

SUNDAY OF MEATFARE
JUDGMENT SUNDAY



Icon of the Last Judgment

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this fourth weekend of this period of preparation for the Great Fast, our readings are taken from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians and Matthew's Gospel. In the reading from Paul's letter we are given "practical rules" to live by, especially during the time of the Great Fast. Each of us must choose what we will do to observe the Fast and we should not judge what others have decided to do. For example, while fasting is encouraged, we should not judge someone who does not fast. We cannot judge the relationship that others have with God and their personal journey of transformation. All we can do is to decide *how we will observe the Fast and how it fits into our personal plan for transformation.*

Our Gospel reading, according to scholars, was, in its present form, produced by ecclesiastical expansions of sayings of Jesus. The designation of the passage as "The Last judgment" is somewhat misleading; it is an imaginative scene in which is set the core of the moral teachings of Jesus. It has no parallel in the other Gospels. The scene is the Parousia, and "all nations" mean all mankind. But the process is addressed to the disciples; the standards on which they will be judged are set forth. Because faith is not mentioned should not lead to theological conclusions; it is clear that for Matthew, as for other New Testament writers, faith in Jesus is the first movement of man toward God. The point of this scene is that faith is



not the whole movement by which a person is transformed. The passage says nothing about what we would consider duties; man is judged on those things that he is accustomed to not consider duties.

So we should not think that this passage prophecies a Last Judgement as such but, rather, sets forth a way of living that Jesus proclaimed by His very life. Jesus taught and lived according to a basic process which brings about personal transformation, a process which includes how we treat others. Somehow our personal transformation and salvation is directly connected to how we respond to others. It requires that we don't "pick and choose" the people we love and the people we reject. Rather, it requires us to treat all others, regardless of how they treat us, with respect and unconditional love.

As all of us have probably already discovered, this requires courage, desire and commitment. It is not our human natural response, but rather a learned, divine-guided response. Think about this.

BECOMING AN ADULT CHILD OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER

As an Adult Child of the Heavenly Father, I purposely “choose” how I will live my life. I blame no one else for how I respond to the challenges of life or to others but, rather, take personal responsibility for my behavior. It also means that I take seriously the purpose of this earthly existence which is to personally change, attempting to become more like our Brother Jesus.

In order to do this, I have to not only look at my behaviors but also my attitudes and my thinking about God, life and others. It means I have to work to develop a “positive attitude” about life, even with all of its struggles.

LIFE IS NOT A PUNISHMENT FOR THINGS THAT I MAY HAVE DONE WHICH COULD BE CONSIDERED WRONG. God doesn't spend His time punishing me for my choices in life. He continuously extends His love and insights, hoping that they will help me to personally change.

Of course this all means that I cannot attempt to make God in *my image* and *likeness* with all of my human ways of thinking, but rather to remember that I have been made in His image and likeness, although

imperfectly and in a limited fashion. The task of life on earth is to attempt to actualize the “potential” He has infused into me to transform myself so that I become ever more like Jesus.

We should remember that when we talk about being created in God's “likeness”, we are talking about being created in the likeness of Jesus since He became one of us and shares in human nature as we do.

This requires that we realize that Jesus lived as a human while on earth and not as God. So we have the ability, if we choose to use it, to live as He lived. We do have the ability to respond to others as He did and to love others

as He did. It is not beyond our human powers.

Again, this requires us to look at life and our relationship with God as “adults”. We have to change any childish ideas we have about God and attempt to have “adult” ideas about Him. We have to attempt to establish an adult relationship with Him while, at the same time, remaining His child. We look to Jesus to discover how to do this. He truly demonstrated an adult relationship with His Abba (Dad).

