

SUNDAY BEFORE THE  
THEOPHANY/EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD



*Icon of the Theophany of Our Lord -- January 6th*

## A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

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On this weekend before the feast of the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan by John (Theophany), our readings are taken from St. Paul's second letter to Timothy and Mark's Gospel. Both readings are rather short.

Paul writes to Timothy that God will reward persons for fidelity to His Son Jesus. In saying this, Paul reminds us that if we truly attempt to follow Jesus the reward will be our own personal transformation. It is all about what happens to us if we embrace the "way of Jesus." His way allows us to find interior peace and a real understanding of the meaning and purpose of this earthly life. It is all about a way of living that brings greater clarity to life. There is a reason why we are here. Earthly life does have a purpose and meaning. This is not all just some sort of "accident". Nothing in the created universe is an accident.

The portion of Mark's Gospel that we hear is the prologue: preparation for the ministry of Jesus. It is all about John the Baptizer. While he was a great prophet and many Jews flocked to him, he was a man of great humility. He set the stage for the ministry of Jesus which, by the way, took up the same theme: *Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand.*

John states this *One more powerful than I is to come after me. I am not fit to stoop and untie his sandal straps. I have baptized you in water; he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit.*

Now we know this much. John would not have used the term Holy Spirit in the sense that we understand it. The followers of Jesus had yet to advance their understanding of God as

Three-I-One. This was an addition to the text after the Church defined her understanding of God as Triune.

We see, however, John's true and sincere humility. He recognized in

the preaching of his cousin, Jesus, something special. Despite the fact that he had already gained a great reputation as a prophet, he was able to recognize that there was something special about Jesus and, recognizing that, he was able to send many of his followers to Jesus (Andrew, Peter's brother, is one who followed John).

We can learn much from the person of John the Baptizer, especially about humility. We always need to point others to Jesus and to share with them, if they ask, what we see in the person of Jesus and His message. His message is powerful. It is simple and direct: *Love your neighbors and your enemies as yourself.*

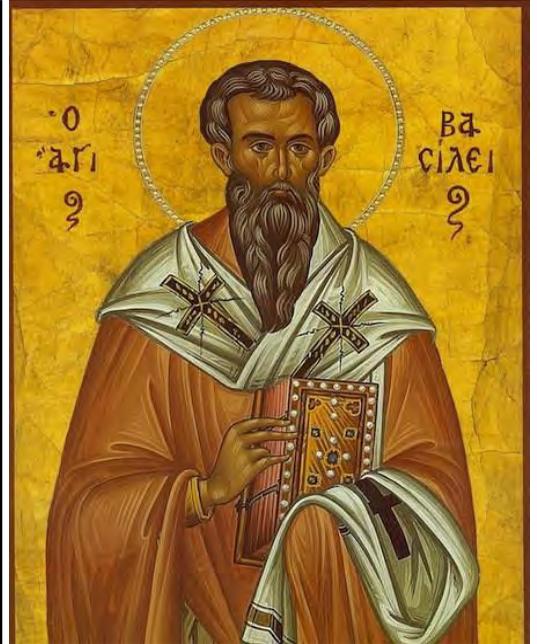


## THOUGHTS ON GENESIS

Although I know that many of my readers are getting tired of this particular article, I continue sharing thoughts about Genesis because I would have you change your understanding of this story. It is not history. It is not reality. It is an attempt by Jewish authors to come to some deeper understanding of why life is the way that it is. There is a difference between Original Sin and Ancestral Sin, something we may take up again in our Adult Discussion sessions.

The last issue of this article dealt with the meaning of death in Genesis. Death for this new Man was not the same as death for the animals. For the newly endowed Man was no longer an animal, and he now experienced death as loss, both through bitter fear in this life and through misery in the next. It is as Paul taught: death entered the world through sin. This remains true whether the Genesis tale is regarded strictly as supplying an archetype (teaching that our human experience of death is rooted in our corporate rejection of God) or as compatible with our secular hominid myth (positing an actual hominid experience).

