

# SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON



*Icon of the Prodigal Son*

## A REFLECTION ON OUR REAINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this third weekend of our five-week preparation for the Great Fast, the theme is taken from Luke's reporting of the parable of the Prodigal Son. Our Epistle reading is taken from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

In the passage that we hear from Paul's letter, we hear these wondrous words: *You must know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within - the Spirit you have received from God. You are not your own. You have been purchased and at a price. So glorify God in your body.*

It is important to note that Paul originated this idea of us being the temple of God's Spirit. He shares this in several of his writings. He had this keen insight from God. It is something that we are urged to believe and cherish. It truly enhances the meaning of life. It also helped set the stage for the Church's later understanding of what it meant that God became incarnate as a human. It changes our ideas about what it means to be a human being, or at least I think it should.

The parable of the Prodigal Son is probably one of the most popular of all of Jesus' parables. Although it labels the parable as dealing with the behaviors of one son in particular, I truly believe that it makes a profound

statement about the father and his absolute unconditional love for his sons.

I know that many have already heard me speak about my thoughts on this parable and how neither son truly understood the depth of the father's love for them. Both sons failed to understand the father.

I think that the parable highlights another natural, human tendency: jealousy. The older son was jealous of the father's forgiveness of the prodigal son. Instead of rejoicing with the father at the return of the prodigal son, the older son becomes angry which is a clear sign of jealousy. The older son felt that the father should love him more because he always did what the father wanted. He felt he should be rewarded because he didn't break the "rule" of honoring the father and doing everything the father wanted.

Does this sound familiar? Too frequently, I believe, we humans, who attempt to keep all of God's rules, expect Him to love us more and, of course, reward us. The Heavenly Father cannot love us any more or less than He already does. His love is absolute and unconditional. We, however, can learn how much He loves us by living as His children.



## BECOMING AN ADULT CHILD OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER

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Being an Adult Child of the Heavenly Father means that we have to realize that there are many things in life that we will not be able to understand and that we only have to place our hope and trust in the Father's love for us. It also means that we don't "expect" the Father, because He loves us, to grant each and everything we may pray for. A good father doesn't ever give his children everything they want. He gives them what they need and what is best for them. This is also true of the Heavenly Father.

Of course we have to really believe that He knows what is best for us. The problem that we usually run into is that we think we know what is best for us when, indeed, we only know what we "want."

If I have learned anything in life it is that what I want is not always good for me and that if I get what I want, my satisfaction with it doesn't last very long. We humans always want something different - something more - and yet we don't really want to change. It is a paradox! We only think we know what will please us and make us happy. Happiness, however, is very fleeting. If we strive for happiness we

will, probably 95 percent of the time, be disappointed. This is why I have repeatedly shared with you: *happiness can never be the real goal in life. The more important goal in life is to come to a deeper understanding of the meaning and purpose of life.* If I come to a deeper understanding of the meaning and purpose of life, I will probably find true, lasting happiness.

I recall that what I thought would make me happy when I was 21 is truly not what I think will make me happy at 81. The true meaning and purpose of life, however, never changes, regardless of our age. It truly only gets more sophisticated and with greater and clearer dimensions.

To be an Adult Child of the Heavenly Father means that we take time to pray before major decisions and then believe that God accepts our decision. It also means that if we discover, after we have made a decision, that it wasn't the right one, we have the courage to call on God to help us make another decision. We have to also remember that God wants us to be "adults" and wants us to give up any childish notions or ways.

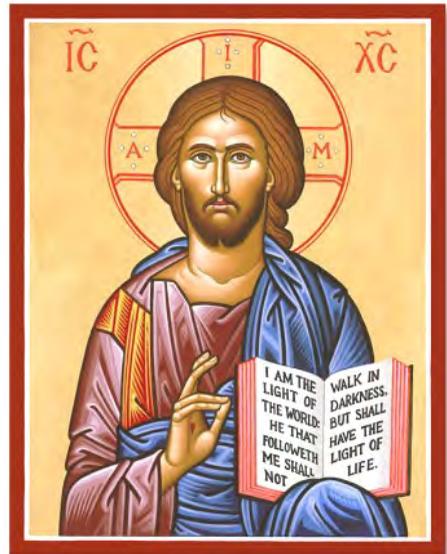


# THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Our union with Christ through the sacraments is so fundamental and so complete that it creates a new home and a new paradise for us. The world is no longer merely the house of man but is the house of the living God. God, who before the incarnation was “without a house” as far as creation was concerned, now finds a created place in which to sojourn and dwell. Thus not only the altar on which God is worshipped but God Himself is found from now on within creation, and the human race becomes the family of God. The transformation goes even deeper. The Church is not only House and Family but Body of God.

