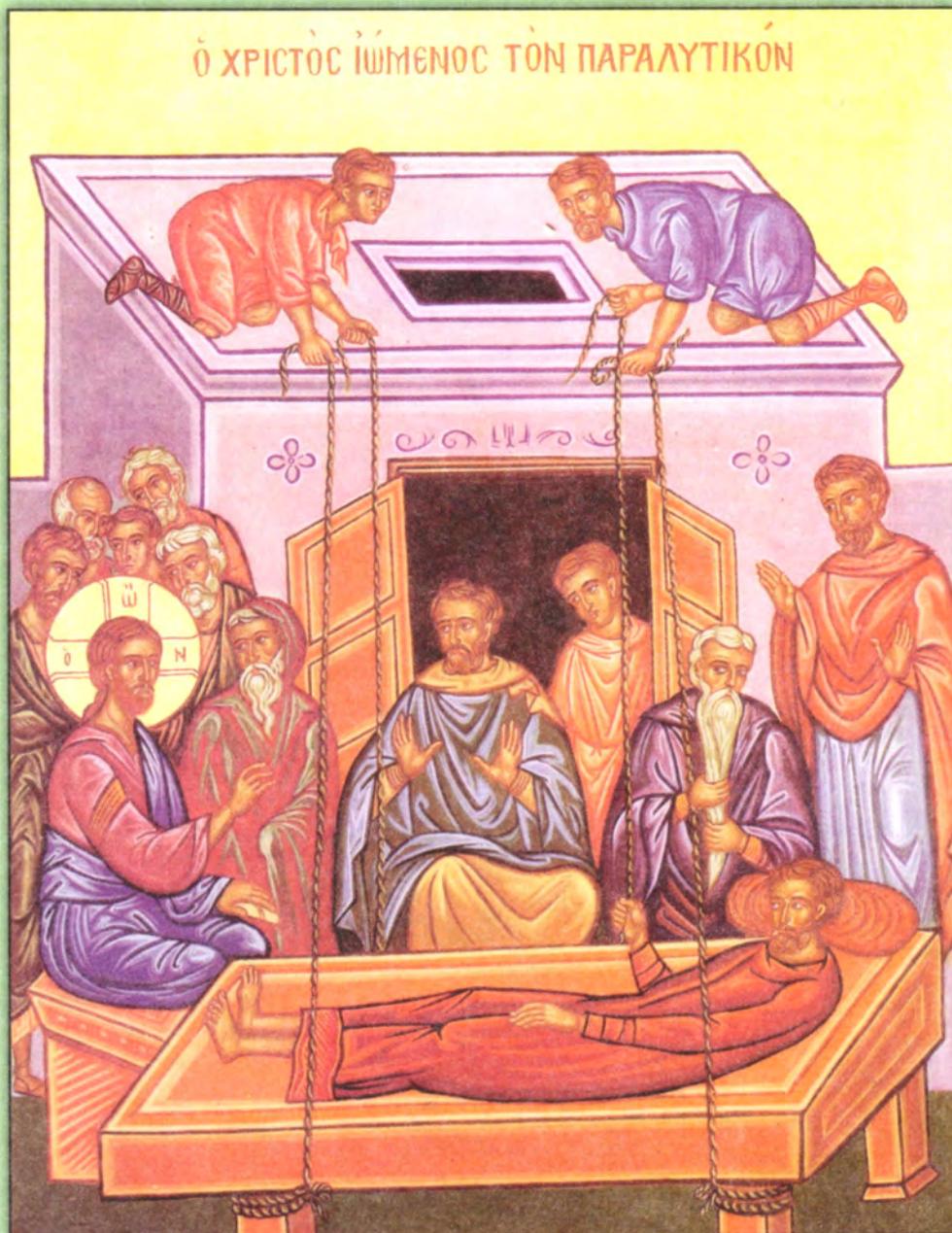


SECOND SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST
SUNDAY OF ST. GREGORY PALAMAS



Icon of Healing the Paralytic

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this second weekend of the Great Fast, our readings are taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews and Mark's Gospel. Paul exhorts the Hebrews and therefore also us, to be faithful to our efforts at personal transformation and change and to truly embrace Jesus as our true and real Messiah - the one who has liberated us from the ignorance of how to live this earthly life. He encourages us to attend to what we have heard about Jesus and His Way of Living. Indeed if we embrace His Way of Living, we will be freed from any paralysis of spirit.

