

SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN



Icon of Christ with the Samaritan Woman

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

As we begin the 5th week of our Paschal celebration, our readings are again taken from ACTS, the early history of the Church, and St. John's Gospel. The passage we hear from ACTS tells us of the establishment of the first Christian Community at Antioch and relates to us that it was at Antioch where the followers of Jesus were first called Christian.

The narrative of the Samaritan Woman permits John to further develop the theme of the water of Judaism being replaced by the life-giving water of Christ. The rabbinical comparison of the Torah with water (as cleansing, as satisfying thirst and of promoting life) affords the background of John's teaching. Once again Christ is the fulfillment of what the Law could only promise.

A note on the growing hostility of official Judaism towards Jesus serves as a preface to this account and helps to bring out by contrast the favorable reception that Jesus receives from the Samaritans. The chronology is uncertain, but presumably this relates to a time after John's imprisonment. The resentment aroused by John's activity has now been transferred to Jesus.

Of course it must be remembered that Jesus preached the very same message as John: *Repent - Transform yourselves - for the Kingdom of God is at hand.*

Not only was it unheard of for a



rabbi to speak familiarly with a woman in public but also for a Jew to request water of a Samaritan. Jews considered Samaritans, and therefore their utensils for eating and drinking, unclean. Jesus was untroubled by such scruples; The Gospels frequently record his enlightened attitude toward women and also that on occasion he spoke favorably of Samaritans. One can see why the "established religion" therefore was against Jesus.

Truly the teaching of Jesus is life-giving. Just as one needs "water" to sustain physical life, one needs the teaching of Jesus to sustain spiritual life - that is, of course, if you have been given the gift of faith by God.

One line in this story stands out, I believe. It tells us that the true worshiper must worship God in "Spirit and truth." To worship God in "Spirit" means to live like Jesus lived. That is the truthful way of living. Unconditional love is the true way that humans are called to live.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN TODAY?

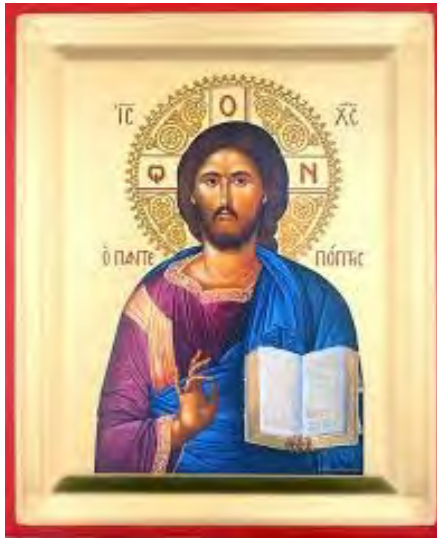
Faith is utterly central to the Christian life. But what does the word mean? In the history of Christianity, it has four primary meanings. The first of these is closest to faith as a “matter of the head.” The remaining three all understand faith as a “matter of the heart.”

One way of looking at these various meanings of faith is to attach a Latin term in order to show its antiquity,

The first is **FAITH AS ASSENSUS**. The meaning of the Latin word *assensus* is suggested by its closest English equivalent: “assent”. This is faith as belief - that is, as giving one’s mental assent to a proposition, as believing that a claim or statement is true. Sometimes called a propositional understanding of faith, it is the dominant meaning today, both with the church and outside it.

But this notion - that Christian faith is primarily about *assensus* about belief, about a “head” matter - is recent. It is illuminating to see how this happened. Two developments account for its dominance in modern Western Christianity.

The first is the Protestant Reformation, which not only emphasized faith, but also produced a number of new denominations. Each



defined itself by distinguishing itself from other Protestants by what they “believed,” that is, by their distinctive doctrines or confessions. Lutherans believed “x”, Presbyterians believed “y”, Baptists believed “z” and so forth. Roman Catholics followed suit, distinguishing themselves by what they believed compared

to what Protestants believed. Christian faith thus became believing the right things, having “right” beliefs instead of “wrong” beliefs.

It must be noted that the Eastern Church did not become involved in this since the Reformation only truly took place in the West.

