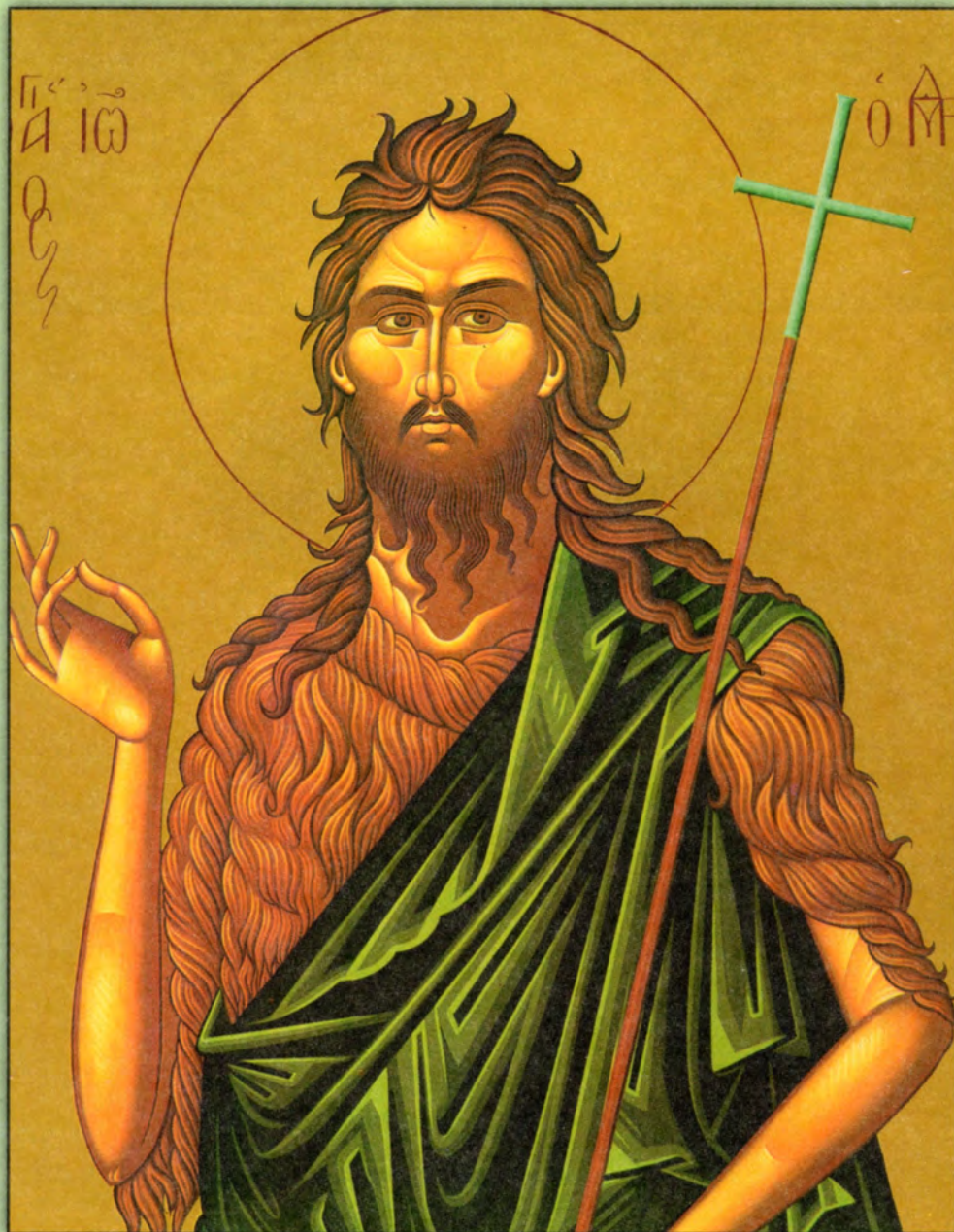


SUNDAY AFTER THE
THEOPHANY/EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD



Icon of Saint John the Baptist

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this weekend after Theophany we solemnly celebrate the Feast and also perform the Great Blessing of Water. Our readings are taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians and Matthew's Gospel.