The narrator of Genesis picks up his narration and relates the story of the man and his wife after their expulsion from the garden, as they began to make their weary way in the world. The focus is on both multiplying and sinning, and accounts of procreation/genealogical lists are interspersed among stories of murder, killing, celestial violation of the



daughters of men, universal corruption, the sins of Noah and his sons, and the hubris of building a tower. It is significant that no happy stories of human heroism, nobility and self-sacrifice are included. The overall message is clear: the history of human growth and expansion is also the history of sin. Man grows in artistic and technological prowess as cities and civilizations arise, but the glory of such achievements is overshadowed by the darkness of rebellion.

This, of course, is the result of the great gift of “FREE WILL”. Free will allows us to choose our own path in life. Unfortunately it more often than not, leads to disaster because we are too self-centered.

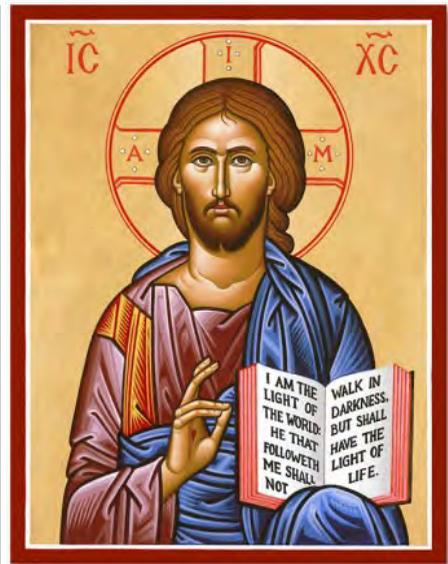
## THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

According to Paul, the primary and highest mystery of our faith is Christ - the incarnation of the divine dispensations by which the Logos saved the world. This primary mystery or sacrament which is Christ is reactive within time through the sacramental mysteries, by which the church is organized and by which it lives. Kavasilas teaches that an internal identity exists between the historical body of Jesus and the Church, between the energies of the concrete body of the Lord and those of the sacraments.

What this is saying is that Christ is truly and really present to us through the mysteries or sacraments that we celebrate. Think about it. Christ is present in “new life (birth)”, in “love” in dedication to the way of Christ, in repentance or sorry for mistakes, and, most prominently, in the Eucharist. He presents Himself to us in these “mysteries of life.”

The Eastern Church calls the seven sacraments of the Western Church “mysteries.” Each of them deal with basic “mysteries” of life. The seven mysteries deal with birth or new life, illness, love, sickness, dedication, forgiveness and transformation. We celebrate these mysteries since they bring us into the very life of God Himself.

The mysteries truly extend the functions of that body and make its life available in actuality. “The sacred rites which are celebrated belong to the incarnation of the Lord.” For this reason the Church is created, is organized and lives within these mysteries. “The Church is represented in the sacraments not in a symbolic way but as limbs are represented in the heart, as branches in the



root, and, as the Lord has said, as shoots in the vine. For here is no mere sharing of a name, or analogy by resemblance, but an objective identity.

To put it simply, the seven sacraments (mysteries) are the seven mysteries that we humans face in life. In some way, when we celebrate these, God is more present to us. We begin to understand the meaning and purpose of life.

Think about it. What do you see as the mysteries of life? Love, illness, forgiveness, dedication, the various human powers and the ability to nobly respond to the challenges of life. GOD IS WITH in life's mysteries and challenges.