It must be pointed out that this is reality. These words are not poetic or mythological. The fact that God took on human nature in the Person of the Son, Jesus, reveals that human beings are, as St. Paul repeatedly says, the “temples” or “homes” of God’s Spirit. So we now are God’s body in the world just as Jesus was God’s body in the world. Think about this! This has to change our ideas about who we are in God’s creation.

In this new situation human beings live the life of love in freedom and joy, sensing the presence of God, contemplating His glory and receiving His radiance. The saints, these sons of the Father, the members and friends of the Son, the stewards and heirs of the House, receive the ray of “the Lord, the Spirit” and reflect it actively. “Would you like me to demonstrate this?” asks Chrysostom in a passage cited by Kavasilas. “Consider Paul, whose garments were efficacious, and Peter, whose shadow even had power. They bore the image of the King and their radiance was unapproachable. The new mode of human life,



the new Christian ethos, has a Godlike or Christlike character, or more precisely a theocentric and christocentric character.

Holiness, in fact, has nothing but God as its source. “The saints come to be holy and blessed in this way because of the Blessed one who lives with them. They derive not a single thing from themselves or from human nature or effort but are holy because of the Holy One, and righteous and wise because of the Righteous and Wise One who lives within them.

As you can tell, this takes a truly new way of thinking, a way that can lead us to personal transformation and, of course, personal change.

# 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

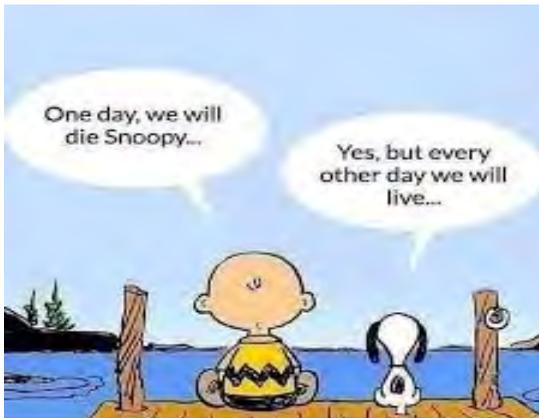
Thursday March 18th - 8:00 PM  
The Forgiveness of Sins

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. I've listed the topics. If you find one that interests you, why not join us. To that, you must register. Of course you have to have a computer

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## LIVING THE NEW LIFE

As you can tell if you are a regular reader of this article, this truly is a stream-of-consciousness and personal record of my spiritual journey. As I look over the various articles that I have included in this



Bulletin, I see that each article comes from deep within me and touches on some part of my journey (*of course some of it is just because of my age*).

Living the New Life is a challenge. It is also about how we respond to the challenges in life. One of the things I have repeatedly said within recent years is that challenges have no real moral value - they are neither good or bad - they are just challenges. How we respond to these challenges is really important. Further, each of us must take personal responsibility for how we respond to these challenges. No one can make us respond in a certain way. Our response comes, quite often from our unconscious minds and involves past, difficult memories. That is why I have been writing the article on becoming a healing presence because to become such a presence, I must heal past

(Continued on page 8)

# HOW TO PERSONALLY EXPERIENCE THE DIVINE LITURGY

One of the things I have thought about in trying, in the article, to present ideas about how to “personally experience” the Divine Liturgy, is to share with my readers something that is important. I may have touched on this before, I am not quite sure. It deals with our ideas about Who Jesus is and What Holy Communion is.

First-and-foremost we must really remember that Holy Communion is one of the ultimate symbols of LIFE. Just as regular food is needed to sustain life, so too Holy Communion, for a Christian in our Church, is the Spiritual Food needed to sustain spiritual life.

Now Jesus is the ultimate symbol of human life. He is God’s prototype of what humans are meant to be.

Now in the Divine Liturgy we are called to put these ideas together. The essence of the bread and wine we use in worship, symbols of life, are, quite miraculously changed through the power of the Holy Spirit, when we recall, remember and ritually repeat what Jesus did at the Last Supper. However, now we join with Jesus, since we share the same LIFE-FORCE (God’s own life) in offering up our lives to Him in worship. We and Jesus are represented as one in the bread and wine and our very essence is changed when we offer back to the Father our lives. That is true worship. We say to the Father in thanksgiving for the gift of life: Father I offer my very life back



to you in “communion” with Jesus and other believers.

