

SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE



Icon of the Publican and Pharisee

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this second weekend of our five-week preparation for the Great Fast, the Church presents the second main characteristic of Metanoia through the parable of the Publican and Pharisee. This parable is found in Luke's Gospel. Our Epistle reading is taken from Paul's Second Letter to Timothy. This letter urges Timothy to protect the community from the inevitable impact of false teaching, without fear of the personal attacks which may result. It recommends that Timothy rely on the power of the Scriptures and on the positive proposal of doctrine without being troubled by those who do not accept him. Paul suggests that the scriptures can equip a person for every good work (*It is important to note that the Scriptures Paul was referring to were not the New Testament, which hadn't been written yet, although oral stories existed*).

The Gospel parable highlights the second characteristic a person must develop in order to accomplish a real change of heart, mind and behavior (Metanoia).

While humility has been defined in several different ways, one definition is that it represents modesty; the quality of not being proud because you are aware of your bad qualities; freedom from pride or arrogance; and

a modest view of one's importance. The Publican, a tax collector working for the Romans,

How does a person truly become humble? S/he looks at him/herself in light of the model for human beings, namely Jesus Christ, and assesses how closely s/he is like Christ. This truly takes an honest assessment of oneself.



Jesus is the model that God has presented to us for what we human beings should be like. We cannot argue that it is impossible for us to be like Jesus. Our doctrine clearly states that Jesus was truly human as well as divine and that His divinity did not dictate the attitudes and behaviors that He exhibited. So we can measure what we are like as human beings by comparing ourselves to Jesus. Metanoia IS the call to become more like Jesus. We know that to accomplish this we have to change our minds, hearts and behaviors. This is true for all humans.

When we read about the saints we discover that this was their attitude throughout their lives. Every day they made attempts to grow greater in their likeness of Jesus. This is an eternal process! We can make progress in this effort, however, if we first DESIRE go grow in our likeness of Him and work on growing in HUMILITY.

BECOMING AN ADULT CHILD OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER

To become an Adult Child of God, I must be willing to spend some time actually thinking and reflecting on what I believe and why I believe what I do. The study of God, theology, is not just meant for clerics.

I truly believe that God does not want mindless robots, adhering to a particular way of understanding Him. He wants persons who feel that He (1) is important to them and a part of their lives; (2) desires them to freely and voluntarily return His unconditional love; and (3) only desires the best for them - that He is not an eternal policeman trying to catch them doing something wrong.

To be an Adult Child means that you feel free at all times to seek His advice about the events of life. That is, you truly attempt to have repeated conversations with Him by prayer, remembering that conversations are always two-way - while you talk you also have to listen.

God frequently communicates to us through insights and inspirations. We have to take notice of them and not overlook them. If you open your mind and heart to Him in prayer, you will

receive insights and inspirations. He always responds to a person who is desirous of listening to Him.

This means that as an Adult Child your prayer if is not just constant asking God to “give you something.” An important part of prayer, which is truly modeled in our Divine Liturgy, is that you find a way to first express your love for Him and to remind yourself and Him that if your request is not granted as you would like it to be, that you accept that without sadness or bitterness, always knowing that He knows what it best for you.

What makes this an adult response is that you truly take responsibility for your response to the answer that He gives to your prayer. This means that you truly and deeply believe that He knows what is best for you and that, perhaps, what is best for you may not meet your expectations. To me, that is an Adult response.

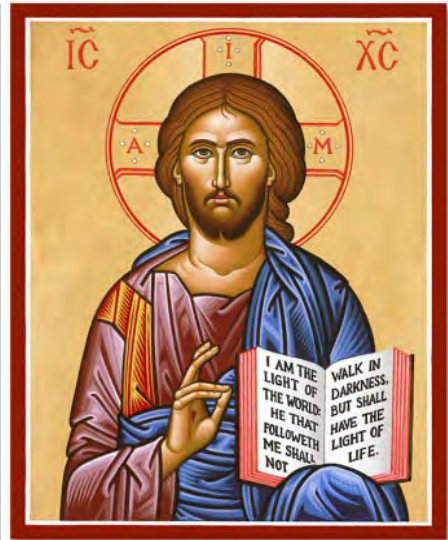
An Adult Child of God also is adult in the way that they chose to live. To choose to be a “positive, healing person” means you understand that this is how God has called you to live for your spiritual growth.



THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Kavasilas teaches that the sacraments constitute the “gate” and the “way” by which the life of God enters into creation, liberates it from sin and death, gives it life and sanctifies it. “The Lord opened up this way by coming to us, and unlocked this gate by entering into the world. When He returned to Father He did not permit the gate to be closed, but comes through it from the Father to sojourn among men, or rather, He is always present, is with us and will be with us forever. Therefore this creation is none other than the “house” of God and we are the “body”. “Through these sacred mysteries as if through windows the Sun of Righteousness enters into this dark world. He puts to death the life which is conformed to this world and raises up that which transcends this world. The Light of the world overcomes the world and introduces a life which is enduring and immortal into a body which is mortal and subject to change. The two words that are important in this reflection are “house” and “body” of God. And the sacraments are the “windows” through which the Sun of Righteousness illuminates the “house,” the arteries through which the life of the Head vivifies the “body”.

The full union of the created with the uncreated within the sacraments powerfully “overcomes” the limits of place and time without destroying them, and adds new dimensions to them. Creation, reassembled and restructured sacramentally - which is called Church or ecclesial communion - now has new dimensions, new functions and new life, the dimensions, functions and life of the body of the risen Lord. All things henceforth can be assembled and can live within creation



in a new manner which is neither purely human nor exclusively divine but “theanthropic.” Liturgical space and liturgical time are created. Within this liturgical space and time the unconfused mingling of earthly with heavenly life, of history with eternity, is realized. “The body of Christ is one...the body of the faithful is one...and this body is divided neither by time nor by place.” By sojourning among us God has set us among the angels and established us in the heavenly choir.

While at first this may seem to be unintelligible, just reread, think and pray about it.

More to come!

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



VIRTUAL ADULT DISCUSSION SESSIONS

Thursday February 4th - 8:00 PM

Humility - An Essential Virtue

Thursday February 18th - 8:00 PM

Return from Exile - An Attitude of Mind

Thursday March 4th - 8:00 PM

The Meaning of the Cross

Thursday March 18th - 8:00 PM

The Forgiveness of Sins

If you have not already registered to participate in these discussions, simply go to

<http://stmichaelarchangel.org/>

and click on Adult Discussion Group and register. You do not need to attend each and every session but you have to be registered to be admitted to any one particular session. Non-registrants will not be admitted to the discussions. This has to do with security!

OUR EPARCHY IN NEED

As you may know, our Eparchy is in need of financial help. Truly all organizations dependent on the generosity of people are in need. I shall, during the next coming weeks, share the needs of our Eparchy. Our parish is also in need. It is finding the balance between the two needs.

LIVING THE NEW LIFE

I know that I have been writing this article for a number of weeks. I am not sure if anyone has received any benefit from it. It is a free flowing article which comes from my own experience as a person attempting to lead the Christian life. I do hope, in some small way, that I'm making a contribution.



I know that in my own life, trying to live the NEW LIFE has meant that I truly have to make a conscious effort to reflect on my thinking. My thinking, I realize, influences how I live and how I behave. I have to constantly ask myself, especially in our polarized in our present American society, what I really believe and how I truly want to live.

It seems that so many people have politically decided that we need to embrace a "while supremacy" in order to rescue our country from destruction. All the demonstrations, have, in my mind, been based on white superiority and not on Christian values. I truly do not believe that it is proper for priests to become political. However, I feel I must point out as *(Continued on page 8)*

HOW TO PERSONALLY EXPERIENCE THE DIVINE LITURGY

Perhaps one of the words in the Divine Liturgy which is said most frequently, is the word **MERCY**. To personally experience the Divine Liturgy, one has to reflect on some of the words that are said.

For example, what goes through your mind when you hear the deacon or priest ask God for His mercy? Is it a mere background sound that you tune out, or do you think about mercy? What do you understand by this sacred term that is used so frequently in all of the Eastern Christian worship, as well as private prayers? Do you think about forgiveness, which nullifies our sins as if they never happened?