St. Paul shares with the Ephesians and with us that God has shared a "diversity of graces" with those who have decided to follow Jesus. He writes

Each of us has received God's favor in the measure in which Christ bestows it. This diversity helps to complete God's Kingdom in the here and now and gives each of us a particular role to play in the completion of His Kingdom. We all have a part to play. Each and every person is important in order for God's Kingdom to come to fruition. One person is not more important than another. All of us are important and have a role to play.

The passage we hear from St. Matthew's Gospel shares the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. It takes place at Capernaum where He made His home after He left Nazareth. From that time on, the Gospel relates, Jesus began proclaiming this theme *Reform your lives! The Kingdom of heaven is at hand!*

This theme, by the way, is the same

theme that John the Baptizer used. It tells us that our religion is really all about our personal transformation so that God's Kingdom might become real in the here and now. This message truly harmonizes well with Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians, namely that each of us is called to personal change so that God's Kingdom might be real. This personal transformation is

the vocation, the task, that each of us has. If we choose not to follow this vocation, we in effect also choose not to accomplish what we are here on earth for, namely spiritual change and growth.

This is the primary task of this earthly life. No one is exempt from this task. It is a task that not only benefits us but also builds up God's Kingdom.

I wonder how many of my readers have ever considered that their work at personal change has anything to do with building up God's Kingdom and also gaining their own salvation in cooperation with God's Spirit. We know that we cannot accomplish personal change without God's help and assistance. That is why He planted His Spirit within us. It is also the way that He decided He could complete His Kingdom here and now.



THE CELEBRATION OF THEOPHANY - BLESSING OF WATER

The **Great Blessing of Water** is perhaps the most memorable part of the Theophany services. Water, as a real symbol of life, was at one time blessed as often as once a month. But the **Great Blessing of Water**, connected explicitly with the blessing of the Jordan River which occurred at the baptism of the Lord, is done each year on Theophany. In practice, most parishes only hold the **Great Blessing of Water** once each year. The blessing takes place after the Divine Liturgy's Ambon Prayer.

There are four major actions to the blessing. First, the priest makes the sign of the cross in the water three times with a three-branched candle which signifies the Holy Trinity. saying each time: *Great are you, O Lord, and wonderful are your works; no word suffices to give praise to your wonders.*

Second, he breathes upon the water to symbolize that God shares life through His Spirit, recounting the many reasons we have to praise God, in company with the angels and all creation.

Third, the priest makes the sign of the cross in the water with his hand, three times. This symbolizes the joining of human life with the God's **LIFE FORCE** which permeates all of creation.

Finally, the priest plunges the cross into the water to signify that human life is closely connected to the actions of Jesus Christ.



After the priest has completed these four actions, he turns to the people, bids them to bow their heads, and prays: *Incline your ear, O Lord, and hear us. You sanctified the water when you consented to be baptized in the Jordan; now bless us who through the bowing of our heads signify our servitude. Grant that we be filled with your sanctification by the partaking of this water, and let it be for the healing of our souls and bodies, O Lord.*

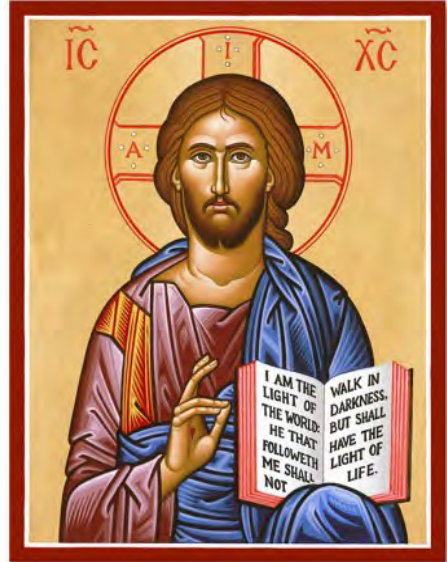
After the Liturgy is completed, it is customary for the faithful to come forward, take some of the blessed water home and use it throughout the year. It is proper to drink it, cook with it, bless your home and pets, and plants with it. As we use it in these ways we profess our belief that our God is the **LIFE FORCE** in our universe and within us and we thank Him.

