerals
*Membership of an immediate
family member required*

Parish Life Council

Bob & Corinne Boyko
734.451.1893

John & Janet Dicky
586.755.3129

Daria Drobny
313.791-0292

Robert Krokosky
248.734.7078

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

Sunday, December 20 - Weekend of the Ancestors
10:00 AM + Elizabeth Mier; Reverend Deacon Len Mier, Jr.

WEEKEND OF CHRISTMAS - Tone 5

Monday, December 21 - Juliana, Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, December 22 - Anastasia, Great-Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, December 23 - Ten Holy Martyrs of Crete
No Service Scheduled

Thursday, December 24 - Eugenia, Martyr - Christmas Eve
Service in Plymouth - 5:30 PM

Friday, December 25 - CHRISTMAS DAY
10:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday, December 26 - Synaxis of the Theotokos - Live Streamed
8:00s AM - Special Intention

Sunday, December 27 - Weekend After Christmas - Tone 5
10:00 AM - Health of George & Irene Durisin; Semak Family

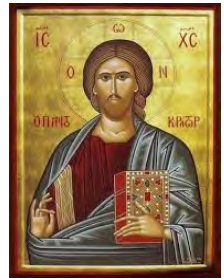
(Continued from page 5 - Living The New Life)

what will cause us to grow in our likeness of Jesus.

There is always "HUMAN FREE WILL" involved in this process. God created us with a free will and, therefore, everything is based on this assumption. All of life is this based on this "desire to become more like Jesus" and our efforts to actually become like him.

Jesus is our model of how we are to live. Do we see His way of living our way of living? God has not gone through all these efforts just to have us question what the 'incarnation' means. God became human because He desired to reveal to us how we must live and act in order to make His revelation real. He came as Jesus Christ in order to tell us that Jesus is the key to the solution of what earthly is all about.

Hopefully you can keep this in mind as we prepare to celebrate the earthly manifestation of God as Jesus Christ in human form. What does this mean to you?



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

BECOMING A HEALING PRESENCE



The truth that suffering can and does help and heal, can be useful to those who are suffering horribly, especially people in nursing homes who are lonely and wonder why God doesn't just take them to heaven. They might ask, "Why am I sitting here with rheumatoid arthritis? Why doesn't God just take me? The answer is that God is God. His ways are not our ways. Those in nursing homes or afflicted seriously in any way might be helped if they can understand that their suffering has meaning. A believer's suffering can help her children and grandchildren as well as those who live in the same nursing home.

No doubt, any form of suffering poses difficulty. We have three choices: We can

give up. We can give in. We can go on. The Christian chooses to go on in the light of faith that there is more to suffering than suffering itself.

Suffering can be meaningless, or worse, if we choose not to see God's hand present with us. Suffering can become an interior cancer, eating us alive as it metastasizes on its own darkness.

It is well known in social agencies that "hurt people hurt people" - that is, people who have been hurt, particularly those who were abused during childhood, tend to hurt others when they become adults. We might like to think the opposite. We might like to think that people who were abused in childhood know the pain and suffering of the abuse, so they would not want to hurt others because they know from experience the ravages of the hurt. Statistically, such is not the case. There are exceptions, but exceptions they are.

I can testify to the truth of this fact. The abused persons I have treated typically ended up, albeit unconsciously, hurting others. The psychic pain is usually so deep that they don't even realize that they hurt others. Also, quite often sexually abused persons repeat the sexual abuse even though they may not want to or even intend to. Abuse is truly psychologically debilitating. Years of therapy can lessen the influence the abuse experience has on a person's interactions with others but it doesn't seem to eradicate it. In many ways it is much like addiction.

A strong spiritual life can help ease some of the psychic pain, especially if it includes the act of turning the pain over to God and finding some meaning to they endured abuse.

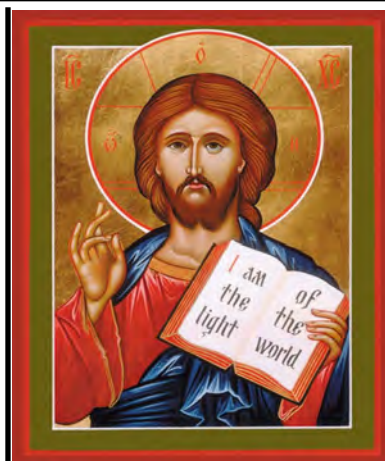
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN TODAY?

The earlier paradigm sees Christianity as grounded in divine authority. For most Protestants, divine authority resides in the Bible. For Catholics, it resides not only in the Bible but also in the teaching authority of the church, expressed especially clearly in the notion of papal infallibility.

