

SUNDAY OF THE MAN BORN BLIND



*Icon of the Gospel of the Man Born Blind*

## A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

As we begin this sixth week of our celebration of Pascha, Easter, we hear passages from ACTS as well as St. John's Gospel, a pattern that we have repeatedly encountered during this Pentecost Period. The passage from ACTS relates Paul's imprisonment in Philippi and how the Lord rescued him and his companion from a very difficult situation. In the process Paul brought others into the Church.

I believe that this shows us that the way we handle challenges in life can make a difference for us and others. The way that Paul responded allowed the jailer to embrace the way of Jesus.

The passage from John's Gospel relates the cure of a man born blind and how he was given sight by Jesus. This is one of three miracle stories which include the use of "water" as a medium by which the miracle and cure are delivered.

This coming week concludes our post-Resurrection religious education period of the newly initiated Christians into the Early Church. The week that will follow relates to the first writing of the Nicene Creed and is the culmination of religious education.

During this coming week we also celebrate the Feast of the glorious Ascension of Jesus back to the Father. (The feast of the Ascension is on Thursday, May 13th. We will be celebrating the Liturgy on that day at 7:00 PM and live-stream it.).

The passage from ACTS gives us an



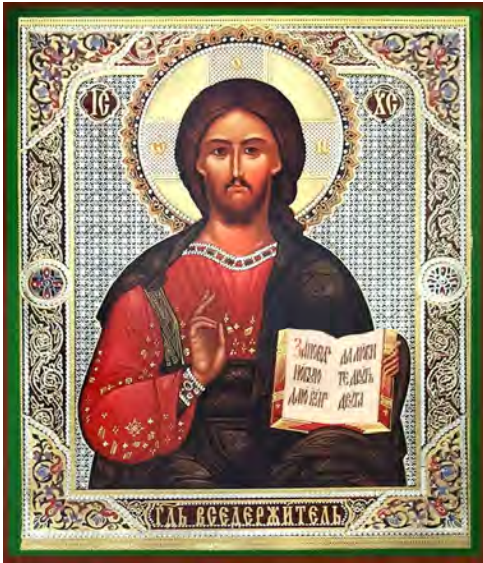
idea of how people responded to Paul and the Good News when he did not "fight back" from being unlawfully arrested (perhaps a good lesson for our modern society). Because of the way that he handled his imprisonment, he gained additional followers to Jesus Christ and freedom. .

The Gospel miracle story ends our period of specific religious education for early converts to Christianity as I have shared. Again it is a story of a person who, because he responds in a positive manner to Jesus Christ, is cured of a disability he was born with.

This raises the question: *How do we respond to Jesus? Do we request that He does what we want?* The man born blind didn't request anything of Him. I am sure, if we really take time to think about it, Jesus constantly offers us an opportunity to respond to His offer to help us. How do we respond?

All of this is shared with us to make our "religion" more sensible and reasonable. Religion, I must assert, is not magical!

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN TODAY?



Where I'm at in this article is the four meanings of faith. There was the influence of the Protestant Reformation in the West as well as the rise of the "scientific method" which did not greatly influence the Church in the East.

The second development that impacted Christianity was the birth of modern science and scientific ways of knowing in the Enlightenment of the seventeenth century. The West, it must be remembered, developed in a much different way than the East. The Enlightenment has pervasively shaped modern Western culture. Think about it. We believe in the West that scientific data is more accurate about things than belief. The truth of the matter is that scientific data is constantly changing. On

the one hand, the Enlightenment identified truth with factuality: truth is that which can be verified as factual. Modern Western culture is the only culture in human history that has made this identification. On the other hand, the Enlightenment called into question the factuality of parts of the Bible and of the many traditional Christian teachings.

The effect on the meaning of "faith" and "belief" has been extraordinary. For many, Christians faith began to mean believing questionable things to be true - as assenting to the truth of claims that have become "iffy". According to a modern American dictionary, this is the most widespread contemporary understanding of "belief." The first definition of "belief" is "an opinion or conviction" and then, as an example, it provides a mistaken belief, "the belief that the earth is flat." Belief is about believing a opinion contrary to evidence, contrary to what reasonable people know - to data.

