

SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN



Icon of the Myrrh-bearing Women

A REFLECTION ON OUR REAINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

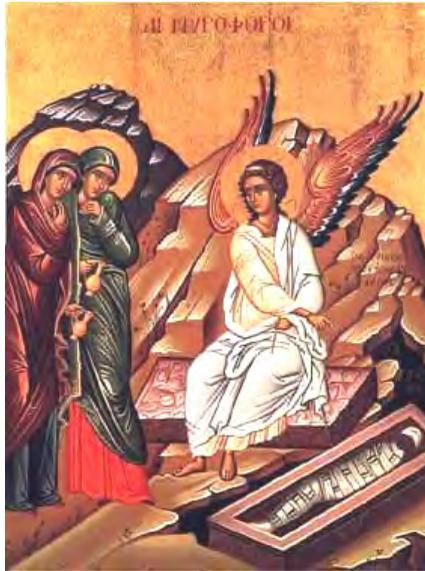
On the third week of our celebration of the Lord's Resurrection, we remember the Myrrh or Ointment Bearing Women, that is the women who came to Jesus' grave to complete the burial ritual. They did not have time at His actual burial to carry out the total ritual. Why? Because that weekend was the Passover. The burial ritual involved anointing the body with various oils, one of which was myrrh.

The passage we hear from ACTS, speaks of the early Church's need for assistants to carry out the mission of the church. What was the mission? To be of help and assistance to others who were less fortunate. This fact highlights the early church's true and real understanding of its mission which was based on the mission that Jesus had articulated, namely to help others in need. From the very beginning Jesus emphasized that the way to grow in our union with God is to reach-out and to help others in need. The only real way that we can have a relationship with God is to assume the mission that God expressed through Jesus Christ, namely to be of service to others.

I am sure that most of us are very aware of the Gospel message to "feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the

shut-in and help the poor." These real activities are transformative - they have the power to "change us."

The Gospel message, of course, reinforces this message. The women were attempting to be of service to the dead - in this case Jesus - and, because they were, they encountered the angel who told them about Jesus' resurrection. Truly the resurrected Jesus is encountered when we attempt to be of service to others.



Think about it! As we attempt to be "other-centered" we truly encounter Jesus since we realize the presence of God's Spirit within others, whether they are aware of it or not. **WHEN WE SEE GOD'S SPIRIT IN OTHERS, WE BECOME AWARE OF**

GOD'S PRESENCE. When we become aware of God's presence in our world in other persons, we finally have an encounter with God and we can then build a relationship with Him. The only true way to build a relationship with our "invisible God" is by building relationships with other "visible" persons who are, in essence, also the living temples of God's Spirit.

The Christian message is focused on building human relationships that can bring us into relationship with God.

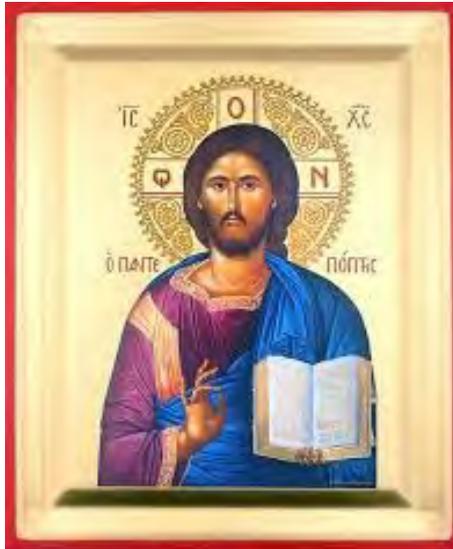
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN TODAY?

While I discontinued this article during the Great Fast so that I could provide “prayers for each day”, I would like to return to it. Christianity has always and ever changed through the centuries. Like all things, CHANGE is inevitable. Unfortunately in religion, people want things to remain the same - “Give me that old-time religion.”

Articulating the heart of Christianity involves a “given” and a real “context.” The “given” is the Christian tradition itself: the Bible, God, Jesus, the creeds, rituals and so forth (*and many, many traditions which are cultural and not religious. For example, what did you put into your Easter basket? What is suppose to go into the basket is food which you have abstained from during the Great Fast. Do you always eat ham and kielbasa?*) We receive this from the past. The context is a cultural context - namely, the time and place in which we live and who we have become because of our context. The task of Christian theology is to interpret a “given,” a received tradition, in a present cultural context. It has always been so.