This development changed the meaning of the word “orthodoxy” (i.e., orthodoxy means, when it is not a capitalized word, authorized or generally accepted theory, doctrine, or practice. Before the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, orthodoxy referred to “right worship” or “correct worship”). If you did the liturgy right, the practice right, you were orthodox. Then, in the aftermath of the Reformation, orthodoxy began to mean “right belief” or “correct belief.” The faith began to mean “believing the right things.”

More to follow!

ST BASIL THE GREAT AND THOUGHTS ON GENESIS

The Genesis narrative resumes with a domestic detail: Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. (The age-old question, “Where did Cain get his wife?”) I would suggest that you return to Genesis in your Bible and pick up the story. This portion is rarely referred to as far as I can tell. We never get much past Adam and Eve and the expulsion from the Garden.

Cain also built a city, which he named after the name of his son, Enoch. The word for city (Hebrew ‘ir) does not necessarily mean a vast metropolis. Any walled settlement would be termed a city. Founding a city was not incompatible with Cain’s life of wandering. His exile did not entail a life of perpetual homelessness, as if he could never remain in the same place, but simply banishment from his life of farming the soil at his home. The text portrays Cain as making a new life for himself with progeny and success. His naming the city after his son reveals Cain’s desire to look to the future and to build for his descendants a new start.

As if stressing the success of Cain’s new life and new line, the narrator recounts his genealogy: to Enoch was

born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered Lamech. This last (the seventh generation from Adam in Cain’s line) was a particularly important figure in human history as offered by the narrator, for the text dwells on him and his power at some length, unlike his predecessors, who do not merit more than passing mention of their names. The text mentions his

two wives, the great accomplishments of his son and his personal power.

Lamech’s actions, including his polygamy, have received a lot of bad press from the commentators. Whether the narrator intends to portray the polygamy in a bad light can be doubted, for the later polygamy of Abraham and Jacob is mentioned without

negative comment. Rather, the fact that Lamech took two wives is mentioned as a sign of his power, wealth and importance. The women’s names, Adah and Zillah, are given in verse 19, since they reappear in Lamech’s boast a few verses later.

Think about how much effort was put into creating this Genesis story. It, obviously, gives the appearance of being history, or does it? It presents a real challenge to us.



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



CHOOSING TO LIVE A NEW LIFE

As you can tell, this is an ever-evolving article. I am at a point where I am thinking about the fact that I must “CHOOSE” to embrace a new life if I truly want to spiritually grow. This means that I must freely choose to embrace personal transformation and change.

The only way that I can spiritually grow is if I embrace a deliberate program of personal spiritual growth.

Of course this raises the first very important questions: *Do I want to grow spiritually? Do I see the importance of spiritual growth? Do I realize that I*



have to spiritually grow if I want to come to a real and true meaning and purpose of this life?

One of the problems I have encountered in working with people during these past 55 years is that few, if any, really understand that life, as God has created it, requires that I engage in a program of “spiritual growth” and “personal change.” People don’t like change, I understand this. But change is written into our very DNA. Life is all about change. We must freely choose to embrace change *(Continued on page 8)*

HAVE YOU NOTICED

I don’t know if you have noticed, I have been attempting to use a wide variety of Eastern Iconography in the Bulletin. We have a abundance of different styles and content. I hope that this truly enhances your understanding of the Eastern Church and her use of Icons.

It has been said that Icons are windows into the next dimension - portals by which we have a glimpse of what is yet to come. They are also statements about our history. The Icons we use represent not only persons who

actually lived and are alive in the next dimension but also events that actually took place and are taking place right now.

One of the unique approaches of the Eastern Church is that in God’s Kingdom there is no time and so Jesus is BEING BORN into our world, He is LIVING in our world, SUFFERING AND DYING in our world, and, of course, BEING RAISED FROM THE DEAD in our world. In God’s world, all things happen in the present moment.

BECOMING A HEALING PRESENCE FOR OTHERS

As I go back and read what I have written about becoming a healing person, I realize that for the past several weeks I have also emphasized in my sermons what a healing person Jesus was. I continue to marvel at the stories in the New Testament which repeatedly picture Jesus as reaching out to others in need and helping them. He is a true example of what it means to be a healing person.