Many use the meaning of believing as: "When you're not sure, or when you don't know." There are somethings you know, other things you're not sure about, and so you can only believe. Believing and knowing are contrasted. Faith is what you turn to when knowledge runs out. Even your strong, faith is what you need when beliefs and knowledge conflict.

Thus, for many modern people, faith as *assensus* has become primary precisely because the central claims of Christianity have become questionable. For many today, faith means believing in spite of difficulties, believing when things are "iffy".

## ST BASIL THE GREAT AND THOUGHTS ON GENESIS

I sincerely hope that this article still has some attraction to my readers. I know it can be tedious, but I hope that as you look at Genesis, you adopt an entirely different meaning to this book of the Old Testament. I do believe that this book has greatly influenced all of Christianity. Why? Because we have taken it as “historical”. The history of the beginning of humankind. It was never meant to be historical. When we take it as history, it truly skews our understanding of the beginning of creation and humankind.

In the last issue I was sharing about the ongoing growth of humankind. I shared with you Lamech’s actions, the son of Cain, and, of course, his offspring.

The biggest question that must be raised is how did this all take place. If Adam and Even only had sons, how did all this progeny come about. I will not address this question and choose to skip over this portion of the text.

We see that the sacred text democratizes and ascribes to the common man an exalted nobility. In the ancient world, men were created to feed and care for the gods and their temples; in Genesis, men were created to rule as God’s image and

representatives. In much of the ancient world, gifts, such as agriculture, music and metallurgy, were gifts that gods gave to men. In Genesis they are the result of human invention and industry. That such gifts all came from the sons of one man shows his tremendous importance.

Lamech’s power also is expressed in his boast, which he phrased as a

song to his two wives. We see here the parallelism that characterizes all Hebrew poetry, such as the Psalms. The stich Adah and Zillah, hear my voice parallels the stich you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say. This parallelism means that we should interpret the young man as being the same person as the man mentioned just before, so that Lamech

killed not two different people, but one. The word rendered here for young man is the Hebrew *yeled*; it need not refer to a child or person of but a few years.

Now I must admit that this will make little sense if you are not following along in Genesis from the Old Testament. I’ve almost thought that I have come to the end of this article since if you don’t have Genesis in hand, this will mean very little. I do, however, believe this is all very fascinating,



# St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



## CHOOSING TO LIVE A NEW LIFE

It is my truest belief that our personal “choice” is critical for our growth in faith. As I think about it, I know that we cannot necessarily prove many of the things that we say are a part of our faith

For example, how can we ever prove that Jesus was our God incarnate? Sure we can look at how He lived and what He taught but can we truly

come to the conclusion that He was God and Man and that His Godhead



did not dictate how He lived. I think the fantasy is, as was a heresy, is that He was more God than man and therefore could live and die as He did. He lived as a good man who cared for others because He was God. This is a heresy! He lived as He did because He was a man Who embraced belief in a “loving” God Who only wants us to come to a true understanding of life. He had no “hidden agenda”! He didn’t come *(Continued on page 8)*

## MOTHERS’ DAY

I would, on this 2021 Day dedicated to Mothers, wish, on behalf of the entire parish family, BEST WISHES to the Mothers and Women of our Parish. Truly God has assigned a special role to women in His Kingdom. He calls them to bring His gentle kindness and love into existence. To both men and women He has assigned a role to help make His Kingdom real. To you, dear women, He calls upon you to make His loving kindness gentle and



real. Yours is truly a magnificent role. It is meant to make real the gentleness of the Creator’s love. His is a gentle lover, Who consoles and generates a peaceful existence. It is not aggressive or self-asserting but, rather, simple and loving. We thank you for bringing that aspect of God’s love into our world. We need to know of the gentleness of His love and you can truly provide that for us.

**GOD GRANT YOU MANY YEARS.**

## BECOMING A HEALING PRESENCE FOR OTHERS

I have shared many thoughts about what it means to be a “healing person” to others. I truly believe, that we, like the early Christians, are meant to be “healing persons” to others. We are called to assuage their fears of death, the challenges of life, and to come to a deeper understanding of the meaning and purpose of life. I truly believe that if we come to a real understanding of life, we will achieve internal peace. When we truly know why we have been called into existence, life truly changes. All of a sudden we see life in a much different way. We are called to “spiritually grow” to come to a real and true understanding of why we have been created.