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

In the last issue of the article I was attempting to present the fact that the seven “mysteries” that we celebrate as a Church actually make Christ present and real. Each of the seven mysteries deals with a life-mystery. When we celebrate them a two-fold movement takes place: (1) Christ is extended within time through the energy of the Spirit, and (2) the world is assumed by Him. Christ is extended in the process of assuming the world. The Church is not a static situation. It is a dynamic, transforming movement. It is the perpetual marriage in space and time of the Creator with His creation, the enduring mingling of the created with the uncreated. Through this unconfused mingling in Christ of created with uncreated nature, the created is subsumed into the flesh of Christ, is rehabilitated sacramentally, is transformed, becomes the body of Christ and lives as such.

The manner in which this transformation is effected is through the sacraments, since they constitute an extension of the incarnation and of the saving acts of the Lord. It is on the sacraments that Kavalas based his whole ecclesiology (study of the Church), that is to say, his teaching on what might be called christocentric cosmology - in other words, his teaching on the new creation, the world which in its entirety is transformed, is organized and lives as Christ’s body.

I realize that this takes time to absorb. It requires a new way of thinking. As we celebrate these “life mysteries” and discover Christ within them, we are transformed. Think about it. When we see Christ in Love (marriage), Christ in Forgiveness (Penance)



and truly Christ in Communion, (Eucharist) we change. We begin to see Christ in LIFE, with all its ups and downs and challenges. When we reach this point in our development, we begin to see the unique, fabulous design of life. All things in life are meant to lead us closer to God IF we attempt to see Christ in all the events of life.

In marriage we attempt to have a couple think of GOD JOINING/CALLING them to be husband and wife and not just their “natural desire” to be with one another. Faith in God, hand in Love and Marriage, completely changes marriage.

Think about this!

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



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:

wruchgy@gmail.com

ADULT DISCUSSION SESSIONS

We will continue our Virtual Adult Discussion Sessions. We hope to provide several during the Pre-Great Fast time and then also during 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 send notices to all those who did participate during the St. Philip's Fast. If you have any suggestions with regards the topics you would like to see discussed, please contact us.



LIVING A NEW LIFE

Living the NEW LIFE means living with intelligence and a lot of personal reflection. It doesn't come easy, nor should it. It truly means we have a desire to discover the true meaning of life and a willingness to



work to uncover this meaning. Quite frequently it means putting aside "adolescent" and "childless" ideas about God and our relationship with Him. It means discovering Him as a "LOVING" Father rather than a "dictatorial" father who only desires to force us to "do what is right". He cannot be this type of Father if He became incarnate in the Person of Jesus and went through life as we have to go through life. So living the new life requires us to relinquish stereotypical ideas about God and to learn how to truly TRUST and BELIEVE in Him as a Father Who only wants the best for us. This may be difficult for many people who had dictatorial types of fathers. This, of course, allows us to ask God, through His Spirit, to heal those "childhood" memories which may be very difficult to let go of. It is important *(Continued on page 8)*

HOW TO PERSONALLY EXPERIENCE THE DIVINE LITURGY

As many have already realized, I have been all-over the place in this article. I could have started at the beginning of the Liturgy and progressed through it. I have, however, allowed the Spirit to guide me in what I say about my personal experience with the Liturgy.

