

SUNDAY OF THE FATHERS OF THE FIRST COUNCIL



ΠΙΣΤΩ ΕΙΣ ΕΝΑ ΚΥΡΙΟΝ ΠΑΤΕΡΑ ΠΑΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡΑ, ΠΟΙΗΤΗΝ ΟΥΡΑΝΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΓΗΣ
ΟΡΑΤΩΝ ΤΕ ΠΑΝΤΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΑΟΡΑΤΩΝ. ΚΑΙ ΕΙΣ ΕΝΑ ΚΥΡΙΟΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΝ ΥΙΟΝ
ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΓΕΝΕΤΗ, ΟΝ ΕΚ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΤΕΡΟΣ ΓΕΜΘΕΝΤΑ ΤΩ ΑΙΩΝΩ
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ΠΗΣ ΑΙΤΑ ΣΑΥΡΩΘΕΝΤΑ ΤΩ ΥΠΕΡ ΗΜΩΝ ΕΠΙ ΠΟΝΤΙΣ ΠΙΛΑΤΟΥ
ΚΑΙ ΠΑΘΟΝΤΑ, ΚΑΙ ΤΑΦΕΝΤΑ...

Icon of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea

A REFLECTION ON THE READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

This week we completed our Easter celebration with the celebration of the Feast of the Ascension. This weekend we remember the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. Our readings are taken from ACTS and also John's Gospel.

ACTS recounts Paul "good-bye" to the Church in Ephesus. He ended his career there in the same way Jesus ended his earthly ministry: he commended his followers "to the Lord, and to that gracious word of His which can enlarge you and give you a share among all who are consecrated to Him".

The passage from John's Gospel also relates some of Jesus' final words to His disciples. He felt that His work had been completed and so He said: "Father, the hour has come...inasmuch as you have given Me authority over all mankind, that I may bestow eternal life on those You gave Me".

The redactors of the Gospel then inserted this phrase: "Eternal life is this: to know You, the only true God, and Him Whom You have sent, Jesus Christ." True knowledge of God results in eternal life.

In both accounts, Jesus and Paul exhort their followers to embrace the revelation - the Good News brought from God by Jesus - that has the power to enrich human life. If you follow the "Way of Jesus" you find personal strength, internal peace and courage to face the challenges of life and to grow

from your encounters with these



from your encounters with these challenges. Indeed the Church grew by leaps and bounds when it decided to tackle a most important question: WHO IS JESUS. After 325 years of trying to answer this question in many and various ways, the Church decided, with the strong support of Emperor Constantine I, to address the issue of the teachings of Arius of Alexandria that affirmed that **Christ is not divine but a created being.**

This began a struggle in the Church which lasted until 451 CE and the convening of the Council of Chalcedon which reasserted and rephrased the teachings of Nicaea (several Councils had intervened which dealt with other heresies about Jesus). It stated: "Jesus is the same perfect in godhead, the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man". This is, perhaps, the Church's greatest doctrine and dogma.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN TODAY?

I ended this article in the last issue by suggesting that the meaning of faith as *assensus* is very different from the modern meaning. Imagine for the moment what *assensus* meant in the Christian Europe of the Middle Ages. Most people took the truth of Christianity and the Bible for granted. It was the conventional wisdom of the time. There was no conflict between Christianity and science. In that setting, faith as *assensus* was effortless, and the emphasis was thus on the other meanings of faith. Indeed, in the most common modern sense of the word “faith” means accepting the Christian vision of the way things are. But now, faith, as *assensus* has become effortful. You have to “think about it.”

The opposite of faith as *assensus* has both milder and stronger forms. The milder form is doubt, the stronger form is disbelief. If you have doubts, you don't have much faith. And disbelief is the absence of faith. And if one thinks that “belief” is what God wants from us, then doubt and disbelief are experienced as sinful.

So it was for me as an adolescent I experienced my doubts and disbeliefs as I prayed for forgiveness of my sins. Most often, I ended any real internal



debate with words from the gospel of Mark: “I believe; help my unbelief.”