This, of course, dovetails with our Gospel miracle story. The cure of the paralytic man at Capernaum, the place where Jesus went after He left Nazareth. It's sort of a bizarre story. The paralytic's friends bring the man to Jesus' house and the crowd was so great that they could not bring the man into Jesus' presence. So, instead, they opened the roof of the house and lowered the man into Jesus' presence.

First, this says a great deal about their belief that Jesus could help their friend. Second, they had a strong commitment to their friend to help him. And third, something always happens when people actually come into the presence of Jesus.

So we are encouraged, as we embrace the Great Fast, to put our faith and trust in Jesus, to go out of our way to help others and to try and place ourselves in the presence of Jesus each and every day.

Some might ask, "How do I place myself in the presence of Jesus?" One way is to simply place yourself in a quiet place and slowly recite the JESUS PRAYER over and over again. The prayer is this: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me."

If you have access to the Internet and simply



Google "Jesus Prayer", you can find a ton of renditions of the prayer sung. (I like to use this as an assist - simply listening to the prayer being sung and then reciting the prayer in unison with the music).

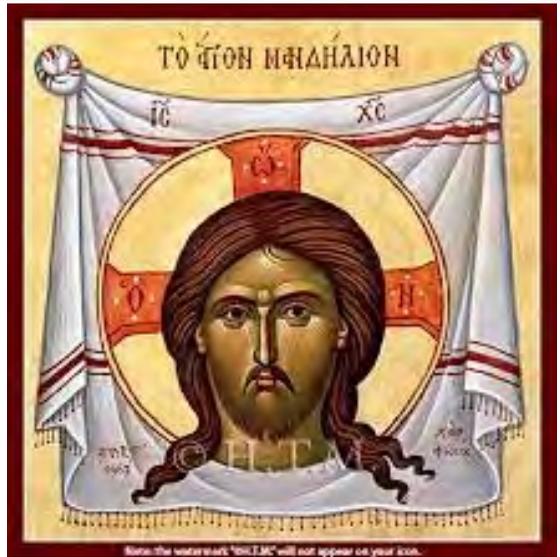
It must be pointed out, however, that you must recite it many, many times. Not just once and expect to be in the presence of Jesus. Repeated recitation will allow you to gain interior peace and gradually sense His presence which will, most likely, come in the form of you becoming very much aware of "God's life force within you." His presence is experienced in the increased awareness of LIFE. You will find you have no control over your heart rate and breathing. This is the experience of human life and of Jesus, Who is God.

THE ICON OF THE GREAT FAST

In the last issue of the Eastern Herald I began sharing the story of Veronica's Veil or the Icon produced not by human hands. The story was later elaborated in the 11th century by adding that Christ gave her a portrait of himself on a cloth, with which she later cured Tiberius. The linking of this with the bearing of the cross in the Passion, and the miraculous appearance of the image, was made by Roger d'Argenteuil's *Bible in French* in the 13th century, and gained further popularity following the internationally popular work Meditations on the Life of Christ of about 1300. It is also at this point that other depictions of the image changed to include a crown of thorns, blood, and the expression of a man in pain, and the image became very common throughout Catholic Europe, forming part of the *Arma Christi*, and with the meeting of Jesus and Veronica becoming one of the Stations of the Cross.

That there was a physical image venerated as the Veil of Veronica and displayed in Rome from the fourteenth century on is clear, but the provenance of that image is uncertain.

There is a statue in St. Peter's Basilica of *St Veronica & the Veil*. It has often been assumed that the Veronica was present in the Old St. Peter's in the papacy of John VII (705-8), as a chapel known as the Veronica chapel was built during his reign, and this seems to have been the



assumption of later writers. However, this is far from certain, as mosaics that decorated that chapel do not refer to the Veronica story in any way.

Furthermore, contemporaneous writers make no reference to the Veronica in this period. It would appear however that the Veronica was in place by 1011 when a scribe was identified as keeper of the cloth.