As I experience the Divine Liturgy, I find that one of the highlights is when we pray the **Anamnesis**. I, on behalf, you pray: *We offer to You, Yours on Your own, in behalf of all and for all.* The response, of course, is: *We praise You, we bless You, we thank You, O Lord, and we pray to You, our God.*

I think too often people, because of the influence from the West, tend to think of the Liturgy as “worship” of the Lord Jesus. In the Eastern Church it is truly meant to be the worship of our Triune God. This prayer, by the way, is offered to the FATHER. The problem is that the Father is addressed as “LORD”, a title also attributed to Jesus.

One of the ways to think about this is to think that we are joined with Jesus, the MAN-God, in worshipping the FATHER, the giver of LIFE through the power of the Holy Spirit. I say that we JOIN Jesus in worshipping the Father because Jesus was and is a human just as we are. We join with Him, in the Spirit. The Father is the GIVER OF LIFE. To help us truly join with Jesus in worshipping the Father, we are provided the Eucharist, the very Body and Blood of Jesus to help us



accomplish this worship.

The Eucharist accomplishes several things. First, it gives us the strength and ability to worship God - it is the spiritual food which helps us believe in a Triune God.

Second, it joins us with Jesus in offering this worship to the Father because it makes Jesus present to us.

Third, it reminds us that we must be in “union with” those who also worship the Father in communion with Jesus.

SO, you can’t really walk down the aisle to receive Communion holding grudges with those who receive the same communion with you. We come as a humble people before our God and pledge that we will do all in our power to LOVE ONE ANOTHER just as God loves us. The community allows us to experience this. We don’t receive communion alone. We receive it in “UNION” with others. We are the extended Body of Christ in time.

THOUGHTS ON GENESIS

Why, you might ask, am I spending so very much time on Genesis. I truly believe that this one book has truly influenced humankind more that we can ever imagine. It has skewed our beliefs in so many different ways. It allowed the idea of “ORIGINAL SIN” to enter into our religious ideas and the belief that in some very essential way we have all been born defective as human beings. We have not been born defective. We have been born as God intended - beings that need, through the use of their “FREE WILL”, to grow in our relationship with Him. He decided, since He created us in His own image and likeness, that He had to also allow us to “FREELY” choose to return His love. He did not create robots.

So we have to find a way to change the common perception of the Genesis story. I don't know if this is really working. Only you can say that it is - only you can tell me that I've achieve my goal.

Now the man knew Life his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of Yahweh!” And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a shepherd of flocks and Cain a tiller of the ground. Some days later Cain brought to Yahweh an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And Yahweh had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering He had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. Yahweh said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your



face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”

Now the man knew LIFE his wife (The Hebrew name *Chawwah* is rendered as LIFE rather than the traditional Eve, keeping the connection with its first use in Genesis 3:20). The Hebrew verb for **knew** here refers to sexual intimacy. It denotes not just physical intercourse, but emotional and personal unity also, a non-exploitative consensus union. Its use here witnesses to the matrimonial ideal, showing that sexuality was designed to be more than the mere satisfaction of appetite.

Schedule of Services

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

33RD WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - Tone 8

Monday, January 11 - Theodosius, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, January 12 - Tatiana, Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, January 13 - Hermolaus & Stratonikus, Martyrs
No Service Scheduled

Thursday, January 14 - Venerable Fathers of Sinai & Raitho
No Service Scheduled

Friday, January 15 - Paul & John, Venerables
No Service Scheduled

Saturday, January 16 - Veneration of the Chains of Peter
No Service Scheduled

Sunday, January 17th - Weekend of Zacchaeus - Live-Streamed
10:00 AM - Special Intention

(Continued from page 5 - Living The New Life)

to remember that our God is a “LOVING” God who has truly spared nothing to reveal to us His love for us.