Now what is even more interesting to me is that when I attempt to be a healing person, I really heal myself. In fact, when I attempt to live like Jesus, I seem to grow and change. When I attempt to express love to others, I discover that I am loved.

I truly believe that we are placed in the life situations that we experience so that we might grow. Without the experiences we have, we would probably never change or grow.

I truly believe, however, that it is essential that we consciously and deliberately choose to be a "healing person." I fully realize, however, that many times we may not feel that others are making any attempt to be "healing to us" and therefore seem to be reticent in our attempts to become

a healing person.

I think that we must remember that the most spiritual growth usually comes when we choose to live like Jesus and not base our response to others on how they treat us. The growth comes when we can make the decision to love, even though we may be hated or disregarded. The act of choosing to love, despite how we are treated, makes the difference and, I truly believe, makes the difference.

Choose to live in accord with your beliefs and how you think God calls you to live. You will never regret it since you will find the spiritual growth that only enriches your life and never diminishes it.

I know that many may be afraid to live in this manner because

they feel that others may take advantage of them. Remember, no one can take advantage of us if we don't allow them to do so. We are in control of our own feelings.

The main thing is to attempt to live a "authentic" life - a life that reflects who you desire to be and become in this world. Do you want to leave behind good memories and people saying:

That person was a great person.



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SPIRITUALITY

Good spirituality keeps us balanced in our relationship with God, others and the material world. Contrary to what some would have you believe, Christianity is a practical religion concerned with helping us overcome sin, draw closer to God, and become more like Him, so that we can bring others to Him. It has nothing to do with “pie in the sky by and by.” Christianity, I truly believe, attempt to help us learn how to live this earthly existence in a manner that helps us to gain the great benefit from the experience. Also, Christianity is, in a way, a materialistic religion in the sense that it is concerned about the entire material cosmos and its transformation. The Eastern Church is not about saving us *from* the world, but saving us *in* the world, using material things as a means for God to give us divine life and grace. The creation should be diaphanous (i.e., light, delicate, and translucent). We should see the presence of the Kingdom through it, but it is always a solid reality.

Spirituality, therefore, is obviously and purposefully centered where we are. Even genuine mystics need to be concerned with seeking to know God's

will in order to do it; otherwise they are just wrapped up in an emotional experience that ends in a kind of quietism. This might fulfill their personal needs, but is of little real use to anyone else. Eastern spirituality deals with the practical living out of the gospel of Jesus Christ through practices such as prayer, fasting, almsgiving and so forth, which Jesus taught His followers to do.

Spirituality creates a firm context within which to work out our salvation; the context of living in Christ's Body, His Church, building our lives on the foundations of worship, prayer and sound doctrine. Genuine spirituality prevents us from wasting our time trying

to reinvent the wheel of doctrine, so that we don't wander around trying to figure out what we are supposed to believe. Instead we can concentrate on the task at hand: growing in Christ so that we can “find out what is truly acceptable to the Lord.”

Eastern spirituality is all about trying to make God's Kingdom real in the present moment by how we freely choose to love and treat others. Its all about learning how to spiritually grow in the here and now!



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 Drobný
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, May 2 - Week of the Samaritan Woman - Festal Tone
10:00 AM + Mary Mihalko; Kotlinski Family

5th PASCHAL WEEK

Monday, May 3, Passing of Theodosius of the Cave, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, May 4 - Pelagia, Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, May 5 - Irene, Great-Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Thursday, May 6 - Job, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Friday, May 7 - Appearance of the Sign of the Cross
No Service Scheduled

Saturday, May 8 - John, Apostle and Evangelist
No Service Scheduled

Sunday, May 9 - Week of the Man Born Blind
10:00 AM + Mary Dicky & Anne Kusher; John & Janet Dicky

(Continued from page 5 - Choosing to Live a New Life)

if we are to derive all possible benefit from this earthly existence. Our life on earth is designed to help us grow and to actualize the potential that we have for becoming truly one of God's Children, to truly become more like Jesus Christ. As you have heard me say before, we are created to grow in our likeness of Jesus, who is the image, in human form, of God Who is Creator, Redeemer and Spirit or Actualizer. We are here to create a better world in the small area within which we have influence. We must always ask ourselves these primary questions: *Is my world a better place because of me? Do I make God's Kingdom more real by the way that I live and treat others?*

We must become convinced that we have a role to play in God's ongoing creation of the universe. All creation, by the way, is ongoing. It is not static. It is truly dynamic. What role do I play?