# St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



## SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

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**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6TH**

**Feast of Theophany**

**8:00 AM - Live-Streamed**

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**SUNDAY, JANUARY 10th**

**Feast of Theophany Repeated**

**10:00 AM - Live-Streamed**

**Great Blessing of Water**

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## 2021 CHURCH CALENDARS

Anyone wishing a 2021 church calendar, please let us know and we will mail you one. Either call the rectory at 313-582-1424 and leave a message or email the pastor at:

[wrchgy@gmail.com](mailto:wrchgy@gmail.com)

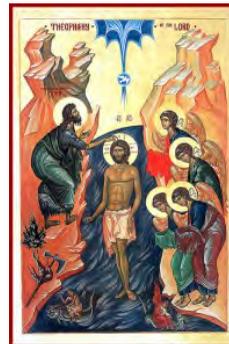
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## ADULT DISCUSSION SESSIONS

The Three Eparchial Deacons in Michigan, together with me, will be continuing with Adult Discussion Sessions during the Pre-Great Fast time and also the Great Fast. If you would like to participate and haven't done so before, just go to St. Michael's website and register. We will be sending notices to all those who did participate during the St. Philip's Fast. We will, this time, attempt to list topics to be addressed so that you can choose the sessions you want.

## LIVING A NEW LIFE

I often wonder what others think "religion" is all about. I have observed that there are many different ideas floating around about religion. Some of the ideas seem to boarder on "magic" while others seem to insist that there are "laws" and "rules" that must be followed in order to be rewarded instead of punished after this life on earth. Others, like our Church, stress the fact that earthly existence is given to us so that we might spiritually grow and become all that we can be. Our faith attempts to provide us with a "vision" of what life is meant to be and how to live this life in order to derive the greatest benefit from it.



It bases its approach on the Person of Jesus Who, we believe, was and is God incarnate as a human. This belief, of course, has the power, I believe, to totally change life on earth and our relationship with God. It changes our understanding of life. Life on earth is not a "TEST" to see if we meet God's expectations. Its not about failing or passing hurdles that God has established for us. *(Continued on page 8)*

# HOW TO PERSONALLY EXPERIENCE THE DIVINE LITURGY

One of the things that makes my celebration of the Divine Liturgy more personal is to think about the many petitions that we offer to God. We ask for internal "PEACE"! We also ask for many other things. We need to choose to make these petitions our own.

Right before the Our Father prayer, we have a litany (served now because we have a deacon), that truly asks God for some particular things that I can personally relate to. Our response is, of course, Grant it, O Lord.

- For the pardon and remission of our sins and offenses
- For what is good and beneficial to our souls and peace in the world
- That we may spend the rest of our life in peace and repentance
- For what a Christian, painless, unashamed, peaceful end of our life and for a good account before the fearsome judgment seat of Christ

It is traditional that we make the sign of the Cross for any of these petitions that truly touch us. They are powerful petitions, I believe.

SO, making the petitions your own petitions to the Lord is important if we are to personally experience the Liturgy. Don't make these things rote or something that you just respond to. Make these your petitions to God as we worship.

What is wonderful about this particular litany is that it is followed by



our prayer to the Father. I truly believe that this is one of the most powerful prayers in the Christian literature if we pray it as "children" of the Heavenly Father.

Think about it. Here we are as children of God. We then address a particular prayer to Him as Father, a prayer which our brother Jesus gave us. You cannot tell me that this is meaningless if we are truly praying the Liturgy. This is one of the moments (although there are others), when we directly "petition" the Father to help us.

The OUR FATHER prayer is, perhaps, one of the most poignant prayers we have as Christians. We address God as FATHER. It is our human understanding that good father's protect and help their children to grow into truly, productive adults. What more can we expect from God our Father?

Again, this requires to make the prayers of the Liturgy our prayers.

## BECOMING AN ADULT CHILD OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER

For me, this has been one of the more challenging articles in my Bulletin. It was conceived out of a pure inspiration from God. I woke up one morning with this insight that I really needed to be an ADULT CHILD of the Heavenly Father and not just a CHILD. It has caused me to force myself to think about what it means to be an ADULT CHILD. I hope, in some way, that this has caused my readers to think about this same issue.