If you think of the entire Jesus story you realize that He is a **LOVING GOD** Who has only one desire, that is for us to know that He loves us. He has not placed all kinds of commandments and laws upon us. He only calls us to “love one another and our enemies as ourselves”. This may be more demanding than the commandments He gave to Moses. His call is to be “truly human” as Jesus was human. The interesting thing is that His way of living, as expressed through Jesus, can bring much more internal peace than “keeping the commandments.” It is much more in keeping with our human nature.

When we begin to think in this fashion, something happens - we truly become **FREE** and we begin so see the meaning and purpose of life.



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

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

BECOMING A HEALING PRESENCE



If we are going to be a healing presence to others and ourselves, we need to be clear about our attitude toward the ultimate reality, namely death.

“The Fathers assert that perfect love is sinless, and it seems to me that a perfect sense of death is free from fear.” Well, that is an attitude which our faith deals with very directly. Think about it. Every Sunday is a celebration of the Resurrection of Christ. We also believe that God revealed through Christ’s Resurrection that the life we humans have is “eternal” and that we also will rise from the dead. God revealed this so that we would not “fear” death but only see it as a transition to a new and better way of life.

Every death and every grieving about death involves

a loss of some sort. Death is synonymous with separation.

Our brain consists of a hundred billion cells, give or take a couple of billion. Ten thousand of these cells die every day. We aren’t conscious of the process of losing brain cells. One day blurs into the next as life goes on. And as we age, we experience the lights beginning to dim, not unlike a dimmer on an overhead lamp. The Lord is so gracious that He gradually prepares us for our eventual death. We Eastern Christians know that at our physical death, life begins.

We need to die to live. Our life is a series of small deaths and resurrections. In a sense, daily life is training for death. We experience many, many small deaths. For example, when we go to sleep at night, we lose it all. We lose our awareness, our possession of our mind, our memory and our consciousness of our relationships. Sleep is a form of death. Awaking in the morning, though it may be slow, is a new day, a resurrection. We get up, pray, shower, brush our teeth and eat breakfast. Perhaps the sun is shining, perhaps not. It’s a new day, a new beginning.

Now we have to ask ourselves *Do I believe all the Church teaches about death and resurrection? Do I believe in the Christian message about life after death?*

There is no sugarcoating the experience of the death of a loved one. We can’t domesticate death. God did not create death. Christ did not experience death as a pleasant moment. No, death is death. Death, with all its tragic ugliness and monstrosity is ultimately the only thing that gives us hope. This is why our Church says all She does about death...the path to real life.

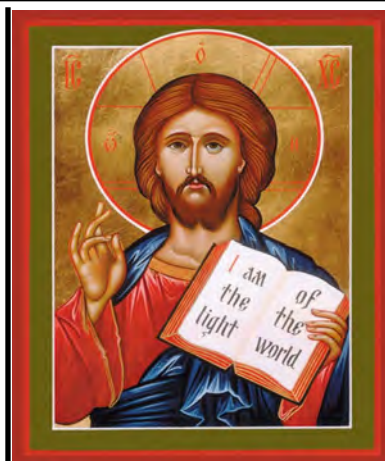
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN TODAY?

Biblical literalism typically affirms the absolute character of biblical teachings, both doctrinal and ethical. The Bible as the revealed will of God is the ultimate authority for both faith and morals. As such, it tells us what God wants us to believe and how God wants us to live. From this point of view, considering the teachings of the Bible as anything other than absolute leads to a “cafeteria” way of being Christian, in which we “pick and choose” the beliefs and ethical teachings we live. For earlier-paradigm Christians in denominations that give a central place to the creed, this way of seeing the Bible typically applies to the creed as well. The creed is understood as a summary of the essential Christian doctrines. And, despite its manifestly metaphorical language, it is often understood literally, by both those who can say it and those who can't. For the earlier paradigm, to be Christian means to be able to say the creed without crossing one's fingers or becoming silent during any of the phrases. To be Christian is to believe all of the statements of the creed to be factually true.