Of course, the “given” cannot simply be conformed to the present; it must be allowed its own voice. But the

“given” must from time to time be reformulated to speak to a changed cultural context. This has happened many times in Christianity’s history. God may or may not be the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, but the cultural context in which we speak about God does change.



To a large extent, the Christian tradition is constituted by language, by words. Of course, it also includes rituals and practices, but these also are a kind of language. The key question is: How are we to understand this language that comes to us from the past?

Discerning the heart of Christianity thus involves us in an “unending conversation” just as history does. History is the product of what is called the “unending conversation.” AND, if we don’t engage in such a conversation, we will repeat history - we will repeat the aberrations even of Christianity.

Being a Christian should involve us in an unending conversation with the Bible, the Christian tradition and each other. Of course this means more than just “conversation”. The task is the ongoing construction of what it means to be a Christian.

ST BASIL THE GREAT AND THOUGHTS ON GENESIS

Before the Great Fast, I was presenting thoughts about Genesis which are based on the interpretation of Basil the Great. Why? Because it seems that the stories in Genesis seem to always be taken in a fundamental and historical manner. They are not meant to be history. Where I had ended the story, Cain had killed Abel and was banished from the Garden. Cain's response was not one of penitence but one of protest. As he keenly felt that God's response to their offerings was unjustly arbitrary, so he felt his sentence was unjustly severe. The punishment is greater than he can bear. For not only has God drive him today away from the ground and cut him off from protection, forcing him into a life of wandering far off, but this means that he will be completely vulnerable to everyone. Whoever finds him will slay him without fear of consequences. Cain seems unconscious of the irony: he slew his brother and now he protests that any stranger might be able to slay him too. This seems to be Cain's point: banishment should be punishment enough, but here banishment is augmented with subsequent death as well.



The situation envisioned here is from a later time. Cain himself did not fear retaliation from an avenger of blood - for who then could fulfill such a role? An avenger of blood was a near relative of the victim whose responsibility it was to track down the offender and administer justice by killing him. Abel's only near relative were their parents, for according to the narrative, no one else yet existed. And it is unlikely that Cain referred to such a task being fulfilled in the years to come by people not yet born, for his words clearly reflected fear of a present danger.

Rather, Cain's complaint was that there was no one new who could fulfill the role of an avenger of blood *for himself*. The sentence for his crime had separated him utterly from family. In the later culture of Israel, what kept a person relatively safe from attack from outsiders was the assurance that if one was attacked, one's family would fulfill the role of avenger of blood and take revenge on the offender and his tribe. Such an assurance of vengeance acted as a constraint on wanton attacks from outsiders.

More to come!

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



THE PENTECOSTARION

The liturgical period we are currently in is called the Pentecostarion, the 50 day period from Easter to Pentecost. It was the time in the early church where newly baptized Christians continued to receive instruction on the meaning of the Good News. Each week bears the name of the Gospel story that is read.

Week of the Myrrh-Bearers

Week of the Paralytic Man

Week of the Samaritan Woman

Week of the Man Born Blind

Week of the Fathers of the 1st Council

I would like to challenge my readers and ask them to think about what the message is for each of these weeks and send their ideas to me. There is no right or wrong. It is all about God moving us to think about something.

This is one way to truly celebrate the Resurrection of Christ.

***Be thankful for what you have;
you'll end up having more. If you
concentrate on what you don't have,
you will never, ever have enough.***

LIVING A NEW LIFE

If you have been following this article you will notice a very subtle shift again in its emphasis. Why? Because I truly feel that the Resurrection of Christ calls us to



live a "new life." It calls us to not just "automatically live without thought", but to think about how we live. What do I really think about others? Do I have prejudices? Do I reserve my love for some? Am I focused on imitating Jesus Christ? Do I truly believe that life is immortal? Do I make the Beatitudes, that is the attitudes that truly make me human, the rule of my life or am I still playing around with the 10 Commandments? (*It is truly interesting that very few people break the 10 Commandments and so they think all is well. What about feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for the lonely?*).