My PhD dissertation was on the “mental representation” of God in the context of Faith. I realized, as I did my research, that many persons have a very “childish” idea about God, based mainly on their early religious education. God is this Almighty JUDGE who is just waiting to either reward or punish us. He is someone Whom we must placate in order to stave off His future punishment.

I quickly realized that most people do not necessarily see Him as a “LOVING FATHER” who is, as has, done everything in His power to help us see the true meaning and purpose of life. Although Christians accept that He became a human being, they seldom accept that He did this to show us how

to live this earthly life in order to benefit from it.

Children, quite often because of their experience with their earthly parents, see their fathers as the ones who punish for mistakes and bad behavior. This notion, I believe, is very easily transferred to God, the Father.

This I would suggest, however, is a very childish motion about our Heavenly Father.

I will admit that I think that the Church promoted this notion in order to attempt to keep the weakest Christian in the Church, especially in the West after the Protestant Reformation.

This notion, it is my sincerest belief, is not a notion which is truly present in the Eastern Church who looks at the idea of “*theosis*”, that is God becoming Man in order that Man might become more like God. This idea truly eliminate the idea of “rewards” and “punishments”. It is all about personal transformation based on the revelation that God has given us through the Person of Jesus Christ.

Many argue that if you don't have rewards and punishments, people will not attempt to be good. This idea is not that of an ADULT CHILD of God.



# Schedule of Services

**Sunday, January 3rd - Sunday Before Theophany - Live-Streamed  
10:00 AM - Special Intention**

## **32ND WEEKEND AFTER PENTECOST - Tone 6**

Monday, January 4 - Synaxis of the 70 Apostles  
*No Service Scheduled*

Tuesday, January 5 - SS Theopemptus & Theonas  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Wednesday, January 6 - Feast of the Theophany  
8:00 AM - Live Streamed**

Thursday, January 7 - Synaxis of John the Baptist  
*No Service Scheduled*

Friday, January 8 - George, Dominica & Emilian, Venerables  
*No Service Scheduled*

Saturday, January 9 - Saturday After Theophany  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Sunday, January 10th - Sunday After Theophany - Live-Streamed  
10:00 AM - Special Intention - Great Blessing of Water**

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

Life on earth is only but one small portion of an eternity of opportunities to grow in our relationship with our Creator and our understanding of life. It means embracing certain principles by which to live and not just live an unconscious life which is guided by past memories, misguided notions about others and by the values of our society. It means embracing the values that God shared with us through the Person of Jesus.

He clearly shared with us that we must learn how to unconditionally love our neighbors and enemies as ourselves and base our responses to life not on how we are treated but, rather, on how we would want to be treated. It also means that we take personal responsibility for our feelings. If we truly love ourselves, then no one can make us feel bad about ourselves.



St. Michael the Archangel  
Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church  
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Rev. Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.  
Pastor

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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  
248.734.7078

Leo & Mary LaDouceur  
313.278.7378

Gordon Malaniak  
734.564.9817

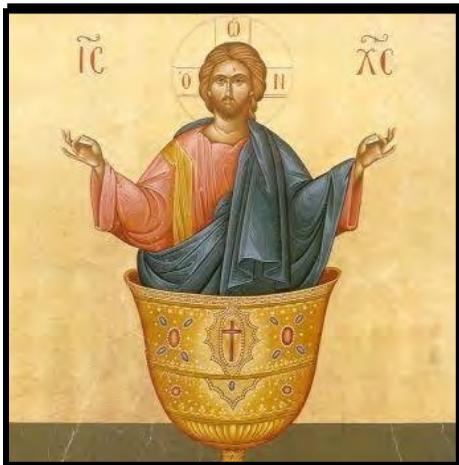
Rev Deacon Leonard Mier  
313.584-6795

Greg & Esther Petrovich  
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter  
313.624.9867

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

## BECOMING A HEALING PRESENCE



In the last issue of the article, I shared some thoughts about “suffering”. We can either become angry, bitter and self-pitying about our suffering or we can work through the suffering by expressing some sort of faith. How we respond to suffering makes all the difference.