The Bible term *“eleos”* is emotional and always means God’s faithful and merciful help. God has promised it, so that while we cannot claim it, we can expect it. It comes with the covenant relationship between the Lord and His people. Kindness is assumed; a Person to person affection. God will be faithful and merciful to those who love and trust Him without reservation or hesitation. When we call out for mercy, we must check our own attitude - have we a faith, trust and love affair with God? If those are lacking, it’s high time to acknowledge it and get right with Him by owning up to our defects.

We know that by confessing your sins we are liberated from the oppression of a bad conscience. Now we must do something with our



restored status before the Holy Trinity. We feel the glorious awareness of being right with God - the gift of grace. Grace means, in the definition of one of the Fathers, *“The free gift of God’s mercy”*

The mercy of God is nothing else but the grace of the Holy Spirit which we must ask from God, unceasingly crying to Him: Have mercy on me! Show Thy mercy, my Lord, in the pitiful state in which I am, and accept me again into Thy grace. Give me the Spirit of power that He may strengthen me in resisting the temptations and sinful bad habits. Give me the Spirit of Counsel that I may become prudent and come to feeling and amend my life.

If I truly seek God’s mercy, that is I am truly desirous of changing my heart, soul and mind to be more like Jesus, then I can be assured that God will give me the grace (i.e. help) I need to accomplish this. So when you hear the word mercy, thought about it.

THOUGHTS ON GENESIS

I ended this article in the last issue by sharing that Cain and Abel offered to Yahweh gifts from their own resources: Cain brought fruit and Abel brought the firstborn of his flock.

As it turned out, Yahweh had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering He had no regard. How this lack of regard was shown is not stated. One old tradition suggests that God showed his regard by sending fire from heaven and consuming Abel's offering while leaving Cain's untouched. More likely the regard or lack of it was the conclusion drawn by the brothers from their future prosperity or lack of it. The ancients offered sacrifices to obtain the blessing of the deity, which was manifested in subsequent prosperity and health. If Abel prospered after offering the sacrifice and Cain did not, they would have drawn the conclusion that God had accepted the former's offering while rejecting the latter's. No heavenly fire would have been required. In whatever way the divine reaction became known to the brothers, once it was known Cain was very angry and his face fell (i.e., he was depressed).

Many have asked the question, "What did Cain do wrong? What was wrong with his offering?" Some have suggested, on the basis of the text saying that Abel brought the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions while Cain simply brought an offering, that Abel's offering was more generous than Cain's - that



Cain's offering was merely nominal and he was being niggardly. This seems to read a lot into the text's silence, which has not a word to say about the deficient quality of Cain's offering. Some suggest that the text is deliberately silent about the matter, leaving us in the place of Cain to wonder what the problem was and to question whether perhaps God was not being somewhat arbitrary. If this is so, one must conclude that there was nothing wrong with the offerings themselves, but that the problem lay in the hearts of the offerors - which is exactly the view of the New Testament (Hebrews 11:4). It deals with the "intention" of the one who offers, not what is offered.

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 Wawter
313.624.9867

Sunday, January 24th - Weekend of the Publican & Pharisee - Tone 1
10:00 AM - Special Intention - Live Streamed

34th WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - Tone 2

Monday, January 25 - Gregory the Theologian, Bishop
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, January 26 - Xenophon & Mary, Venerables
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, January 27 - Translation of John Chrysostom's Relics
No Service Scheduled

Thursday, January 28 - Ephrem the Syrian, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Friday, January 29 - Translation of Ignatius' Relics
No Service Scheduled

Saturday, January 30 - Three Holy Hierarchs
No Service Scheduled

Sunday, January 31st - Weekend of the Prodigal Son - Tone 2
10:00 AM - Special Intention - Live Streamed

(Continued from page 5 - Living The New Life)

as a Christian, that violence is never the solution to any conflict. I truly believe that Jesus made that very clear. His death upon the Cross made that perfectly clear. It is one thing to disagree with another, it is never appropriate as a Christian to therefore want to do harm to the person with which we disagree.