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

THE BEATITUDES INTERPRETED: GREGORY OF NYSSA

I ended this article in the last issue by sharing that I must attempt to cultivate “purification of heart” which can deliver my soul from subjection to passion and, consequently, from the illusions generated by passionate attachment to exterior things. As Thomas Merton said, “When the eye is clear and “single” that is to say disinterested - having only one intention, then it can see things as they are.

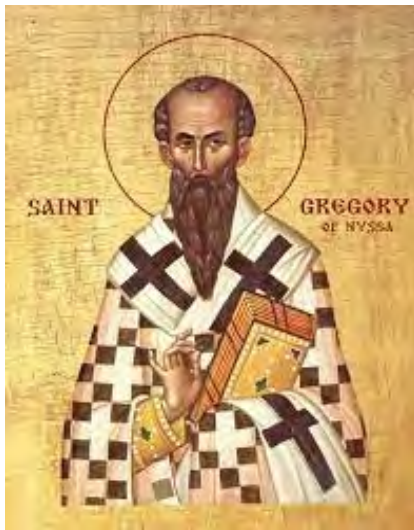
In other words, when we see things as *they are*, we see the divine, we see God! This vision is not of His essence but of His image as it is stamped through all creation, and most perfectly in the human person. Through personal asceticism and through the grace of God, our vision is transformed.

Hopefully this makes sense to my readers. If we look and behold creation as it is and not how we may think about it, we will find God. His image is stamped on every living thing and all things are living, believe it or not, even “stones.” It is just a different way of living. But the entire universe is in a mode of constant change. Why? Because God is dynamic and not static.

God’s glory is manifested in all creation. But is only through the purifying of our hearts that we are able to see all of creation as it truly is: a

reflection of God’s image. (In the case of some people, especially the saints, we see also the *likeness* of God). St. Gregory of Nyssa teaches that “the evil that has been poured all around the nature bearing the Divine Image has rendered useless to you this wonderful thing, that lies hidden under vile coverings. If, therefore, you wash off by

a good life the filth that has been stuck on your heart like plaster, the Divine Beauty will again shine forth in you.” Thomas Hopko writes, “The pure in heart see God everywhere - in themselves, in others, in everyone and everything. They know that the ‘heavens declare the glory of God and the earth shows forth the work of His hands.’



For the pure in heart the image of God can be seen in all created things. In the human person, however, we are able to see the image *and* to greater and lesser degrees, the likeness of God. At the same time, we can, through purification and God’s grace, grow in the likeness of God.

We can grow in the likeness of God, as seen in the Person of Jesus, because we have the assistance of God’s own Spirit Who is within us. To grow in the likeness of God - to actually actualize the potential we have, we must cooperate with God’s Spirit.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION: WHO IS JESUS?

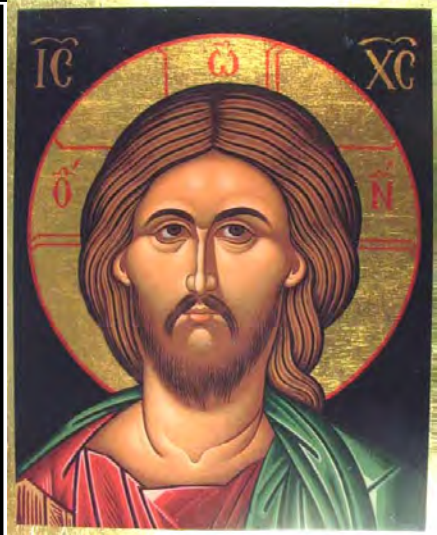
Before God's incarnation as a human being in the Person of Jesus, the Law wasn't bringing people the righteousness they had hoped for. It just showed them that, by struggling to be good on their own, they could never become righteous and please God. So they became disillusioned and actually grew more sinful than before, as people often do when they lose hope. St. Paul says they sort of "relaxed" into more sin than ever.