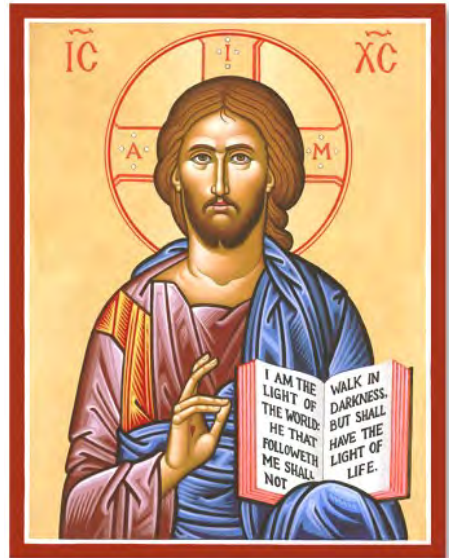


THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Any human virtue whatsoever has real value only in so far as it is a virtue of Christ, because only when it is incorporated into Christ and consequently spiritual (“born of the Spirit”) can it surpass the biological bounds of corruption and death, can it live and have real value, or be ‘useful tribute,’ in eternity. ‘Be merciful’ not with human mercy ‘as your Father is merciful’ and ‘love one another even as I have loved you’. The faithful are called to love “with the affection of Christ Jesus with which Paul yearned,” and to have “the peace of Christ” and the love “with which the Father has loved the Son”. For just as birth “is a divine and supernatural”, so too life and philosophy and all these things are spiritual.”

The phrase “all these things” refers to the various dimensions and functions of man. These functions are called to be purified and changed, to be filled with the Spirit of God and to function in a new manner closely attuned to the functions of the body of Christ. This will take place, not through the abandoning of these functions, but through a specific process of change and transformation which harnesses the work of man to the grace of God. The “good olive,” that is, the new existence and life which Christ bestows, is grafted through the sacraments and the wholly spiritual struggle of man onto the “wild olive,” that is, onto man’s biological existence and psychosomatic constitution. And the common fruit, the new way of life, is that of the good olive. You have to spend some time thinking about this.

The father, for example, who begets his child on the biological level is also called to have it born spiritually in the Church. Spiritual



fatherhood leads to its own “end”; it gives eternal value and incorrupt spiritual content to biological fatherhood and, in this sense, transforms it.

Similarly, the continual process of renewal, thanks to which the human biological organism is kept alive, is completed and radically transformed by the real rebirth of baptism which grants man a spiritual life which is permanent and incorrupt.

All this says something that is truly important: the task of this earthly existence is to transform ourselves, becoming more like Jesus. The Church, through the sacraments, truly aids in this process which is the fruits of the “spiritual life.”

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



VIRTUAL ADULT DISCUSSION SESSIONS

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

To participate in these discussions, you must register at:

<http://stmichaelarchangel.org/>

and click on Adult Discussion Group. Non-registered persons cannot join the discussion.

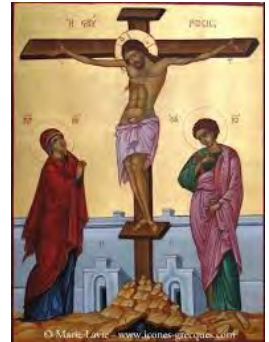
2020 FINANCIAL REPORT

I, unfortunately, forgot to reference our 2020 Financial Report last week. I would just like to thank all those who have so generously supported the parish, especially during this time of COVID 19.



LIVING THE NEW LIFE

As I ended the last issue of this article, I suggested that the way to live the new life is to live in the present moment. This is something that we have to learn how to do, it doesn't just come naturally.



It has to become a "habit" of mind which means that we have to practice, practice, and practice.

Much has been written by many different authors about learning how to live in the present moment since the present moment is the only thing that is truly real.

Life unfolds in the present. But so often, we let the present slip away, allowing time to rush past unobserved and unseized, and squandering the precious seconds of our lives as we worry about the future and ruminate about what's past. We're living in a world that contributes, in a major way, to mental fragmentation, disintegration, distraction, and decoherence" We're always doing something, and we allow little time to practice stillness and calm. It is in the stillness and calm that we really begin to experience (Continued on page 8)

HOW TO PERSONALLY EXPERIENCE THE DIVINE LITURGY

Hopefully some of my thoughts on how to “personally experience” the Divine Liturgy are beneficial. I don’t know if any of my readers have thought about how we end our worship. We end it in this manner: “May Christ our true God... have mercy on us and save us for **He is gracious and loves mankind.**” I think that it is essential for our spiritual growth and personal change that we believe to the very depth of our being, that God “**LOVES MANKIND**”.