I do believe that this "crisis" within our society gives us a chance to truly be a follower of Jesus Christ. Ask yourself, how would Jesus respond to the "crisis" that we are facing as a country? How would He tell us to respond? Take sides? Become aggressive and hateful?

I don't think, if you have truly reflected on the life of Jesus, that you would say that He would InSite people to insurrection. He would say, take time, work it out for the benefit of all people. We have truly lost our Christian values, I believe. And therefore I would exhort all those who read this article, to pray for our country which, I believe, is in need of true reform. We were, originally a Christian country.



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

BECOMING A HEALING PRESENCE



I ended the last issue of this article by suggesting that in order to become a healing persons, we must first learn to embrace “ambiguity”. In psychology, ambiguity is seen as “I don’t know,” and the metaphor is a circle drawn on the whiteboard. A professor draws a circle and asks, “What is that?” The students reply, “A circle.” Then beside the circle she draws an incomplete circle. The question then is “What is that?” Some people say, “That’s an incomplete circle.” Others say, “That’s a circle.” They see a circle closed even though it is not closed. That’s the whole point. some people need premature closure. They have difficulty saying, “I don’t know.”

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware says that it is not the task of Christianity to provide

easy answers for every question, but to progressively make us aware of mystery. God is not so much the object of our knowledge as He is the cause of our awe.

It is my true belief, also that it is not the task of Christianity to give answers to every question but, rather to make us think. When we are thinking about the things pertaining to God, we are building our relationship with God.

This is very difficult for us because we are rational, and we do need an apologia for our faith. At the same time we need the ability to say, “I don’t know. I’m willing to enter the mystery as best I can.”

In theology, we use the word *apophatic*. In psychology we use the word *ambiguity*, which is not a perfect parallel, but it is good enough for our purposes. Both approaches emphasize “not knowing” as a way of knowing.

Psychology says this: “The sign of mental health is the ability to handle ambiguity.” One way of assessing a person’s ability to navigate the world - or to say that another way, to have a reasonable degree of stability and sanity - is to look at his or her ability to handle ambiguity. Ambiguity simply means, “I know that I don’t know, and that’s okay.” It’s okay to say, “I don’t fully understand. I don’t need cheap, quick answers.”

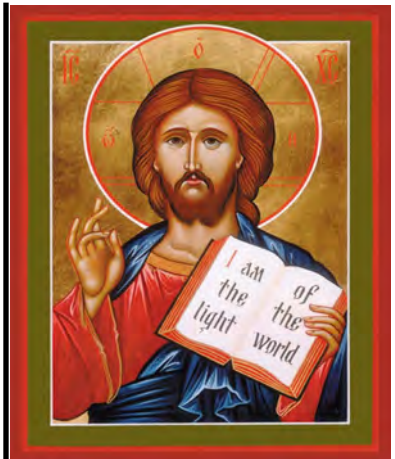
As I have thought about this, I realize that many people are afraid that if their religion doesn’t answer all their questions that it cannot be true. And people seem to need their religion to be absolutely true - more true than any other religion. If I believe my religion is true, why do I care what other people believe? I base my beliefs on what makes sense to me and not on what other people think or believe. *Thoughts?*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN TODAY?

It is important to remember, as you read this article, that I'm trying to contrast a past paradigm of what Christianity is to a present-day paradigm. There has been a change. Unfortunately this has caused considerable conflict in the Church. Many people what the simple formula of "FOLLOW THE RULES AND YOU ARE SAVED" with the new formula "LEARN HOW TO THINK ABOUT LIFE". The past paradigm did not want people to think, just to obey and to accept the dictates of the Church without any thought. This, however, was the result of the Reformation in the West and, because it did not influence the Eastern Church, was never relevant to the religious thought. However, when Eastern Churches came to the West, they were greatly influenced by the Western Church's struggles.

Of course the earlier paradigm uses language of God's grace and compassion and love, but its own internal logic turns being Christian into a life of requirement and rewards, thereby compromising the notion of grace. Indeed, its nullifies grace, for grace that has conditions attached is no longer grace. Much like unconditional love, if you place conditions on it, it no longer is unconditional love. Unconditional means that you place no requirements on it.