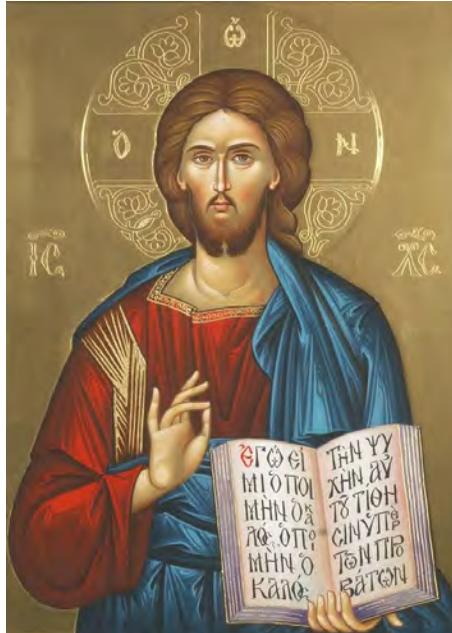
Firm recording of the Veronica only begins in 1199 when two pilgrims, Gerald de Barri and Gervase of Tilbury, made two accounts at different times of a visit to Rome, making direct reference to the existence of the Veil of Veronica. Shortly after that, in 1207, the cloth became more prominent when it was publicly paraded and displayed by Pope Innocent III, who also granted indulgences to anyone praying before it.

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

In the last issue of this article, I shared that the spiritual life is not an escape from the world but a transformation of it. The fact that God became incarnate in the Person of Jesus, assuming a human nature, completely, we believe, changed creation and revealed the true meaning of creation and us. What God revealed through Jesus is the reason why He created us and all things. In the process He made us heavenly beings and established us in a heavenly life, not by leading us up to heaven but by bending heaven and bringing it down to us. By His actions through Jesus, God also inspired the creation of the Church, that group of persons who believe in Jesus not only as truly God but also truly man - a model for us humans to imitate in order to become all that God intended when He created us.

God also inspired the Persons Who conceived the Church as the Body of Christ - that is the extension of Christ in time - to develop rituals that help us to deal with various real “mysteries” of life. In fact the Eastern Church calls them the Seven Mysteries - in the West the Seven Sacraments. Think about this. These seven mysteries are:

Birth (Baptism), Human Powers (Chrismation), Love (Marriage), Forgiveness (Reconciliation), Sickness (Anointing of the Sick), Commitment (Religious Vocations) and Jesus’ promise to always be with us (Holy Eucharist). As we celebrate these seven mysteries (there are really more



since even the Scriptures are a mystery) Christ is more present to us. In fact that is the very purpose of these seven mysteries that we ritualize. They bring us into real contact with Christ and God. What is very important in life is that we truly and really understand these mysteries. When we do, life begins to make more sense. Each of us will

encounter at least most of these mysteries. How we deal with them truly dictates how we deal with life.

For example, the mystery of birth. As we celebrate this in the Eastern Church it is not about “washing away” original sin but, rather, the declaration of our belief that God’s life is in the child receiving Baptism. Water is one of the major symbols of life. We unite the child with water to say that we believe that God’s lifeforce brings that child into existence. WOW!

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



VIRTUAL ADULT DISCUSSION SESSIONS

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. If you would just like
to read the article that is being
discussed but not participate in the
discussion, simply send me an email:

w ruchgy@gmail.com

LENTEN SERVICES

Friday evenings at 7:00 PM - Live-Streamed

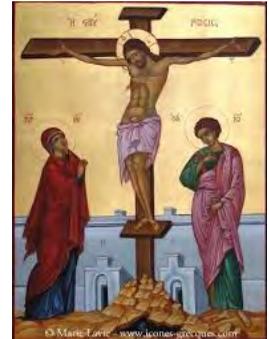
This is just a reminder that we are
serving the Presanctified Liturgy each
Friday evening at 7:00 PM and also
streaming it. We also have seating for
32 people in the Church.

FASTING AND POPE FRANCIS

- ◆ Fast for hurting words and say kind words
- ◆ Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude
- ◆ Fast from anger and be filled with patience

LIVING THE NEW LIFE

Since the Great Fast calls us to a more in-depth focus on the task of personal change, we see that living the new life has many different dimensions. First, it means making a very honest and real



assessment of our attitudes. Most humans, I have found, spend very little time thinking of their attitudes. So very many of our attitudes have come from our families and the society in which we live. Right now if you follow social media or even the news on TV, you find very many non-Christian attitudes expressed. I think that the struggle we are having in our society just with regard to equality is based on attitudes which do not take into consideration that all humans, whether they are aware of it or not, are temples of God's Spirit and that they are created in the "IMAGE" of God. Whether we are aware of it or not, all humans are created in God's image - that is what we believe as Christians and that is what we believe God revealed to us through His incarnation in the Person of Jesus. Ask yourself, *Do I think about others in the same way* (Continued on page 8)