Jesus taught attitudes which deal with how we think about and treat all other human beings. His approach to life is also that we base our reaction to others not on how they treat us BUT rather on how we would like them to treat us. The problem usually comes when others

(Continue on page 8)

BECOMING A HEALING PRESENCE FOR OTHERS

One of the articles I loved preparing in the past, before the Great Fast, was the article on “Becoming a Healing Presence for Others.” I guess I have always thought that being a “healing” presence for others is truly what I am called to be, not just because of my priesthood. I believe that all of us are called to be healing presences to others - people that can truly relieve others of their personal pain, perhaps, of just being alive. Of course this requires, I realize, that I have a strong realization that LIFE, with all of its ups-and-downs, is truly wonderful. I know that I cannot heal others if I haven’t taken the time and effort to heal myself.

Some may say, “What the use?” I believe that the great gift we can give to others is the love of life and the joy of being alive.

I have found, recently, that life can be rather challenging. But I have also found that meeting the challenge with Jesus Christ as my partner makes it all the more possible and more productive of spiritual growth.

The problem, I find, is that in our modern world we are told that we

should not experience pain or discomfort and we should do everything possible to escape it. Just take a Tylenol. Pain is meant to tell us that something is wrong. It is not bad. It is a biological indicator that we should look at what is going on within us physically. Our modern society

believes that pain and suffering are bad. Are they really?

It is all a matter of how we look at it. Pain signals that there is something wrong. It is not there to punish us but, rather, to alert us;

To become a healing person for others, we have to process our ideas about pain and, of course, suffering. We have to want to bring peace to the person we are dealing with.

We have to hope to bring them peace.

Of course we have to want - to see as our vocation - to bring healing to others. Christians have a vocation of bringing healing to others. Why? Because that is exactly what Jesus was all about. We don’t have to cure others. We just have to bring them healing, that is an ability to accept what they are being challenged with. You can do this with the help of the Spirit!



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SPIRITUALITY

What is spirituality? Spirituality refers to the practices and beliefs that individuals or groups hold with regard to their relationship to God - or the Divine, a word that is safer for many. It was not always so: in days of yore the word "spirituality" had an objective meaning that had little to do with the warm-fuzzy that tends to pass for spiritual life in today's market. In the fifth century we first encounter the Latin word *spiritualitas*, which referred to the quality of life imparted by the Holy Spirit to all who believe in Christ. There was an increased reflection upon the role of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification, and it began to be taught that the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned by St. Paul (1 Corinthians 12) was part of spirituality. Spirituality was an area of theological speculation.

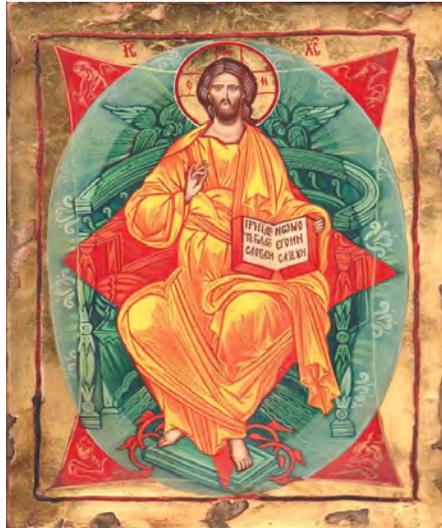
During the Middle Ages the word "spirituality" was used in a variety of ways, but with a narrowing of application from broader theology to "spiritual life" or "spiritual exercises," so that by the twelfth century, spiritual life" came to be seen as identical with interior religion and the devotional practices that fostered it. Later on, Christian writers began to use terms such as "ascetical theology" or "ascetic

life". The Greek word *askesis* means to be in training, and asceticism meant something very active.

The word "spirituality" was formerly used in a specifically Christian sense, but today it is applied to all kinds of religious feelings and practices that are the opposite of Christian teaching. The word has become devalued so much that there are authors who write on "spirituality and sex" or "spirituality and cooking."

Spirituality has become linked in some minds with a positive emotional response to something divine, so if you get your response saying the Jesus Prayer and I get mine by whale watching, this is all right, because it all works on some level. It is perhaps one of the greatest spiritual tragedies of the last thirty years that many Christians have assumed that to become involved in real spirituality, to experience something authentic, they had to go outside their own religious tradition to one of the Eastern religions such as Buddhism or Yoga. They had never been taught that the Christian tradition, both Eastern and Western, had such an experience.

It is my hope, over the next several weeks, to present a clearer picture of what spirituality truly means.