We do know that we have a choice on how we respond to the challenge and sufferings that come with life. The healing power of our suffering comes through our poverty. There are many losses, such as the loss of memory or loss of a child, that cannot be overcome or understood.

Suffering can be a form of prayer. Sometimes all we can do is nod in God’s direction, wordless and emotionless. Even such a nod toward God is

a call to Him, a prayer,

We can ask the question, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” A better question might be, “Why don’t more bad things happen to good people?” The question has to do with expectations.

And the disciple is not above the Master. Jesus’ disciples were maltreated, and bad things did happen to them shortly after Jesus’ death and through the centuries.

God did not create suffering, evil or death. To questions like, “Did God send the planes into the World Trade Center in New York city?” the clear answer is, “No, humans flew the planes into the World Trade Center.”

All of us suffer. Our sufferings are not unknown to Christ and can be of great benefit to others and ourselves. We can become a healing presence simply by being alive, believing as best we can, and offering our sufferings to Christ.

We are especially loved by the Lord when we are poor and suffering. That’s why He came. He breathes, speaks and provides a message to others through us. That’s the way the Lord works. He chooses the poor and the suffering to do His bidding, His healing on this earth.

Now I know that this flies in the face of many “Americans” who feel that we should not suffer things. It’s not our fault what others are going through. And so we extract ourselves from the sufferings of others. The fact of the matter is that we are one with those who are suffering. We have to find a way to help others who are suffering to make the suffering meaningful to their spiritual growth. Again, it is “HOW WE RESPOND TO” the challenges and sufferings that confront us in life.

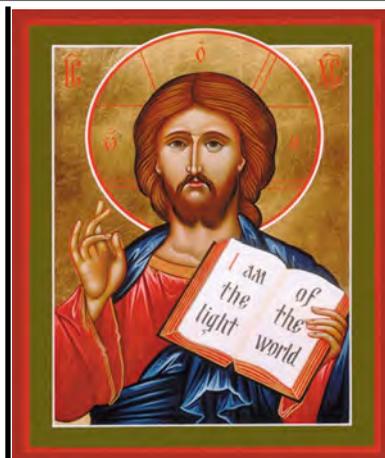
## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN TODAY?

Biblical infallibility and biblical literalism typically go together, but they are not intrinsically related. There is no necessary connection. God could speak infallibly in the language of poetry, metaphor and myth. We have no reason to think that god must be a literalist. But for the last few hundred years, they have been linked. Like the notion of infallibility, biblical literalism in the modern world exists in both harder and softer forms. The hard form insists upon the literal-factual interpretation of the whole of the Bible, including, for example, the Genesis account of creation and biblical stories that report spectacular events (i.e., the Great Flood and Noah).

I suspect that most of my readers will automatically reject my statement that these events did not historically happen as presented. Most people want the Bible to be historically accurate. It is presented as “God’s revelation to us” (this also includes the New Testament).

Softer forms of literalism are willing to grant that not all of the biblical stories are to be understood in a literal-factual way. For example, the six days of creation might be understood metaphorically, perhaps as geological epochs; and the story of Jonah spending three days in the belly of a big fish may be a parable rather than factual history.

But soft literalism affirms that the really important events in the Bible happened more or less as they are described. For example, the sea really did part in two to permit the Hebrew slaves to escape the Egyptians in the time of the exodus, Jesus really was born of a virgin, and he really did walk on water, multiply loaves and so forth. The stories of the “spectacular” matter to both hard and soft literalism. Indeed, Christian literalism is to a large extent a literalism of the spectacular. For the earlier paradigm, “the miraculous” is central to the truth of Christianity.