This understanding of faith is very widespread, so pervasive that for men and women it's hard to see the faith could mean anything else. But it puts the emphasis in the wrong place and thus distorts the meaning of Christian faith.

Christian faith is about belief. A rather odd notion when you think about it. It suggests that what God really cares about is the beliefs in our heads - as if “believing the right things” is what God is looking for. Therefore having “correct beliefs” is what will save us. If we have “incorrect beliefs,” we will not be saved since God is looking for “correct beliefs,” if we can even identify what they are. If you have “incorrect beliefs,” you may be in trouble. It's remarkable to think that God cares so much about “beliefs.”

Moreover, when you think about it, faith as belief is relatively impotent, relatively powerless. You can believe all the right things and still be in bondage. You can believe all the right things and still be miserable. You can still be relatively unchanged.

ST BASIL THE GREAT AND THOUGHTS ON GENESIS

It has dawned me, as I have continued to present ideas about the Book of Genesis, especially as seen through the eyes of St. Basil the Great, that few people know much about Genesis past the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Very few Christian religions go beyond this expulsion which, according to Genesis, was the result of the “sin” of Adam and Eve that was connected with eating of the “forbidden fruit.” This tree, according to Genesis, produced fruit which was intended to give anyone who ate the fruit, the knowledge of “good” and “evil”. Why stop there? I would like to think that God would want all humans to have a sense of “good” and “evil.” I thought that that is what this life is all about....to learn how to distinguish between good and evil and to choose good over evil.

Of course commentators suggest that it was all about obedience. God wanted Adam and Eve to do only what He told them they could do. So much for “free will”. I would have thought that God would have encouraged them to eat of the fruit so that they would gain some insight into what is “good” and what is evil.” Perhaps the writer of

Genesis had some other thing in mind.

Further, I think that most Christian folks don’t know what to think about how a single couple, Adam and Eve, could produce an entire race of humans. As a result, I believe that most people seldom go beyond the very rudimentary basics of this Creation Story. I also believe that the writer of this story was attempting to answer a basic question: “Why is life is as difficult as it is”. The Jewish fantasy was I believe, humans were created into this “garden of delights” but then humans messed it up by asserting their own “free will” which God had given them because He created them in His Image.

So I believe that Genesis was a real attempt to understand

the meaning of life - why life is the way that it is. The story is distorted, I also believe, by giving the reader the impression that it is the beginning of humankind wherein one male and one female found a way to beget an entire race. That idea seems to trump the idea that God created us to “grow” in our likeness of Him, having already created us in His image.

LIFE IS ALL ABOUT GROWING, CHANGING, BECOMING AND TRANSFORMING!



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



CONGRATULATIONS & BEST WISHES

are extended to

JOHN DICKY SR

whose birthday we remember as we celebrate the Divine Liturgy today. We would join with John and Janet Dicky in asking Almighty

God to continue bestowing upon John not only health but also strength and vigor.

Многая літа! Many years!



ANYONE INTERESTED

in joining with me on

SUNDAY MAY 23rd

At St. Hedwig's Cemetery immediately after the Divine Liturgy for our traditional, yearly grave blessings. If so, please let me know, if not we will offer the Panahyda at Church. If requested I will go to Holy Sepulcher the week after, Sunday May 30th.

CHOOSING TO LIVE A NEW LIFE

Because God deigned from all eternity to create human beings in His image granting them to share in His "free will", humans must cooperate with Our Triune God during this lifetime in using that "free will" to actualize the God also infused in us to grow in His likeness as seen in the Person of Jesus Christ, Who is God incarnate. Therefore we must constantly and consistently use our power to "choose" - to exercise "free will" - to bring about our personal spiritual growth, our personal change and real transformation. As I have



shared many times before, these three things are the ultimate goals of human, earthly life, namely: (1) spiritual growth; (2) personal change; and (3) real transformation. It is my sincerest hope and

desire than any Christian I minister to knows that this process of "growth" is what life is all about. There is no more important thing that we are called to do in this life than to achieve these ends.