I would ask you: *Do you believe that God loves you?* and, *What exactly does it mean to you that He loves you?* Does this change in any way your idea about Who God is and what this means with regard to His relationship with you?

I have had people tell me that they don’t sense that God loves them. When I engage them further, I typically find that they don’t love themselves. I find certain signs for this lack of love of self: (1) they rely on the thoughts of others with regard to their worth; (2) they believe that God punishes them when they fail at something or encounter difficult challenges in life; (3) they are not firm in their own beliefs and have to always be right; (4) they feel they are right with God by “only keeping all the rules”; and (5) they believe that “fear of the Lord” means that they have to fear His wrath because He is just waiting to punish them.

If you reflect on the Liturgy you will find that we repeatedly declare that



our God is a “loving and kind” God.

Our Liturgy is also filled with a multitude of statements that declares our God as a “merciful” God. If we really pray the Liturgy we have to be filled with great hope and trust in our God. The Liturgy presents the idea that our God extends to us His “loving kindness” and has extended Himself to us in time through Holy Communion.

Holy Communion is God’s divine commitment to us to be ever present to us, supporting us and expressing His love for us. Our response, hopefully, is one of GRATITUDE not only for His love but for the life He is sharing with us even when life is difficult.

We have to allow ourselves to think about these things when we are praying the Liturgy and not just make sure we give the appropriate response to the priest’s or deacon’s prayers. You make the Liturgy your own when you make the prayers we say together **YOUR PRAYER**. When you do, you also spiritually grow. The Eucharist is a ritual of gratitude and an expression of “union” with God and others.

THOUGHTS ON GENESIS

I ended the last issue of this article with sharing Cain's response to God's inquiry about his brother Abel. Cain's response was "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper? This reveals the death of his darkness. It was not only a lie (for he did know), but also showed tremendous impertinence, roughly implying that God's question was unreasonable. Since he was not his brother's guardian, how could he be expected to know where his brother was all the time? Such a surly response arose from a heart burdened not only with glowing anger and smarting envy but also with stifled guilt. However, God's question was not based on ignorance but on knowledge, and in demanding an account of Abel's location, God was striving to elicit a confession of guilt. God knew where Abel was, for the voice of his blood was silently crying from the ground to Him. His words "What have you done" were not a question but a cry of horror at the magnitude of the sin.

The sentence was immediate: Cain was cursed from the ground that opened its mouth to receive the blood of the slain. Cain tilled the ground, which in turn gave him his food, but he was cursed (Hebrew *arur*) from that ground since it had opened its mouth to receive Abel's blood. Being an unwilling participant in the crime, the soil was not stained and would no longer yield its strength to the murderer. The blood within the soil cried out to God for justice - Cain might labor all he liked, but no crops would be forthcoming for him.



Since Cain lived by tilling the ground, this sentence meant his banishment. He must now be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, leaving his home and surviving as best he could by hunting and gathering. The phrase a fugitive and a wanderer is alliterative in the original: Cain must be *na'* and *nad*. The cognate verbs are combined in Isaiah 24:20, where the earth "staggers like a drunken man" and "sways like a hut." The image here is of someone staggering unsteadily through the world.

I hope my readers are getting a whole different idea about the Genesis story. It is not history but has great wisdom.