Because of the importance of the bible to both Protestants and Catholics, a focus has to be put on how the earlier paradigm sees and interprets the Bible. This should be something that is very familiar to most of us. Until recently, this was the impression created by growing up in the church, whether explicitly affirmed or implicitly conveyed.

The earlier paradigm sees the Bible as a divine product. For this paradigm, the Bible comes from God as no other book does. It is the unique revelation of God. This is the natural impression created by traditional Christian language about the Bible: it is the “Word of God” and “inspired by God.” This is why the Bible is “sacred scripture”: it comes from God. And this is why it has authority: as a divine product, it has a divine guarantee. Thus both its status as sacred scripture and its authority are grounded in its origin in God.

Viewing the Bible as a divine product with a divine guarantee exists in both harder and softer forms. The hard form leads to claims of biblical infallibility or inerrancy: everything in the Bible is the direct result of God’s inspiration. Whatever it says - about the origin and early history of the earth, about God, about Jesus, about ethics and behavior - is “God’s truth.” The Bible tells us how God sees things. In effect, the hard form of infallibility understands the Christian claim “The Bible is the **word** of God” to mean “the Bible is the **words** of God. In British scholar Karen Armstrong’s memorable comment, it sees the Bible as a kind of holy encyclopedia in which one may look up



information about God.”

In the softer form of seeing the Bible as a divine product does not claim that every statement in the Bible is inerrant. Rather, it affirms that the Spirit of God guided the writers of scripture in such a way to prevent them from making any serious errors, namely, about anything that matters for our salvation. The softer form can thus allow for statements in the Bible that reflect an ancient worldview, including pre-modern “science” and archaic law. But harder and softer forms agree that the Bible is true because it comes from God. *More to come!*



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, STL, Ph.D.
Vol. 67 No 50 Weekend Before Christmas December 19-20, 2020

SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND INNER HEALING

Jesus often used the imagery of planting, caring for, and harvesting a field of grain or a vineyard to explain the movement of the Kingdom of God within each human being, and what is the Kingdom of God within us if it is not the presence of Jesus? As we present each memory to Jesus for Him to heal, He reveals His presence in that memory, thus planting Himself there. As His presence grows and matures in these memories, we grow and mature in Christ.

Another aspect of planting that is applicable to the way Jesus grows within us is the way some plants, for example bulb plants, divide and spread on their own. One year we may plant tulip bulbs one foot apart from each other, but after three or four years we will have a full bed of tulips because tulip bulbs multiply and spread underground every year. Similarly, as we “plant” Jesus in various times of our lives - for example, in one memory from the age of three, another from the age of ten, another from our teen-age years, and so on - He spreads His presence and His influence finally to encompass our entire lives. This is one of the meanings of the Parables of Great Assurance (Matthew 13:31-33), so called because they assure us of God’s continuing presence in our lives.

In accomplishing this revolution memory by memory, Jesus gives us a kind of growth that is slow and therefore one to which we can adjust with relative ease. He also gives us reason to trust His Love, for trust is something that also grows slowly.



Further, He establishes us as building of His Kingdom; for His goal is not merely the healing of a memory and the freedom from pain and limitation that results from such a healing - although our happiness and freedom are important to Him; rather, His goal is the healing of our entire lives and saving us, giving us the power and authority to build the Kingdom of God on earth.

More to come!

The Nativity of Our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ

Come, then, let us observe the Feast! Truly wondrous is the whole chronicle of the Nativity. For this day the ancient slavery is ended, the devil confounded, the demons take to flight, the power of death is broken, paradise is unlocked, the curse is taken away, sin is removed from us, error driven out, truth has been brought back, the speech of kindness diffused, and spreads on every side, a heavenly way of life has been implanted on the earth, angels communicate with men without fear, and men now hold speech with angels.

Why is this? Because God is now on earth, and man in heaven; on every side all things commingle. He became Flesh. He did not become God. He was God. Wherefore He became flesh, so that He Whom heaven did

not contain, a manger would this day receive. He was placed in a manger, so that He, by whom all things are nourished, may receive an infant's food from His Virgin Mother. So, the Father of all ages, as an infant at the breast, nestles in the virginal arms, that the Magi may more easily see Him. Since this day the Magi too have come, and made a beginning of withstanding tyranny; and the heavens give glory, as the Lord is revealed by a star.

To Him, then, Who out of confusion has wrought a clear path, to Christ, to the Father, and to the Holy Ghost, we offer all praise, now and forever. Amen.

St. John Chrysostom