While this may seem simple, it is much more difficult than we think. Do you, as you are reading this article, know why you are here at this present moment? Does it make sense that you are here in the present moment? You and I could have come at any moment in time. Why now?

The answer is, of course, a mystery. God has called us into existence at this present time since He knew, from all eternity, that we are capable of making

His Kingdom real right now.

I would stress that He knows we are capable of making His Kingdom present in the present moment. The problem is, as I see it, whether we are capable of doing what God knows us to be capable of doing?

Again it is all dependent upon our own personal choices. God, since He gave us the power to make personal choices, accepts our personal decisions. A part of the spiritual growth process is to begin to believe that we can be instrumental in bringing about God’s Kingdom in the limited area in which we live.

Are we willing to do whatever we can to bring God’s love for us and other humans into existence by the way that we treat and think about others? The work of making the Father’s

love real in the here and now is a cooperative adventure with us, Jesus Christ and God’s Spirit. We are called to embark on this adventure with God so that others may know of His love. Our cooperation is essential.

Our cooperation, as you might guess, is based on our belief that God is with us and that, because He is with us, we are a part of His plan for the salvation of humankind.



# A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SPIRITUALITY

Use whatever word you wish; doctrine, teaching or tradition, they are all important to a healthy spirituality. The traditional Eastern Church's teaching about the Holy Trinity, the INCARNATION and the Church makes it possible for us to really know God. They are so important because what we believe about God is going to affect how we think about Him, and thinking wrongly can really mess up an attempt to develop any kind of relationship with Him. Eastern Christians are concerned about right believing, or correct doctrine, because we learned long ago that ignoring the directional signals leads us not to some kind of freedom but to a colossal train wreck.

For example, many people today like to think of Jesus in very human terms, placing him in all kinds of modern settings - what would Jesus drive or would He work at Wall-Mart - supposedly in order to get a better handle on how to understand His teachings today. Do the Nativity scene in modern dress and the pretense that He is just living next door to us, help? This results in a dandy heresy known as Arianism: seeing Jesus as someone who is human enough, with some divine attributes,

but not quite God. This heresy has been popular since the third century, and we slip into it all the time, The problem here is that a Jesus who isn't God can't really do much for us, other than invite us to barbeques and help us hang-up the outdoor lights at Christmas. He certainly cannot save us, since he is not equal to the Father as God, he has no power to do so. If this kind of vision shapes your spirituality it makes having a relationship with Christ somewhat silly and sentimental rather than saving.

On the other hand, perhaps you think of Jesus in another way, always looking at Him as if through a stained glass window - a kind of spiritual shadow whose genuine humanity is difficult to accept. We don't think of Him as eating or combing His hair, or doing any of those day-to-day human things He would have had to do if He really took on human life and flesh. Every time we say the Nicene Creed, we state that Jesus Christ was "incarnate" of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man"; but this remains an academic concept for many. So what do we really mean and believe when we say these words? What does it mean that He IS GOD AND MAN?



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

## **6th PASCHAL WEEK**

**Monday, May 10 - Simon the Zealot, Apostle**  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Tuesday, May 11 - Cyril & Methodius, Apostles to the Slavs**  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Wednesday, May 12 - Epiphanius & Germanus, Bishops**  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Thursday, May 13 - Feast of the Ascension**  
**7:00 PM - Service of the Feast.**

**Friday, May 14 - Isidore, Martyr**  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Saturday, May 15 - Pachomius the Great, Venerable**  
*No Service Scheduled*

**Sunday, May 16 - Week of the Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council**  
**10:00 AM + John Dicky Sr; John & Janet Dicky - 98th Birthday.**

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

to deceive us into thinking that life is about either doing things to go to hell or to heaven, that is - reward or punishment. Rather, He came to show us how to live in order to gain the greatest benefit from earthly life. Earthly life is but "one stop" in our eternal "growth opportunity" as humans. Our growth, however, during this lifetime truly influences our opportunities in the next lifetime.