Schedule of Services

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

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

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

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Sundays @ 10:00 AM
Ukrainian & English

Weekdays @ 8:00 AM
English

SACRAMENTS

Penance
By Appointment

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

Funerals
*Membership of an immediate
family member required*

Parish Life Council

Bob & Corinne Boyko
734.451.1893

John & Janet Dicky
586.755.3129

Daria Drobny
313.791-0292

Robert Krokosky
248.734.7078

Leo & Mary LaDouceur
313.278.7378

Gordon Malaniak
734.564.9817

Rev Deacon Leonard Mier
313.584-6795

Greg & Esther Petrovich
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

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

36th WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - Tone 4

Monday, February 8 - Theodore, Great-Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, February 9 - Nicephor, Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, February 10 - Charalampus, Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Thursday, February 11 - Blase, Bishop-Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Friday, February 12 - Meletius, Archbishop
No Service Scheduled

Saturday, February 13 - All Holy Ascetical Fathers & Mothers
No Service Scheduled

Sunday, February 14 - Weekend of Cheesefare
10:00 AM - Special Intention - Live Streamed

(Continued from page 5 - Living The New Life)
the present moment.

I know many people who have attempted to develop the habit of living in the present moment. They have told me that in the beginning the greatest obstacle they had to overcome was to shut off the chatter of their mind. Thoughts are always going through our heads and it often seems that we have very little control over the constant stream of thoughts. These thoughts are frequently not about the situation we find ourselves in at the time; it may be reviving the recent or distant past or rehearsing or imagining possible future situations. Here it often imagines things going wrong and negative outcomes; this is called worry.

I can't tell you how many people I have encountered who are "worry-worth's". They worry about everything and anything. And, all their worrying doesn't change anything one iota.



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

BECOMING A HEALING PRESENCE



In the last several issues of this article, I have been sharing thoughts about dealing with ambiguity, something we have to be able to do if we truly desire to be a healing presence. Jesus gave unequivocal directives about living with ambiguity, such as “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

Ambiguity can creep in as we try to discern what to say to others about a problematic situation. How honest is honest?

One bishop once said: “I never lie, but I have no responsibility to answer every question asked of me.” He was saying that he, and by extension the rest of us, simply need to be honest. Never lie, but don’t say too much. Truly don’t give TMI - too much information. Anyone can ask

me any question, but that doesn’t mean I will answer every question. I have no trouble answering some other question so the listener gets the truth, while not answering his or her question.

We need to never lie and we need to include others in our attempts to be honest. We really don’t know much about the truth of our past. The past is what it is. We can’t change it. Someone said that repentance is giving up all hope of a better past - that is, the short-term and the long-term past. But we don’t have to have a self-righteous attitude, telling ourselves that everything we did was proper, correct and the best we could do. All we can do is pray for God’s mercy and let go of the past.

We also often don’t know what is best in the present moment. We pray, ask for guidance, and can easily be surprised at how dense we are and how judgmental of others we can be.

Regarding the future, it’s a non-brainer that there is nothing we can be certain about. We might not get a next breath; we might have no future. But, as humans, we are sorely tempted to worry about future events. Lord, have mercy, and He does.

We know that we don’t know why others do what they do. There is an entire universe of reasons people behave as they do. Why is this person pushing ahead of me in the checkout line? Why was the cashier obnoxious when I asked for a receipt? Truth be told, I don’t know. There may be very good reasons for the rude behaviors. Perhaps the obnoxious person just got a phone call from her doctor, saying a serious blood test turned out positive and she needs to visit the hospital for an operation.

There is so much we don’t know about life and ourselves. We also need to be healed.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN TODAY?

I have been sharing thoughts about the “heart” of Christianity in the time of change. The emerging paradigm has been visible for well over a century. Like the earlier paradigm, its central features as a response to the Enlightenment. Though this description is mine and that of other authors, the vision is not. This way of seeing Christianity is widely shared among theological and biblical scholars and increasingly among laity and clergy within mainline denominations. What I describe is something that already exists, a development well under way. I would now attempt to present a compact preview of its vision of the Bible and the Christian life, using five adjectives put into two phrases. The first three adjectives describe *a way of seeing the Bible* (and the Christian tradition as a whole): historical, metaphorical and sacramental. The last two adjectives describe *a way of seeing the Christian life*: relational and transformational.