It is my belief that people want all the things contained in the Scriptures to be true so that they can say that their “religion” is more true than that of other various religions. What a misguided notion. I believe what I believe because it makes more sense to me and not because it is more historically accurate. Religion is not about history. Religion is about belief in the meaning and purpose of life. If our religion doesn’t give us insight into the meaning and purpose of life, then it has no real meaning.

Think about this. Why do you believe what you believe?



# THE EASTERN HERALD

## СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, STL, Ph.D.  
Vol. 68 No 1                      Weekend Before Theophany                      January 2-3, 2021

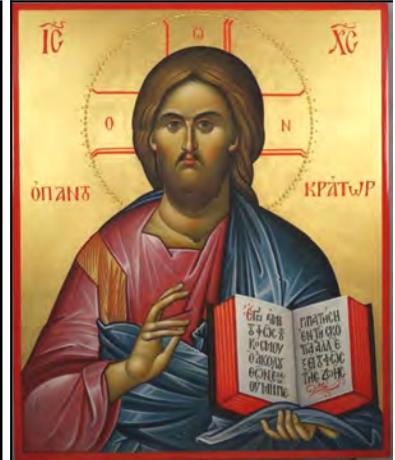
### SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND INNER HEALING

In the last issue of this article I began to write about the healing of old memories which are buried deep within our unconscious. The first step in learning to pray healing of memories by seeing Christ in the events of our lives is to identify a memory that Jesus wants to heal now. Again, we begin by seeking the Spirit's guidance, for doing so makes a difference between using a mental technology and praying. If we were to select on our own the memory we wanted Jesus to heal, we would be in control of the situation, and whoever is in control is master. Since all healing prayer is aimed at allowing Jesus to more and more become our Lord and Master, we seek His Spirit to unveil the memory for which we need to pray.

I can testify to the fact that my recent encounter with cancer again, albeit different from the first, has allowed me to turn over many past memories to Jesus to heal. I can tell you, this does work.

To do this is not a difficult or complicated task. We begin with prayer, asking God to stir His Spirit and reveal what He wants healed in this time and place. We know He will answer this prayer because we asked Him to. We may find that writing our thoughts in a journal will help us to concretize our perceptions and reveal to us the roots of the patterns in our lives that need healing. But whether or not we write, we consider our lives by looking with Jesus to find the source of our pain.

So, after we pray for guidance, we being with the situation in our present life in which the Spirit



has revealed that we need healing, and we see if there are any memories that are the roots of this situation. On the other hand, there are times we do not come to the Lord with a focused awareness of a particular situation in our daily lives. Then we can review in a prayerful way the person, places, and events of our person histories asking the Lord to let us know where He want us to stop and pray for healing. This does work, I assure you.

## *Celebrating Theophany Every Day*

The Feast of Christ's Theophany (or Epiphany) is celebrated with great solemnity in the Byzantine Church. The word "theophany" means a divine "manifestation" or "revealing." Jesus of Nazareth - a carpenter - was revealed on the banks of the Jordan River to be the Son of God and the long-awaited Messiah - the "Christ." A voice came from the heavens that said, "This is My beloved Son, My favor rests on Him." (Matthew 3: 17)

Let us imagine ourselves standing on the banks of the River Jordan. We are witnessing the baptism of Jesus at the hands of Saint John the Baptist and the revelation of Jesus as God in the flesh. What a privilege that would have been!

Yet, God is revealed to us each and every

day. God manifests Himself to us not just on the banks of the River Jordan but at the bus stop, the grocery store, and in the work place. His image is within each of us. He is in our co-workers, our spouses, our children - even in our enemies.

The real challenge of Christian discipleship is to endeavor to see the image of Christ in all people and to allow them to see that same Godly image within us. The celebration of the Great Feast of Theophany is not a one-day occasion commemorating an event that took place some two thousand years ago. Rather, it is living, day-to-day, the conviction that God is within each human being, and that each human being ought to be treated as though he or she is the living image of Christ.