This is why God became incarnate. So that He might concretely show us how to live. *(Continued on page 8)*

THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

The observance of this feast is of great antiquity. Eusebius seems to hint at the celebration of it in the 4th century. At the beginning of the 5th century St. Augustine suggests his belief that it is of Apostolic origin and he speaks of it in a way that shows it was the universal observance of the Church long before his time. Frequent mention of the feast is made in the writings of SS. John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa and the Constitution of the Apostles.

The [Pilgrimage of Aetheria](#) speaks of the vigil of this feast and of the feast itself, as they were kept in the church built over the grotto in Bethlehem in which Christ is traditionally regarded as having been born. It may be that prior to the 5th century the event narrated in the Gospels was commemorated in conjunction with the feast of Easter or Pentecost. Some believe that the much-disputed forty-third decree of the [Synod of Elvira](#) (c. 300) condemning the practice of observing a feast on the fortieth day after Easter and neglecting to keep Pentecost on the fiftieth day, implies that the proper usage of the time was to

commemorate the Ascension along with Pentecost. Representations of the mystery are found in diptychs and frescoes dating as early as the 5th century.

In the Eastern Church this feast is known in Greek as *Analepsis*, the **taking up**, and as the *Episozomene*, the **salvation from on high**", denoting that by ascending into his glory Christ completed the work of our redemption. The feast of the Ascension is one of the Twelve Major Feasts of our liturgical year.

The Ascension has an after feast of eight days. The Sunday after Ascension is the Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical at Nicaea. This council formulated the Nicene Creed up to the words,

"He (Jesus) ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end." The after feast ends on the following Friday, the Friday before Pentecost. The next day is appropriately a Saturday of the Dead. "Life's Journey is an *Ascension* to the Heavenly Father by a process of Personal Transformation".



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SPIRITUALITY

If we allow the INCARNATION to be that main academic concept of our faith, the results is another mistake or heresy which we call Apollinarianism. If the Jesus who shapes our spiritual vision is otherworldly and ephemeral, we are going to have a problem dealing with our own lives. As we wrestle with temptation and sin, what good will it do to pray to a Jesus whose humanity is so insipid that He never really had to deal with the prospect of falling? Only the real Christ of the full gospel, the God-man Jesus Christ, is going to save us, so we need to be focused correctly on Who He is and what He has done.

What all of this comes down to is that spirituality cannot be separated from religion, although many would like to try. Eastern Christian life cannot be divided from Eastern Christian doctrine without going badly off the rails.

Here it must be pointed out that we Eastern Catholics are frequently caught in a dilemma. We feel that because we call ourselves "Catholic" that we have to embrace "Western Spirituality and Theology". Since our worship is based on Eastern Spirituality and Theology, we need to embrace the spirituality and theology that supports our

worship. Therefore we are going to have a different spirituality and theology from "Western Catholics".

For example, when we enter the Church Nave (that portion of the Church where the congregation prays), we make a "metania" or small bow.

We do not bow to the "Eucharist in the "kavot" (a tabernacle). Our reverence is not for the Eucharist retained for the sick but, rather for the icons of the Church. Doing this, we recognize that we are entering into a sacred space.

In Catholic Churches people genuflect to the tabernacle because it contains consecrated hosts - the real presence of Christ represented as Bread.

Further, the only time in the Eastern Church that Holy Communion can be distributed to people outside of the Liturgy in the Eastern Church, is during the Presanctified Liturgy (our Lenten Service) or if they are physically ill. We do not "venerate" the Eucharist but, rather, find that it is in the "eating" and "drinking" of the Eucharist that we find our union with God, through the Person of the Son in the Holy Spirit. A slight, although I would say profound, difference. Catholic doesn't mean "just one way" of thinking about the faith.