A very important thought: *I have to be willing to offer myself - my life - back to the Father just as Jesus did in order to truly worship Him.*

Of course the Father’s response to my offering of thanksgiving for the gift of life is to shower His MERCY on me.

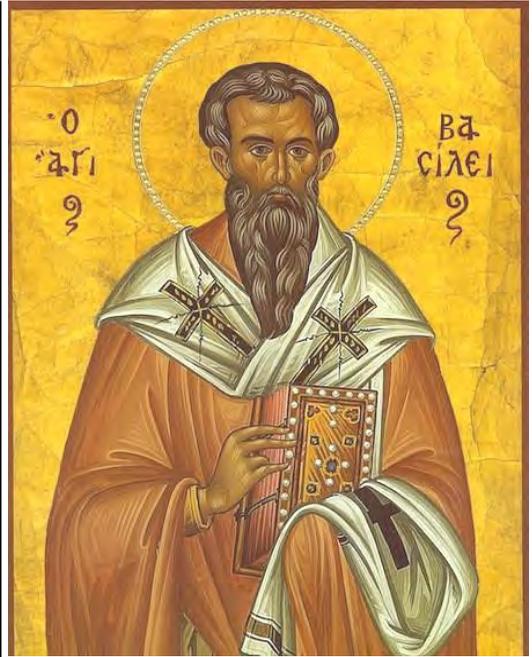
So to experience the Divine Liturgy I have to truly become involved in the Divine Liturgy spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and psychologically. I have to see myself as a part of the ritual. I don’t respond to the Divine Liturgy like I do to a television program - just watching it. I allow myself to become totally involved in the ritual, seeing myself as truly a real part of the ritual.

I know that this will take my readers some time to think about this. In attending the Liturgy it is not like standing outside and looking in. Its all about allowing my self to imagine myself being a PART OF THE RITUAL. This approach changes everything.

## THOUGHTS ON GENESIS

In the last issue, I shared thoughts about the offerings of both Cain and Abel. It should be noted that Cain did not complain to God but simply sulked, angry and depressed. God in compassion took the lead and came to Cain, saying, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?” There was no mystery nor arbitrariness about His response: “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.” The image of sin as lurking is an interesting one. Some connect the verb rendered lurking (Hebrew *rabats*) with the Akkadian *rabisum*, a demon that lurked in doorways to threaten those within. Whatever the cultural background the sin of anger was clearly threatening Cain, and so in mercy God warns Cain that he must conquer and rule over it. The word for rule is the Hebrew *mashal*, the same word used in Genesis 1:16 to describe the sun’s dominion over the day - an absolute sovereignty. The lurking demon is about to attack, and Cain is in danger - now is the time for him to take action! What follows is Cain’s murder of Abel.

As it turned out, Cain was not to prove successful in his struggle against sin. Cain said to Abel his brother, “let us go into the field.” Note that the text describes him not just as “Abel,” but Abel his brother, as if to heighten the magnitude of the crime. It was no stranger that Cain slew but his own blood. Cain’s invitation to go into the field with



him is not included merely as a narrative link to the next scene but to show that the act was premeditated. The murder did not take place because a quarrel escalated and got out of hand. There was no quarrel; Cain lured his brother to the place selected for the crime, a place apart from their parents, and then slew him there in cold blood. God’s question to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” perhaps indicates that Cain buried him in the field as well.

Cain’s response to the divine inquiry “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” reveals the depth of his darkness.

***This is a story which has indeed humankind for centuries!***

## SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

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

### 35th WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - Tone 3

Monday, February 1 - Tryphon, Martyr  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Tuesday, February 2 - Presentation - Live Streamed**  
**8:00 AM - Special Intention**

Wednesday, February 3 - Synaxis of the Holy Prophets Simeon & Anna  
*No Service Scheduled*

Thursday, February 4 - Isidore, Venerable  
*No Service Scheduled*

Friday, February 5 - Agatha, Martyr  
*No Service Scheduled*

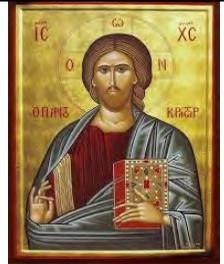
Saturday, February 6 - Bucolus - Venerable  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Sunday, February 7 - Weekend of Meatfare**  
**10:00 AM - Special Intention - Live Streamed**

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

memories which may be influencing how I respond to the challenges of the present moment. I must become aware of these past memories, make an effort with the help of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, to heal them so that I can live in the present moment. This means, however, that I have to desire to live in the present moment and to believe that the present moment is the only real thing I can experience.