In very compact form, the vision of the Bible and the Christian life that I have tried to describe is the "meta-theology" that shapes the earlier paradigm. The elements are intertwined. Put most simply, it sees the Christian life as believing in Christianity now for the sake of salvation later. it sees the Bible as God's message of salvation (meaning a blessed afterlife), and sees the Christian life as believing in the message and seeking to live accordingly. And believing is the central requirement: it is *believing* that will save you which was and is the central theme of Protestantism. It is all about FAITH, and



eliminates the Good Works that must flow from that faith.

Think about it! Your faith should result in you changing the way of living. This truly means, typically, that faith drives us to live a certain way and to reach beyond ourselves to help others who are in need. Faith without **GOOD WORKS**, according to the original Good News and the Eastern Churches real and true interpretation of this Good News, is really meaningless.

So how do we approach true faith in this modern world. That is what I want to explore with you. It means, in most instances, change.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, STL, Ph.D.
Vol. 68 No 4 Weekend Of the Publiкан & Pharisee January 23-24, 2021

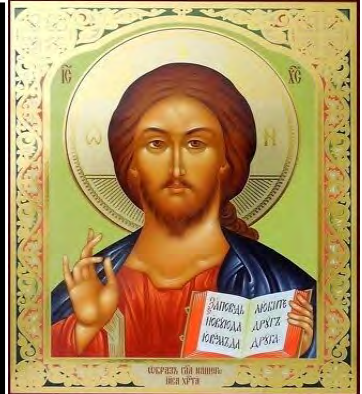
SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND INNER HEALING

I ended the last issue of the article by suggesting that we can use Gospel stories as guides to see how Jesus treated people in need. If Jesus treated people a certain way then, He treats us just the same way now, for “Jesus Christ is the same today as he was yesterday and as he will be forever. If Jesus forgave sins then, He forgives us in our sinfulness now. If He freed people from shame, indignity and aimless living then, He does the same for us now.

As we see what Jesus was doing for us, even though at the time it occurred in history we did not understand what He was doing and maybe did not even care, it is important that we *consciously choose* to accept His Love into our hearts. While some people can make too much of this point, others can make too little of it.

Choosing to accept JESUS’ Love for us in prayer for the healing of memories makes the difference between merely experiencing a temporary emotional “high” on the one hand and beginning to live a spiritually new and freer kind of life on the other. The first makes us feel good for the moment but has no lasting effect; the second is the beginning of a new stage in living a Jesus-centered, creative wholeness. Maybe it is this implicit responsibility to live in a different way that makes some people avoid this subtle but crucial step, but this is the step that frees us to grow spiritually through healing of memories prayer.

As we choose to accept Jesus’ Love for us, we are also choosing to accept this experience and to cherish it as our own



If we are dealing with a destructive situation in the past we have disowned it because of the pain in it. Because we have not seen its value and worth, we have tried to repress the memory into our unconscious minds.

This, of course, gives the past memory power to disturb our present life and keep us from any spiritual growth. We have to heal past memories so that they don’t impinge on our present attempt at spiritual growth.

Publican and Pharisee: Humility vs Self-Righteousness

This parable represents to us two chariots on the race course, each with two charioteers in it. In one of the chariots it places righteousness with pride, in the other sin and humility. You see the chariot of sin outstrip that of righteousness, not by its own strength but by the excellence of humility combined with it, but the other is defeated not by righteousness, but by the weight and swelling of pride.

For as humility by its own elasticity rises above the weight of pride, and leaping up reaches to God, so pride by its great weight easily depresses righteousness. Although therefore you are earnest and constant in well doing, yet think you may boast yourself, you are altogether devoid of the fruits of prayer. But you that bears a thousand loads of guilt on your conscience, and only

think this thing of yourself that you are the lowest of all men, shall gain much confidence before God.

And He then goes on to assign the reason of His sentence. For every one who exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. The word humility has various meanings. There is the humility of virtue, as, a humble and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. There is also a humility arising from sorrows, as, He has humbled my life upon the earth. There is a humility derived from sin, and the pride and insatiability of riches. For can anything be more low and debased than those who grovel in riches and power, and count them great things?

Saint John Chrysostom