Schedule of Services

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

7th PASCHAL WEEK

Monday, May 17 - Andronicus & Others, Apostles
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, May 18 - Theodotus & Others, Martyrs
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, May 19 - Patrick, Bishop-Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Thursday, May 20 - Thalaleus Others, Martyrs
No Service Scheduled

Friday, May 21 - Constantine & Helen, Equal to the Apostles
No Service Scheduled

Saturday, May 22 - Basiliscus, Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Sunday, May 23 - Feast of Pentecost
10:00 AM + The Deceased - Divine Liturgy - Live-Streamed

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

I realize that we humans can become easily distracted from the important things of life by what we see going on around us. Think about it, homes are getting “bigger and bigger” and we wonder why. Society pressures us to cherish the things of this world and yet all the things of this world cannot accomplish bringing us closer to God.



Who we are as people is more important than what we have a people! And I believe that we have to be repeatedly reminded that the only things that we will take into the next life are the “fond memories” that we have managed to forge with others.

Ask yourself this: What is important to me? Our the things I have more important than the friends that I have? What would it mean to me if I gained the whole world but lost my soul - lost me - in the very process? Things to think about!

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

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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

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Gordon Malaniak
734.564.9817

Rev Deacon Leonard Mier
313.584-6795

Greg & Esther Petrovich
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

THE BEATITUDES INTERPRETED: GREGORY OF NYSSA

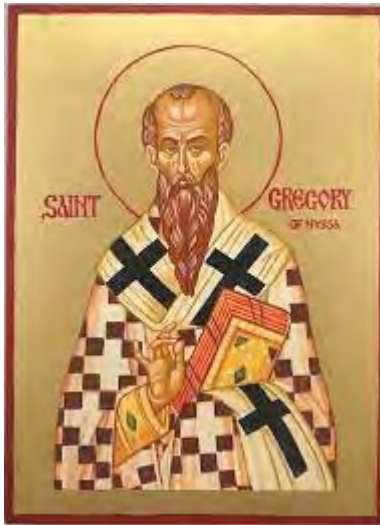
All of the Fathers seem to agree that one has to “put off” carnal desires in order to allow the Spirit to bring about the Personal transformation necessary in order for us to SEE GOD. It is the efforts of the believer complemented by the work of the Spirit that allows us to come to a point in our lives where we can SEE GOD. (Of course this means that we do not see Him directly since He is a Spirit. Rather, it means we see Him in others and in His creation).

Can a person expect to become truly pure in heart, pure in the sense that we can experience that which Thomas Merton and St. Gregory of Nyssa describe in their writings? Probably not. But again, the ability to see God is not something one either has or does not have. It is best described (though never measured) as occurring in degrees. And one can even say it can be somewhat fleeting. Yet the reason for desiring to see God in such a way should not be due to us wanting some “spiritual experience”. To be in search for experiences is to be open to a real deception.

Our desire should be to know God and to become what He has created us to be. In achieving this state, we may expect to have our “inner eyes”

opened, if only for a short period, to see creation as it really is. Furthermore, we may discover the Kingdom of God within us, if we see through eyes not blinded by guile and sin.

For some, the idea of seeing God, the transformation of our inner eye, may seem like pie-in-the-sky mysticism that has little to do with the Church and her mission. Yet the ability by God’s grace to see the world as well as



our brothers, sisters, neighbors in the way that God intended us to see them should have a radical effect on the way we live our everyday lives. In fact it could be said that such a transformation is at the heart of the Church's life and mission. St. Seraphim of Sarov once said, “Acquire peace and thousands around you will be saved”. As we enter

into the world of our salvation - the struggle with the passions, the participation in Church life, the communion of the saints, the cleansing of our hearts - we grow closer to the person that God created us to be. The new way of seeing, the saving of “a thousand around you,” are merely results that can occur as we grow in the likeness of God.

If we make it our goal to see God, our goal will result in personal change.

THE DOCTRINES OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY



In more recent days, I have had the occasion to turn to the First Letter of St. Peter. It is among one of the earliest of Christian documents. A letter of but five short chapters, its themes and the creative way they are presented make this letter one of the most attractive as well as revealing of Christian writings. I would encourage you, if you are reading this, to pick up your New Testament and gradually work your way through it.

Neglected for a period of time by modern exegetes, the epistle is now being restored to its rightful place as a document

of singular importance for a proper understanding of primitive Christian beliefs and practices. If only this short treatise remained to us, we would still have evidence of the essential elements of early Christological and ethical teachings.