I find that we humans have a great tendency to live either in the past or the future, many times regretting the past. This results in us living an unrealistic life. In fact I am thinking about writing a series of articles during the Great Fast about living in the present moment with tips about how to accomplish this. That is the one thing that I feel Jesus truly accomplished. All the stories I read about Him have convinced me that He always lived in the present moment. So with that teaser, I'll end this article!



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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  
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Gordon Malaniak  
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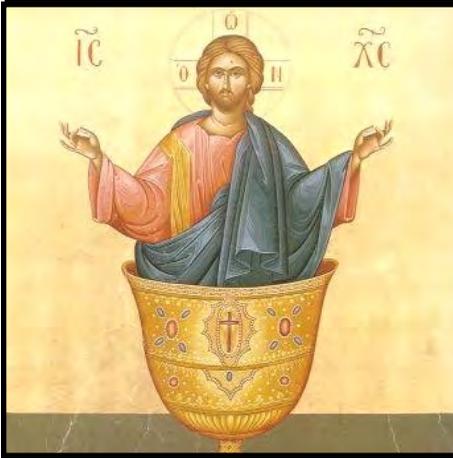
Rev Deacon Leonard Mier  
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<http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org> - and - [Facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn)

## BECOMING A HEALING PRESENCE



In the last issue I introduced the idea that in order to be a “healing person” one has to learn how to deal with what is called “ambiguity”. There is always some emotional pain connected with ambiguity. Children want to escape from ambiguity. That is not okay for an adult. For an adult with some maturity, a tolerance for ambiguity is translated as (1) I know that I don’t know; (2) I know that Christ knows; and (3) I trust Him. That’s the beginning of mental health, sanity and sanctity.

St. Gregory of Nyssa said, “God’s Name is not known. It is wondered at.” So we continually try to move into the “wondering” of St. Gregory. When we begin to experience wonder, we begin to enter a new phase of awareness.

Our Eastern Church, I truly

believe, continues to unfold for us the sense of mystery, the sense of “I don’t know.” that is why, in the early Church, the Gospel of John was kept from the catechumens until they were baptized. It is the Gospel of high theology, high mystery. We slowly move into the mystery of God.

So saying “I don’t know,” being willing to live with ambiguity, is a sign of both psychological maturity and spiritual maturity.

Of course, not embracing ambiguity allows us to fall into theological fundamentalism. Fundamentalism says, in effect, “We have the answers and you don’t.” Fundamentalism is theological immaturity.

Perhaps a great challenge to our rationality is to try to embrace the truth that we are, all of us, together in deep silence.

Stories of overcoming ambiguity can be found throughout the Bible. Strikingly, Jesus said as He hung on the Cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” They certainly seemed like they knew what they were doing. They shouted, “His blood be upon us and upon our children.” That’s the point. Those at the foot of the Cross truly did not know what they were doing. So, too, with us. We just don’t know, and that’s okay, simply because that’s the way it is. The more we know that we just don’t know, the more we can try to rely on God.

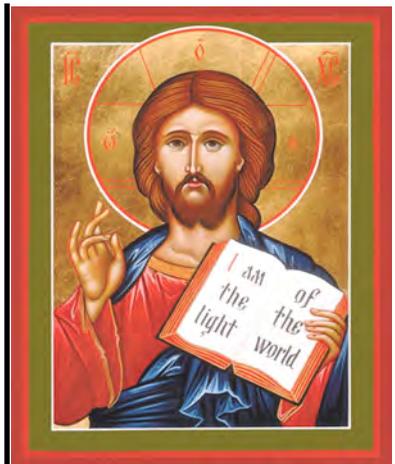
When Jesus was asked by two of His apostles for specific places in His kingdom, He pointed out their lack of knowledge and their need to live within that ambiguity. He said, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They replied, “We are able”. Yet they had no idea how ambiguous the meaning of *cup* was and how their lives would unfold.

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN TODAY?

Modernity has deeply affected Christianity. By modernity is meant Western cultural history since the Enlightenment of the 17th century, marked above all by the birth of modern science and scientific ways of knowing. With the Enlightenment as its foundation, modernity called into question both the divine origin and the literal-factual truth of many parts of the bible.