God realized from all eternity that humans would have a distorted understanding of life. So He came Himself, in the Person of the Son, Jesus, to show us how to live. His plan was, from the very beginning, that we, because we were given "free will", would learn to use our free will to spiritually grow. God gave us "free will." He, by necessity, must show us how to use that free will to spiritually grow. The result is, of course, free human beings returning His love for them. Does this make any sense?



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



## THE BEATITUDES INTERPRETED: GREGORY OF NYSSA

When we talk about “seeing” God, we are not referring to some profound visual experience of divine light (though many saints have said this is possible). It is instead a transformation of our “inner eye,” seeing God through His imprint and image in all of creation. This “vision” is progressive and usually does not come at once. It is not a state at which one arrives, never to lose his or her sight again. We as Christians prepare our hearts through purification but must wait ultimately on God to open our eyes for however long He chooses. ‘

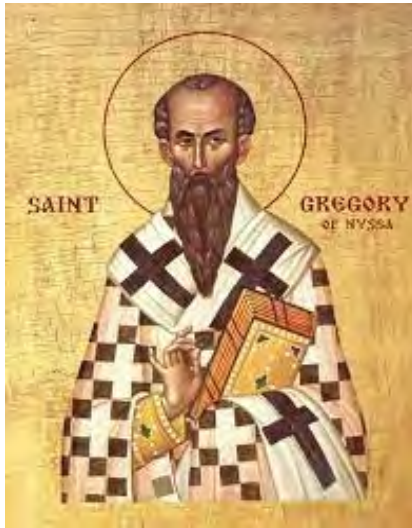
To find an example of such a visual transformation we must look no further than the Transfiguration of our Lord. This event has been interpreted by the Fathers as occurring because the disciples’ eyes were opened, not because the Lord momentarily changed. St. Gregory Palamas states that

the transformation of our human nature, its deification and transfiguration - were these not accomplished in Christ from the start, from the moment in which He assumed our nature? Thus He was divine before, but He bestowed at the time of His Transfiguration a divine power

upon the eyes of the apostles and enabled them to look up and see for themselves.

Palamas corroborates his argument by quoting St. John of Damascus: “Christ is transfigured, not by putting on some quality He did not possess previously, nor by changing into something He never was before, but by revealing to His disciples what He truly was, in opening their eyes and in giving sight to those who were blind.” Thus Christ is not changed into something new; instead His disciples are able to see His true glory, which is revealed when their eyes see beyond the veil of His flesh that He took upon Himself in His Incarnation.

Perhaps the one description that describes most succinctly this transformation is given to us by St. Maximus the Confessor. He writes that Peter, James and John crossed over from the flesh to the spirit, having already put off their carnal life. the Spirit brought about a transformation of their sensible energies and stripped away the veils of passion from their intellectual faculty. Having been cleansed by the Spirit in their psychic and bodily senses, they were taught the spiritual principles of the mysteries that had been exhibited to them.



## AN IMPORTANT QUESTION: WHO IS JESUS?

One Father of the Church wrote: "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". The only thing that God desires is that we become conscious of Who we are in His Kingdom and that we freely return His love.

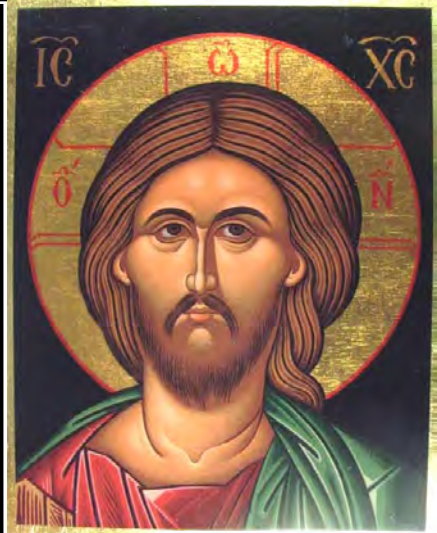
What makes us unable to save ourselves is the weaknesses that are a part of us and which need to be transformed. In order to be able to understand and embrace God's Kingdom to its fullest, we have to come to a much deeper understanding of the life that God is sharing with us.