The Bible tells us the reason for having the Law was to make people realize their need for the Savior - to get them in the mood for repentance and belief when the Lord Jesus appeared. Paul says that "the Law was our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

Think about it! They had the Law and yet their disregard for so many other human beings kept growing. They did not see that other humans were the source of their growth in a relationship with God. God let the people struggle for a long time with trying to restore themselves by the Law, so that they'd finally discover they couldn't save themselves just by knowing about sin and trying to be good, and would become humble enough to accept Christ when He came.

John Chrysostom wrote: God waited a long time, so that after they were by every argument clearly convicted of their inability to help themselves, he then saved them by his grace through Christ. At least a portion of mankind had to be disposed to accept the teachings of Jesus. (By the way, not all people that heard Jesus preach, followed Him. Also remember the number of people who yelled "crucify Him" was not inconsiderable).

Before we can have any chance at all of salvation and happiness, we all need to lose every illusion of saving ourselves through any kind of legalism or good behavior, or brilliant analysis or



social regime or allegiance to an impressive prophet or whole group of prophets, or though anything merely human and therefore lacking the power to change human nature.

We have to stop and think. God kept sending prophets to help people change their minds and hearts. It just did not seem to work despite how convincing the prophet was. God sought to form a mind conscious of righteousness, so that being convinced in that time of our unworthiness and having made it manifest that in ourselves we were unable to enter into the kingdom of god, we might through the power of God be made able.

More to come!



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, STL, Ph.D.
Vol. 68 No 18 Week of the Samaritan Woman Mayh 1-2, 2021

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

In the last issue of this article I ended by sharing some thoughts about “anger” and “angry feelings.” I also suggested that unconscious angry feelings will somehow find a way to be expressed without benefit of the light of consciousness, and therefore it will result in some form of unwholesome behavior. It may be expressed in the form of backbiting, slander, sarcasm, judgment, building walls in relationships, bitterness, in some expression of anger toward self like depression, or even after a while it may build up to verbal or physical violence. These reactions are the necessary consequence of repressing emotions like anger, and they are the very opposite of the spiritual growth we seek.

The Scriptures also urge us to this kind of emotional honesty because it is spiritually as well as psychologically healthy. In his letter to the

Ephesians, Paul gives practical advice on handling, as an example, our anger. He begins by explaining our responsibility to tell the truth to each other (in psychological terms we would say we should not repress our true thoughts but rather find an acceptable way to express them): “So from now on, there must be no more lies: you must speak the truth to one another since we are all parts of one another”. And he links that ideal immediately with being honest about difficult emotions like anger, for

in the next sentence he says: “Even if you are angry you must not sin: never let the sun set on your anger or else you will give the devil a foothold.”

The key: never accuse the other person of causing you to be angry but, rather, admit that you are angry when the other person does something or says something. Own your own anger and don’t blame it on someone else. You are responsible for your feelings.



The Samaritan Woman

The Fourth Gospel, attributed to Saint John the Evangelist, is used exclusively from Easter until Pentecost for the Sunday readings. The first chapter of John's Gospel is the proclamation used for the Divine Liturgy on Easter itself. This week, we are reminded of the story of Christ's encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob, and thereby Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament. In one of the many unique stories of the Fourth Gospel not found in the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark or Luke), Jesus reveals himself as Messiah to this woman of Samaria and talks with her about the "water that I will give will become ... a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."

In the early days of His ministry, Jesus travels back and forth between Galilee and Jerusalem, and must pass through Samaria. The Samaritans

were outcast Jews because they were not subject to the Babylonian exile of the Israelites from other provinces. Therefore, when Jesus talks with this Samaritan woman, His disciples are surprised and in shock that He would carry on a conversation with a woman at the well, let alone a Samaritan. But as the story is explained, the woman's testimony about Jesus spreads through the nearby town, and because of her many come to hear His teachings. After hearing His word, they come to believe in Him, and proclaim Him "the Savior of the world." (Jn 4:42)

With water as the focal point of this encounter, we are once again reminded of our Baptism, and that Christ's Baptism is that of "eternal life" through "living water."

Archbishop Vsevolod of Scopelos