Significantly, modernity has not only affected the forms of Christianity that have accepted it and sought to integrate it, but also the forms of Christianity that have strongly rejected it. In particular, the earlier paradigm is very much a product of modernity. Though it sounds like traditional Christianity to many people, including those who embrace it as well as those who reject it, it is important to realize that its central features are the produce of the last few hundred years. To be specific:

- ◆ The notions of biblical infallibility and inerrancy first appeared in the 1600s, and became insistently affirmed by some Protestants only in the 19th and 20th centuries. Papal infallibility was affirmed only in 1870.
- ◆ An emphasis upon the literal-factual interpretation of the Bible is also modern, a reaction to the Enlightenment. Prior to the Enlightenment, it was not the literal meaning of the Bible that mattered most for Christians, but is “more-than-literal” meaning”. But the Enlightenment largely identified truth with factuality. In our time, if somebody asks, “Is that story true?” we are likely to assume that they’re asking, “Is it factual? Did it happen? Truth and factuality go hand in hand. And so for the earlier paradigm, defending the truth of the Bible meant defending its literal-factual truth.
- ◆ The notion that Christian faith means “belief” is modern.



Thus the earlier paradigm is not “the Christian tradition,” but a particular and relatively recent way of seeing the tradition, shaped by the conflict with modernity over the past few hundred years. No less than the emerging paradigm, it is a modern product.

It may seem obvious that I find the earlier paradigm less than compelling. I want to emphasize that it has nourished the lives of millions of Christians for centuries. Unfortunately I think that it has kept many people “children” of God instead of Adult Children of God. Perhaps you can see a pattern to my thinking.



# THE EASTERN HERALD

## СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, STL, Ph.D.  
Vol. 68 No 5                      Weekend Of the Prodigal Son                      January 30-31, 2021

### SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND INNER HEALING

Healing of memories is a way of uniting our memories with Christ. It is a way of acknowledging and accepting His presence in our lives, soaking in His Love, and acting on His challenge to live as loved people rather than as desolate people. To grow spiritually through prayer for healing of memories, then, we need to touch the real Jesus, Who lives both outside of us and within us.

I shared in the last several issues of this article a way to contact Jesus as He lives within our inner selves. I would now like to look at a way to contact Jesus as He lives outside of us, especially in Scripture, and see how He can touch our memories and free our past as we unite ourselves with the events of His own life.

It is important to learn to pray seeing ourselves in the events of Christ's life as a balance of praying to see Christ in the events of our lives.

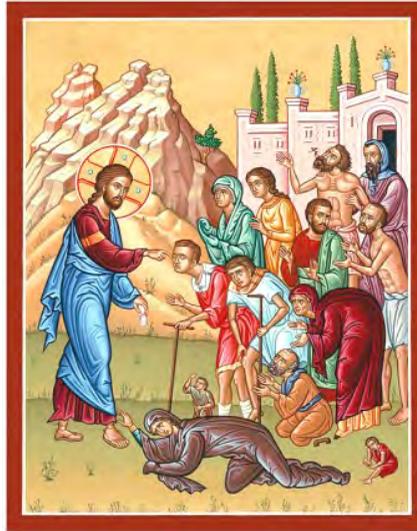
For that kind of praying can subtly become self-centered or can reinforce our self-centered tendencies. When we seek only to see Christ in our own lives we can unconsciously encourage the erroneous notion that we are the

center of the universe, and that even God centers Himself on us. This is not the message that the healing of memories prayer ought to convey, and it does not convey this message to one who understands and prays for it properly. But, unfortunately we do not always do things properly.

While Jesus wants us to know that we are

very important to Him, we also need to know that He is the center of the universe, not us. As we come to understand this truth we can live creative, whole and wholesome lives because we are in proper relationship to the real order of things.

These are important things to ponder. Will you?



### *Despite His Sin, the Spirit Was Still with the Son*

It was the same with the younger son who squandered his property and wasted his father's property living among prostitutes. Despite all this, he did not lose his honorable title of son. In the land of captivity, having rejected his father, he rather remembered, "How many hired servants are at this moment in my father's house who have more than enough bread, but here am I perishing from hunger."

He was still a sinner. He had sinned to such an extent that he had thrown to the winds with his misdeeds the entire inheritance he had received from his father. He still called God his father. This indicates that the grace of the Spirit, which authorizes him to call God Father, did not depart from him.

We are unable to employ this term of address and call God Father, except through the authority of the Holy Spirit who is within us. It is well known that those who have not yet become God's children by the holy rebirth of baptism are not authorized to use this term. They are not permitted to say, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." The apparent reason for this is that the Holy Spirit is not yet within them to give them this authorization. It is well known to all that, when they approach the holy mysteries, the newly baptized all repeat this prayer with confidence in accordance with the tradition handed down by our Lord, and then they proceed to the holy mysteries.

*Philoxenus of Hierapolis*