The First Epistle of Peter is a complex piece of writing. It combines Christological, ethical and pastoral teachings presented as one undivided whole. Its Christology appears universal in its implication and its ethical teaching is far from exclusive. The love it presents knows no limits; it is extended to all, including pagan magistrates. Christians are called "to do good" to all without exception. And the pastoral duties the epistle commends, like its moral exhortations, come from its doctrinal teachings.

This letter presents the moral exhortation which is its dominant feature in close relationship to Christian doctrine: The Trinity of Persons in God; the redemptive value of Jesus' death and resurrection; the sinfulness of man whom God's destined to be holy. Some scholars are of the opinion that it is taken substantially from an early Christian baptismal liturgy. Whether this view is correct or not, the passages in question are among the clearest expositions on the meaning of Christian baptism to be found in the New Testament.

So, for the next few weeks I would like to explore 1 Peter with my readers. As we progress, if you have any questions, just simply send them to me by snail mail or email: w ruchgy@gmail.com. We will be entering into the world of primitive Christianity and the plight of Christians.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, STL, Ph.D.
Vol. 68 No 20 Week of the Fathers of First Nicaea May 15-16, 2021

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

When we pray to accept our feelings, we are praying to come in touch with our true selves. Often the revelation of our true selves will be a surprise to us, but a necessary one. Also, when we pray to accept our feelings get in touch it memories in which feelings played a significant part. Rarely do we have a feeling that is not associated with one or several memories. We examine and acknowledge our feelings in order to heal past memories because in doing so we have yet another avenue to spiritual growth.

It is important to note that we do not condemn ourselves when we discover bitter feelings that are directly connected to past memories. Rather, we accept them and think about them and decide how we might get rid of them since they are truly obstacles to spiritual growth - which is the true aim of this earthly existence.

So we bring our emotions out of



darkness and into the Light of Christ where they can be healed. Then a simplicity comes to be a part of us - a part of the way we choose to live - that allows us to say what we mean and to mean what we say. Once we begin to live in that way we find that we are able to talk to God in prayer

and truly hear His response. Plus, we are able to talk with other people and, if not communicate with them (we know that communication is two-way), at least understand our dialogue with them.

Jesus needs men and women of honesty and morality to be His ambassadors to the world. How can we help the world to see that Christ has reconciled the world to Himself if we are not reconciled to ourselves because of Him? Remember, what happens to us directly also impacts what happens to the rest of the world. All of creation is connected, believe it or not.

Knowledge of the True God Nurtures Us to Eternal Life

Are we saying that knowledge is eternal life? Are we saying that to know the one true and living God will suffice to give us complete security for the future without need of anything else? Then how is "faith apart from works dead?" When we speak of faith, we mean the true knowledge of God and nothing else, since knowledge comes by faith. The prophet Isaiah tells us this: "If you do not believe, neither shall you understand." But he is not talking about a knowledge that consists in barren speculations, which is entirely worthless. For one of the holy disciples said, "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe and shudder." What then shall we say to this? How is it that Christ speaks the truth when He says that eternal life is the knowledge of God the Father, the one true God, and with Him of the Son? I think, indeed, we must answer that the saying of the Savior is completely true. For this knowledge is life, laboring as it were in birth of the whole meaning of the mystery and

granting to us participation in the mystery of the Eucharist, whereby we are joined to the living and life-giving Word. And for this reason, I think, Paul says that the Gentiles are made fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of Christ, inasmuch as they partake in His Blessed Body and Blood. And our members may in this sense be conceived of as being members of Christ. This knowledge, then, which also brings to us the Eucharist by the Spirit, is life. For it dwells in our hearts, reshaping those who receive it into son-ship with Him and molding them into incorruption and piety toward God through life, according to the Gospel. Our Lord Jesus Christ, then, knowing that the knowledge of the one true God brings to us and promotes our union with the blessings of which we have spoken, says that it is eternal life. It is the mother and nurse of eternal life, being in its power and nature pregnant with those things that cause life and lead to life.

St. Cyril of Alexandria