A PRAYER A DAY FOR THE 2021 GREAT FAST

MONDAY, MARCH 1ST

Heavenly Father, time is quickly passing, and I do not feel that I have sufficiently applied myself to the personal change this Great Fast calls me. The days slip by so fast. I have come to the awareness that the chaos in our society keeps distracting me from my efforts to apply myself to personal, spiritual change and growth. It is so easy to be distracted by the things that go on around me. Help me to shut out the things of this world and, rather, focus on my spiritual growth. I know that one of the things I can do is to turn off my television since it highlights the struggles of my society. I ask this of You who I truly call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

TUESDAY, MARCH 2ND

Heavenly Father, I have decided that my attitudes about things that are happening in my society are distracting me from focusing on the work of the Fast, namely my spiritual growth. I know that my growth, which involves personal change, is what You have revealed through Jesus Christ. I know that I must learn, during this lifetime, to love all others unconditionally and to base my response to others not on how they treat me but on how I would like to be treated. I must base my response to others as Jesus did, responding with love. I believe if I am to become more like Jesus, I must learn how to live like Him. I ask this of You who I truly call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3RD

Heavenly Father, I would, today, like to express my belief that You sent Your Son, Jesus, into the world to help me know how to live in order to grow into the person You intended when You created me. I believe that You unconditionally love me and only want me to freely return Your love. I also realize that I can return Your love by truly learning how to unconditionally love others and treating them with respect and love. I feel that frequently my society militates against this approach to life. Help me to reject society's approach to life and, rather, embrace Jesus' approach to life. This means I must embrace His attitudes and behaviors. I ask this of You who I truly call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

THURSDAY, MARCH 4TH

Heavenly Father, I join my prayer with Your Son Jesus and ask Your help as I continue my struggle with personal change and spiritual growth. Help me to realize that this is the work of earthly life. Nothing is more important than spiritual growth which, I realize, requires personal change. As I look at my life, I realize that there are so many attitudes and behaviors which can keep me from unconditionally loving others and not allowing their behaviors to dictate my response to them. I know that they do not have to embrace my beliefs and values for me to love them. I willingly accept this and ask You help to develop this attitude. I ask this of You who I truly call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

A PRAYER A DAY FOR THE 2021 GREAT FAST

FRIDAY, MARCH 5th

Heavenly Father, I cannot believe how quickly the days of the Great Fast are passing. In some ways it seems like I just started the Fast. I ask Your help in making this a time of spiritual growth for me. I truly want to be the person You intended when You first conceived me. Help me to truly imitate Your only begotten Son Jesus. I know You became incarnate in Him in order that I might have a real model for how to lead and live this life. Help me to grow in my ability to unconditionally love others and to openly accept, respect and treat others the way that I want to be treated. I ask this of You who I truly call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

SATURDAY, MARCH 6th

Heavenly Father, the Church calls me to remember my deceased relatives and friends today. As I think about the people who have gone before me into eternal life, I offer a prayer of thanks for them and ask that they be granted eternal rest. I believe and profess that they are alive in a different dimension since I believe that human life, because it is a sharing in Your Life, is eternal. I believe that You sent those who I remember in prayer to be a part of my life to help me understand that I am loved. I thank You, Heavenly Father, for the gift of those persons for whom I pray for today. I ask this of You who I truly call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

SUNDAY, MARCH 7th

Heavenly Father, today the Church presents the Cross of Christ to us for our meditation. As I look upon the Cross, decorated with flowers, I realize that the message the Church is sharing with me is that the fullness of life is only achieved when I, like Jesus, can embrace the challenges of life with internal peace and trust in You. Jesus met the greatest challenge of His life with love and absolute trust in You, Heavenly Father. Help me to cooperate with Your Spirit within me to meet the challenges of my life in the same way that Jesus did. For I know that I do, I will deepen my relationship with You. I ask this of You who I truly call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

MAKING THE GREAT FAST REAL

One of the things we can do in order to make the Great Fast real is to do something that you would ordinarily not do. For example, have you thought about contacting someone who may be shut in and could benefit from a kind word?

OR, if you do not regularly exercise, try exercising, valuing the life and body that God has given you.

OR, give up a favorite TV program. This could be a real challenge during this COVID19 time.