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, April 18, Week of the Myrrh-Bearers - Festal Tone
10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy

3rd PASCHAL WEEK

Monday, April 19 - John the Hermit, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, April 20 - Theodore the Hairshirt Weaver, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, April 21 - Januarius & Others, Bishop-Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Thursday, April 22 - Theodore Sykeot, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Friday, April 23 - George, Great-Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Saturday, April 24 - Sabbas, Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Sunday, April 25, Week of the Paralytic Man - Festal Tone
10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy

(Continued from Living a New Life, page 5)
don't treat us the way that we would like to be treated and so we change our response and treat them as they treat us. We forget that the criterion for responding to others is based on our FAITH and not on their response to us.

This fact, therefore, calls us to live a "new" life, one which truly attempts to imitate Jesus Christ and the way that He dealt with other people. The bottom line: **DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU.** Translated this means: Unconditionally love others!

You might ask: Why should I attempt to live in that manner? For your own sake. It transforms you. It changes you, making you more like the person that God intended when He created you. That, of course, is the meaning and purpose of this earthly life - personal change and transformation.



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

THE BEATITUDES INTERPRETED: GREGORY OF NYSSA

As I suggested in last week's Bulletin and began to share thoughts about the first of the 10 Beatitudes, the first is the most puzzling of all: "How blessed are the poor in spirit: the reign of God is theirs."

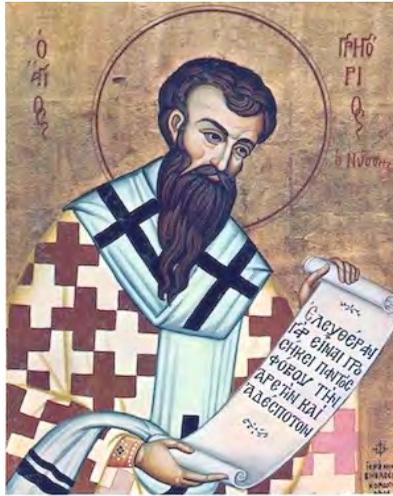
We find, however, instances in the Old Testament of those who have seen God in some form. Isaiah cried, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of the people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" These theophanies are usually interpreted as God revealing Himself in a tangible form while concealing his true essence, which is unknowable, let alone

something we can visualize. Such a view would explain how God could wrestle with Jacob. After his encounter, Jacob proclaimed: "I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." (The Jewish fantasy was that if a person ever saw God face to face he would die). Whether or not Jacob actually wrestled with a manifestation of God or if it was an angel is unclear. (The icon of the Trinity by Rublev depicts God as three angels).

Another example is when Manoah and his wife saw an angel of the Lord. Manoah cried, "We shall surely die, for

we have seen God"

Although these Old Testament passages, and others like them, have been interpreted in many ways, the general consensus of the Holy Fathers and the teaching of the Church remains the same: God, in His essence, is beyond our visual capacity. At. time, however, He does manifest Himself in



ways in which we can see. The clearest example is found, of course, in the incarnation. Theophanies are obviously uncommon. Moreover, they have little to do with Christ's statement: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"

There is another meaning that refers to the present, preceding the time when we shall see him "face to face". But if it is true that, as many of the Fathers taught, we can see God in the present, how is it possible? If the criterion is "purity of heart," what does it mean to be pure of heart and how is it attained? And what does such a transformation mean for our personal lives as well as for the life of our parishes?

Even another, more immediate question comes to mind: Is this transformation available to all Christians or just ascetic men and women living in monasteries or in solitude?

More to follow!

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION: WHO IS JESUS?

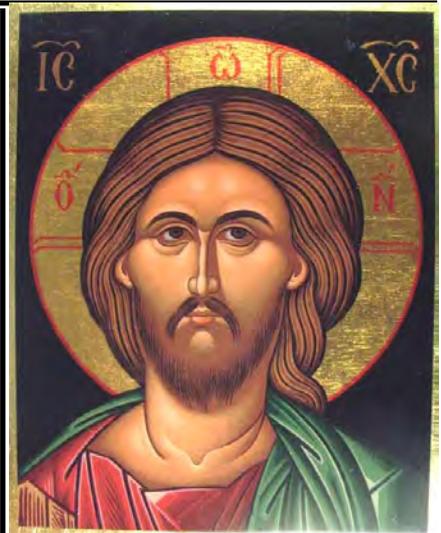
It should be noted that the definition of man as a created being in the image of Jesus, with all the physical and intellectual and spiritual properties and capacities, is because Jesus was a man.