- ♦ **HISTORICAL:** For the emerging paradigm, the Bible is the historical product of two ancient communities, ancient Israel and the early Christian movement. The Bible was not written to us or for us, but for the ancient communities that produced it. A historical approach emphasizes the illuminating power of interpreting these ancient documents in their ancient historical contexts.
- ♦ **METAPHORICAL:** The emerging paradigm sees the Bible metaphorically, meaning its “more-than-literal”, more-than-factual,” meaning. It is not very much concerned with the historical factuality of the Bible’s stories, but much more with their meanings. It is not bothered by the possibility that the stories of Jesus’ birth and resurrection are metaphorical rather than literally factual accounts. It asks, “Whether it happened this way or not, what is this story saying’? What meanings does it have for us?”



- ♦ **SACRAMENTAL:** The emerging paradigm sees the Bible sacramentally, meaning that the Bible’s ability to mediate the sacred. A sacrament is something visible and physical whereby the Spirit becomes present to us. A sacrament is a means of grace, a vehicle or vessel for the Spirit.

Like the earlier paradigm, the emerging paradigm sees the Bible as sacred scripture, but *not* because it is a divine product. It is sacred in its *status* and *function*, but *not in its origin*. The point is not to believe in the Bible and the Christian tradition, but to live within them as a metaphor and sacrament.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, STL, Ph.D.
Vol. 68 No 6 Weekend Of Meatfare February 6-7, 2021

SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND INNER HEALING

In the last issue of the article I introduced the idea of seeing ourselves in the events of Christ's life. Seeing ourselves in the events of Christ's life is a way of praying for the healing of memories. It is a kind of scriptural meditation in which the words of Scripture and our imaginations interplay with each other. Thus, it is a way of making the Scriptures come alive.

We find a scriptural basis for this kind of prayer in these words of Jesus: "On that day you will understand that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you". In this one sentence Jesus reveals an entire world view; in these words He explains how He sees the world operating.

"On that day" is a phrase used by the prophets for occasions when God dramatically shows Himself in history. A "day" in this sense would be more accurately described as an event or an epoch. Often the prophets used this phrase to refer to a special epoch, the

age of the Messiah, the time when the Messiah would be revealed. Of course, we know that time is now, and the way that the Messiah has been revealed is that He has risen from the dead. So we

can insert this idea in the sentence to understand better the meaning of Jesus' words: When I rise from the dead you will understand that I am in my Father and you are in me and I am in you. This is a very important point. We have to learn how to see that we are in Jesus and that He is in us. Once we can develop this "image" for ourselves, our whole life changes.



Have you ever thought about Jesus being in you and you in Him? Quite frequently our thoughts about ourselves - who we really are - prohibit us from accepting this reality. GOD, in the Person of Jesus through the power of His Spirit, is in us, calling us into existence every moment of our lives. Search for Christ within you.

If You Love God, You will Love your Neighbor; If You Love your Neighbor, You will Love God

Surely everyone knows that human beings are social creatures and for that reason are not made for a solitary and uncivilized life. Nothing is better suited to our nature than to have continual relationships to seek one another out and to love one's own kind. The Lord asks no more than the fruit of the seed He has implanted in us, when He says: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another." (John 13:34) To lead us to obey this precept He does not want the badge of recognition of disciples to consist in miracles. Rather He asserts: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35) And between the commandment to love God and the commandment to love your neighbor, He has established so close a bond that He takes as done to Himself anything done to our brothers or sisters. He says: "I was thirsty and

you gave me drink." (Matt. 25:35) And He adds: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Matt. 25:40) The keeping of the first commandment includes the keeping of the second, and in the fulfillment of the second the first is fulfilled. Whoever loves God loves his neighbor. The Lord says: "Anyone who loves me will keep my word" (John 14:23) and "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12) So then, whoever loves his neighbor loves God, and God reckons our unity with our brothers and sisters is unity with Him. One is reminded of Moses. He loved his brothers and sisters so much that he asked to be blotted out of the book of the living if the people did not receive forgiveness of their sins. (Exod. 32:32).

Saint Basil the Great