OR, occasionally eliminating one meal and instead of eating, some time reading the New Testament. Our church calendar has readings.

Schedule of Services

Sunday, February 28 - Second Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 6
10:00 AM - Special Intention - Live Streamed

3rd WEEK OF THE GREAT FAST - Tone 7

Monday, March 1 - Eudoxia, Venerable Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, March 2 - Theodotus, Bishop-Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, March 3 - Eutropius & Others, Martyrs
No Service Scheduled

Thursday, March 4 - Gerasimus, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Friday, March 5 - Conon, Martyr
7:00 PM - Presanctified Liturgy - Live Streamed

Saturday, March 6 - Forty-two Martyrs at Ammorium
No Service Scheduled

Sunday, March 7 - Third Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 7
10:00 AM - Special Intention - Live Streamed

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

(Continued from page 5 - Living The New Life)
that others in my society think about them? Our present society seems so very polarized and seems to embrace attitudes about various groups within our society in a very negative way. This, of course, is not the Way of Jesus. You will recall that He embraced all those that His society rejected and tried to love and accept them.



I realize that “fear” in our society causes people to develop “negative attitudes” about people who are not the same as them, whether it is their religious affiliation, ethnic background, social class or by the way that they respond to others. The Jesus Way responds to others, regardless of who they are or how they treat us, with unconditional love and, of course, unconditional forgiveness. Followers of Jesus base their behaviors and attitudes on those that Jesus modeled as the way to live.

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

THEOSIS: THE WORK OF LIFE AND THE GREAT FAST

Theosis is a practical “goal” for our spiritual lives. The prize is a deeper union with God in the Person of Jesus Christ. of God in Christ Jesus. It is an applied science that refers to a faith process of grace-energized and grace-dependent transformation unto “union with God,” and such transformation is precisely with the entire tradition of our Eastern Church is aimed at producing. St. Nicodemos, the compiler of the *Philokalia* (a collection of the works of many of the Eastern Fathers of the Church) wrote of *theosis*:

This union is the final goal towards which are directed the creation of the world and the Dispensation of the Logos of God for our well-being, both temporal and eternal.

In other words, the union of man with God is the very purpose of the creation of the entire universe and the saving economy of the Incarnate Logos, Jesus. It is also intended to produce both temporal and eternal well-being. This necessary unity of the temporal with the eternal is manifested through the systematic *practice* of ceaseless prayer, stillness and watchfulness. It is the “one essential work.” And it is the only path to the reliable production of spiritual

fruit:

For without the unceasing remembrance of the Lord, and purity of the heart and mind from everything evil - *a purity generated by this practice* - it is impossible to bear fruit.

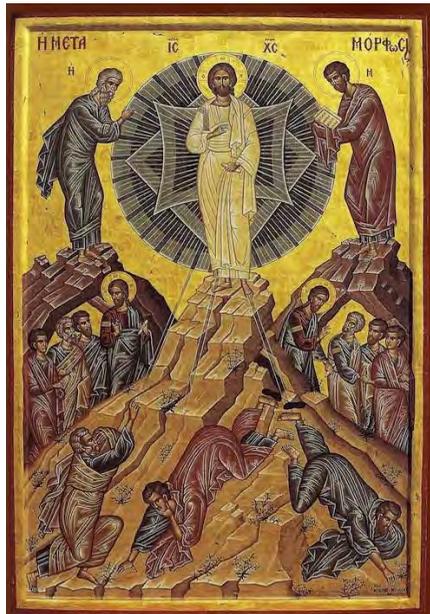
Notice that St. Nicodemos states that it is a practice, not a vague goal reached haphazardly or through mere intellectual understanding. Thus one must practice intelligently and systematically, which is the reason for St. Nicodemos’ compilation of the *Philokalia*:

Behold these texts which guide us systematically to purity of the heart, to watchfulness of the mind, to the recovery of Grace with us, and, *theosis*.

At five volumes, the *Philokalia* is a large collection of texts that span roughly ten centuries and twenty authors, each writing to different audiences. As such, the diversity

of instructions can make it daunting to attempt to synthesize and represent both concisely and in the depth that they deserve.

During the Great Fast I would like to draw upon a work by Joshua Schooping who writes about *theosis* based on the practical advice of the Fathers of the *Philokalia*.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN TODAY?