St. Irenaeus wrote this: For in times long past, it was said that man was created after the image of God, but it was not actually shown; for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image man was created. When, however, the Word of God became flesh, He confirmed both the image and the likeness; for He both showed forth the image truly, since He became Himself what was His image; and He re-established the likeness by uniting man to the invisible Father through means of the visible Word.

So for all eternity, God, in the Person of the Son, had united Himself physically to humanity, taking on human flesh and all human beings that were created were made in His image and given the potential to grow in His likeness.

By telling us in ancient Scripture that we were made in His image, God prepared us for the birth of Jesus. He got us ready to believe that someday the Son of God would come and would really be a human being, walking on the earth with the rest of us.

This information, along with all the detailed prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament, made His coming a very well-known thing. So, by the time he came, no one had any excuse to doubt that He was the Son of God. For we have never been ignorant that God would also be a human being, sharing His image with us, **OR SOME WOULD THINK**. The problem: when He came, people wanted more than a model that could teach them to live this earthly life. They wanted someone to rescue them from a life of subjugation. God made man after the image of Jesus. Man and God have the image in common.



Anyone who denies that god's Son is true God, I would like to ask him after what "God's image" he supposes that God made man? We must constantly bear in mind that all things are through the Son. If, therefore, man is created through God the Son after the image of God the Father, he is created also after the image of God the Son; for all admit that the words "after our image and likeness" were spoken to the Son.

Thus God molds man into the image of God, who then reveals Himself as God.

QUESTIONS: Do you see yourself as created in the image of Jesus Christ? If you do, what does it really mean to you?



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, STL, Ph.D.
Vol. 68 No 16 Week of the Myrrh-Bearers April 17-18, 2021

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

One of the last statements that I made in last week's Bulletin was that I believe that many modern people need to learn to not only accept their feelings but to take responsibility for them. Perhaps this is the psychologist speaking. I know that **No one can make me feel the way that I do. I am truly responsible for how I feel. Although others may trigger my true feelings, I am still responsible for my feelings.**

It is important that we learn to do this because feelings are at the heart of where we live. Our thoughts may guide us, our attitudes and opinions may limit or focus us, or decisions may rule out other options and give our lives direction, but our feelings are our motors, our motivators. Feelings give us the energy we need to live life fully. This is one reason that when we begin to run from our feelings, to pretend they are not what they are, and to repress them

into unconsciousness, we usually become either depressed or sick - a state opposite of that of spiritual growth.



Immediately, however, we must distinguish between a Christian approach to feelings and approaches that are common today in the world at large. I am not suggesting that people should act on all their feelings, say anything that comes into their minds, or let their lives be controlled by feelings as the modern slogans "Do your own thing" and "If it feels good, do it" suggest. No, a Christian approach is that we acknowledge all our feelings, feel them fully, and then decide with some moral code what we shall do with them. Therefore, it is important to learn how to get in touch with our feelings in a Christian way so that we can use these "motors" as energy in our quest for spiritual growth and healing. Hopefully this will be helpful for some.

The Myrrh-Bearing Women

The Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women ... reminds us that the love and faithfulness of a few individuals shone brightly in the midst of hopeless darkness. It calls us to ensure that in this world love and faithfulness do not disappear or die out. It judges our lack of courage, our fear, our endless and servile rationalizations. The mysterious Joseph and Nicodemus, and these women who go to the grave at dawn, occupy so little space in the gospels. Precisely here, however, is where the eternal fate of each of us is decided.

Today, I think, we are especially in need of recovering this love and basic human loyalty. For we have entered a time when even these are being discredited by harmful concepts of the person and human life now prevailing in this world. For centuries, the world still had the weak, but still

flickering and shining, glow from that faithfulness, love and co-suffering which was silently present at the sufferings of the Man cast aside by all. And we need to cling, as if to a last thread, to everything in our world that still thrives on the warm light of simple, earthly, human love. Love does not ask about theories and ideologies, but speaks to the heart and soul. Human history has rumbled along, kingdoms have risen and fallen, cultures have been built and bloody wars fought, but what has remained unchanging on earth and in this troubled and tragic history is the bright image of the woman. An image of care, self-giving, love, compassion. Without this presence, without this light, our world, regardless of its successes and accomplishments, would be a world of terror.

Father Alexander Schmemmann