Although created with the ability to only think in a limited way, God gives us the opportunities in life to strengthen our thinking by cooperating with His Spirit. In this manner we are "free human beings" who can spiritually grow and learn how to open our hearts and minds to the reality in which we find our existence.

To become righteous and joined with God, we need a coupling - someone who fits with God on one side and with man on the other. Then things from the nature of God can flow through the coupling and into us. Only Jesus fits perfectly with God and perfectly with us. He's our coupling. He took on our human nature

that He might unite what is man by nature to what is in the nature of the Godhead. He assumed the human body that, having renewed it as its Framer, he might make it god in himself, and thus introduce us into the kingdom of heaven after his likeness. For we could not have been made god unless the Son of God were very God.

Think about the wisdom of God when He chose to



create humankind as He did. He creates in His image with the ability to freely choose to spiritually grow. He infuses within us "free will" so that we can feel good about ourselves and have the ability to freely return His love. We are unique in His creation. We can say that "if any man is in Christ he is a new creation". He is no longer just man; he's man with God living in Him. Because of Jesus, the Spirit of God can flow into us and unite with us this uniting with the indwelling God is accomplished by prayer and by making every attempt to live like Jesus. Think about the love that God has for us that He created us in the way that He did.



# THE EASTERN HERALD

## СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, STL, Ph.D.  
Vol. 68 No 19                      Week of the Man Born Blind                      May 8-9, 2021

### VARIOUS ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

One of the aspects of Spiritual Growth that each of us must address is by learning to effectively deal with our emotions and feelings, especially with our anger. Paul says that the way we sin with our anger is by keeping it inside us longer than to the end of that day on which we first felt it. We must find a way to express our anger or else we are giving the devil a foothold. A foothold to what, we may ask? We are giving him a foothold in our lives to accomplish all the works of repressed anger. Those sins will come as a necessary consequence to “letting the sun set on” our anger.

But Paul continues, saying that there are limits on how we can express that anger: “Never have grudges against others, or lose your temper, or raise your voice to anybody, or call each other names, or allow any sort of spitefulness.” Often, when we resist the notion of acknowledging and feeling all of our feelings, it is not

because the feeling is “wrong” (no feelings are wrong, they just are; what we do with them may be right or wrong), but because when we think of the feeling, in this case, anger, we judge it by its companions or by the way we have expressed it in the past. If our anger is usually accompanied by spitefulness or name-calling or screaming, it is the companions we are judging to be wrong, not the anger itself. Our expression of feelings may need to be redirected, but acknowledging our feelings and expressing them properly will always be necessary to psychological health and spiritual growth.

Now is the time that I would ask you, my readers, to think about how you express your anger. What happens when you get angry? Do you find an appropriate way to express your anger without blaming someone else for your anger? Take time to do this now.



## *A Link to Baptism*

The cure of the blind man also symbolizes mankind's means for its recovery from its blindness. It symbolizes the Sacrament of Baptism. Baptism is called holy enlightenment. Those who have been recently baptized are called the newly enlightened. This gospel from Saint John was read in the ancient Church on Holy Saturday when Catechumens were baptized. As this man is cured of his blindness when he washes in the waters of the pool of Siloam, as Jesus tells him to do, so are we brought out of darkness into a new life when we are baptized as Christ instructed us to be. Jesus restores His creation, mankind, with the potential to become what it was meant to be before the fall of Adam.

We also hear in the reading that after this man was cured many of those who knew him before did not recognize him. He is still the same man

but something has significantly changed about him. He is no longer blind. So when we are illuminated we are also new persons, though our outward appearance might be the same. To symbolize this newness a white garment is put on us to show the purity with which we start this new existence. We must, however, become different and unrecognizable in our inward and outward actions also. We must manifest our new existence to those around us through these actions. We must radiate this new found light to others by the way we live our lives. We must say to the world, "I am he who was blind but now my eyes are opened." Credit must be given to Him who has cured us of our darkness by living our lives according to the lessons of the illumination we have received and the continued guidance we get with the reception of the Holy Spirit.