In this article I'm attempting to share with my readers that "religion" is, in truth, changing during our modern times. As I tried to share with my readers previously, I feel that religion is moving to a position where we truly become "ADULT CHILDREN" of the Heavenly Father. When we look back at how religion has, so very many times, put us in the position of "children" in the true sense of the word, we know that our attitudes about religion have to change.

In the past many Christians were not educated and, as a result of that, the Church took a very direct approach to telling members what to think and do. That is no longer the case.

We now believe that God desires our free response to His love. This is why He created us with "free will." He did not create "robots" who have no other choice but to return His love.

Think about this. God's love is so very great that He took the chance of us not returning His love. He truly believe He understands that if we become aware of His love, we will do everything in our power to return His love.

So one of our tasks during this earthly existence is to become more

deeply aware of His love. Unfortunately the events of life frequently get in the way. For example, quite typically when humans are confronted with illness or some other event they see as tragedy, they immediately ask: *Why did God allow this to happen?* They fail to see that life presents opportunities for us to deepen our love for God instead of questioning it. Illness and disease are not punishments! They are simply a part of life and opportunities to put life into the proper perspective.

Hopefully the emerging paradigm for Christianity may help us come to this same conclusion. The old way of thinking truly distorts our perception of Who God really is. He is not

the punisher/rewarder. He is, rather, the lover of humankind and has spared nothing in order to reveal this to us. He even became one of us in the Person of His Son Jesus in order to tell us this.

Some believe that if we begin to look at God in this manner that people will disregard God's laws and lead a profligate life. That is also a distorted idea of human beings. I believe that most humans want to do what is good and right and don't have to be frightened into living a good life.

Think about this!





THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, STL, Ph.D.
Vol. 68 No 9 2nd Weekend Of The Great Fast February 27-28, 2021

SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND INNER HEALING

In the last issue of this article I introduced the idea of seeing ourselves in Christ's life. In an age when we want so much to rediscover the power of the bible to heal, to console, and to help us grow spiritually, this kind of inner healing prayer is more than appropriate. Sometimes when we read the Bible we forget that "the word of God is something alive and active" and in forgetting that truth we read the Bible as if it were just another book. Thus we are not open to its unique power to transform our lives and therefore we are not transformed by it and we do not grow spiritually when we read it. Praying to see ourselves in the events of Christ's life is a simple and straightforward way to allow the Scriptures to be alive to us, to be a living word that we allow to change the way we live.

Also, when we put ourselves into the Scripture in this personal way, thus

meeting Christ, we find that "no created thing can hide from Him; everything is uncovered and open to the eyes of the One to whom we must give an account of ourselves. If we are to "put on the new self that has been created in God's way, in the goodness and holiness of the *truth*", then we need to come to the Scriptures, where the truth of our lives in Christ will be uncovered and revealed. This process is at the center of spiritual growth, inner healing, and healing of old memories, and the Scripture is an important part of this aspect of healing.

Some of us may say, however, that we cannot identify in such an intimate way with Christ because He was and is so perfect and sinless, and our sinful lives have little to do with His life. D

He calls us to enter into a real and true relationship with Him so that He can truly heal us through the Spirit.



You are Forgiven and Healed

In Capernaum Jesus is surrounded by great numbers of people. As He preaches to the crowd, four friends of a paralyzed man lower him on his mat through the roof so that he can be close enough for Jesus to see him and cure him. Jesus responds to this act of faith, not by healing the man immediately, but by touching off the first of a series of controversial dialogues with the Scribes and Pharisees. When Jesus says, "Child, your sins are forgiven," He is as much as saying, "It is God whom you approach." In the Old Testament, only God is capable of forgiving sins; and it was expected that He would do so only at the end of time. It becomes clear why the Scribes murmur "he is blaspheming" and why Jesus brings it all out in the open. His claim to be able to forgive sins better reveals His identity as Son of God than do the miracles He performs.

Aware of the silent censure His forgiving word has caused in the crowd, Jesus proceeds to prove that "the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth" by commanding the man to rise and walk in the sight of everyone. In concluding this miracle, Mark asks his readers to praise God for His presence in their midst as the forgiver-healer, just as the crowd did, even in the face of those who did not believe.

It is significant that Mark has chosen to present this miracle and teaching about Jesus' power to forgive sins so early in his Gospel drama. It shows that the need for the experience of God's forgiveness was as important to first-century Christians as it is today. Mark's readers praise God for saying clearly, and even today, "My sons, my daughters, I absolve you from your sins."