Now it must be pointed out that too frequently Catholic Christians seem to think that many things are “dogmas” or “doctrines” which are not. We do say, however, that the Nicene Creed is a summary of all the basic “dogmas” of our Church and faith.

The earlier paradigm's vision of the Bible and the Christian tradition, whether in harder or softer forms, goes with a way of seeing the Christian life. Three features are particularly important.

First, **FAITH AS BELIEVING IS CENTRAL**. The reason is obvious: the earlier paradigm's way of seeing the bible and the tradition is hard to believe, and that's why it takes faith. Of course, faith has always been central to Christianity. For the earlier paradigm, the Christian life is about more than believing. I includes living in accord with those



beliefs. But believing is its foundation.

By the way, in writing about what is considered the earlier paradigm of Christianity, doesn't mean that I think all of it is bad. In fact Our Church's form of Christianity dates back to the very beginning of Christianity and seems to be a sounder expression of the Jesus Message than some of the more modern forms. We, for example, embrace the Nicene Creed. This makes sense to me and I hope it does to my readers. There is room, however, for us to expand some of our thinking with regard to our faith. That is what I am attempting to make know to my readers.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, STL, Ph.D.
Vol. 68 No 2 Weekend After Theophany January 9-10, 2021

SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND INNER HEALING

In this article I have been dealing with seeing Christ in our lives and calling upon the Holy Spirit to heal past hurtful memories. If we allow the Holy Spirit to be in charge of the process by which memories are released from our unconscious minds into our consciousness, we will never be confronted with a memory too powerful for us to handle. In His wisdom, the Spirit reveals only memories with which we can cope, and He will slowly strengthen us to be able to handle the deeper and often more important memories at some future time.

This may seem impossible to do, I agree. But it is possible. We first have to learn how to TRUST God and believe that He only wants what is best for us.

If, on the other hand, we were to probe into our minds on our own powers, through introspection and guided by our own desires, we could uncover all kinds of material we could not handle. (This is why people go to therapists who should be objective persons who can help us see which memories we need to deal with. It can, however, still be done if we trust in God and turn our lives over to God).

The first prerequisite is that we place our trust in God and ask God to guide us with Jesus' Light. But when we have prayed for guidance, we know that He will take care of us by giving us guidance, because we trust Him to be faithful to His Word and we trust Him to love us.

Of course this means that we truly believe that we are "LOVED" by God and that we can trust Him to always do what is best for us. So, we have to ask



ourselves this important question: *Do I really trust that God loves me and that He will do all in His power to help me?* Without this belief, I will certainly fail.

So, after we have identified the area in which the Lord wants to work at this time, we ready ourselves for the prayer for healing of memories.

I can testify to the fact that this does work, albeit it takes effort and true commitment!

John the Baptist and Forerunner

For the Church, John was a prophetic and tragic figure. He is called the 'Baptist' because he baptized those who came to him; he is called the 'Forerunner' because he went before Christ and prepared His way, making His paths straight, in accordance with the words of the prophet: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness ... make his paths straight (Mark 1:3). In the Old Testament, he is prophesied as "the voice of him that cries in the wilderness," in the passage from Isaiah quoted above. In other texts, he is referred to as 'the voice of the Word', 'the lamp of the Light', 'the friend of the Bridegroom', 'the morning star before the Sun'.

John began his work at the age of 30, in the fifteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Tiberius (27 or 29 AD). To begin, he journeyed

around the southern part of Judah, near the river Jordan, preaching and prophesying. The central theme of his preaching was repentance: he called upon men to repent and to change their ways of thinking, so that they would be ready to receive the teaching of Christ, their Savior – "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2).

At the same time, he was severe in his rebuking of evil and sin. Another element of his teaching was that of the practical form – how each of us should love our fellow brothers and sisters.

As we anticipate the coming Great Fast in a few weeks, are we prepared to repent and change our ways, and rebuke evil and sin as Saint John taught?