

SUNDAY OF PENTECOST



*Icon of Pentecost*

## A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEEND

On this great feast of Pentecost, which transpires 50 days after Easter, our readings are taken from the ACTS and also John's Gospel. The actual event of the Christian Pentecost are related in ACTS.

The passage we hear from John's Gospel takes place on the seventh of the eight days of Passover. We hear again that what Jesus teaches, namely the Good News, serves as "rivers of living water" within a person. Just as the Torah was considered to be "living water" for the people of Israel, so the Gospel Message of Jesus is like "living water."

The passage we hear is concluded by these words of Jesus: "I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness; no, he shall possess the light of life." The Good News indeed sheds "light" on life. It helps us to see why life is the way that it is! It truly shows us a "way to live" that can bring about spiritual growth and personal transformation.

I think that it goes without saying that LIFE IS A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY. There are so many things to discover as we make this journey. One of the greatest things we are meant to discover is: (1) What is our meaning and value as God's created children in this universe?; (2) How do we grow in our insight into the meaning of life?; and (3) What are the things that we can do to increase our spiritual growth and understanding of life?



Jesus revealed a way to live that will bring about spiritual growth. We see that His followers all adopted His way of approaching life and they grew as human beings, albeit they also suffered and died as a result of their beliefs.

The way to personal transformation is not without challenges and, most often, certain pain and suffering, be it physical, psychological, emotional or spiritual. It seems that the only way that we human seem to grow is with struggle and challenge. We find that when we are not challenges, we never change. We most frequently have to be dramatically challenged before we have the courage to change.

While I truly believe, as I look at our world today, the Jesus way of living is not popular. We humans have become SOOO individualistic and self-centered, which is whole-heartedly supported by our culture, that we think that the "way of Jesus" makes a person "weak". So, we tend to embrace the "American way of living" instead of the "Jesus way of living." Its our choice.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN TODAY?

I ended this article in the last issue with almost stating the very obvious: You can believe all the right things and still be relatively unchanged. Believing a set of claims to be true has very little transforming power. I can believe that the truths presented in and by Christianity are the absolute truth but that fact alone will not cause me to change. I have to realize that what I believe has implications for how I live.

A second meaning of faith has to do more with the “heart.” These meanings are, of course, relational. They see faith as not very much about believing. Instead, faith is about the relationship of the self at its deepest level to God. The most important question is, at this level, is: Does what I believe bring me closer to God?

Now many will immediately assert: If what I believe makes my relationships with other human beings more honest and genuine, then they can bring me closer to God. Remember what St. John said: *You cannot say you love God Who you cannot see and hate your neighbor who you can see and interact with.* God and neighbor are indeed intrinsically connected. Our neighbor (i.e., any human who crosses our path in life), supplies us access to our



God. This kind of faith is called *Fiducia*. There is no close English word for faith as *fiducia*. The closest is “fiduciary,” which doesn’t get us very far. The best English translation of *fiducia* is faith as “TRUST,” as radical trust in God. Significantly, it does not mean trusting in the truth of a set of statements about God. That would simply be *assensus* under a different name. Rather, it means trusting in God.

Faith as trust is like floating in a deep ocean. I owe the metaphor to Soren Kierkegaard, a radical Christian and one of the philosophical giants of the nineteenth century: faith is like floating in seventy thousand fathoms of water. If you struggle, if you tense up and thrash about, you will eventually sink. But if you relax and trust, you will float. It’s like Matthew’s story of Peter walking on the water with Jesus - when he began to be afraid, he began to sink.

I think that frequently happens to us. When the challenges of life become tough - you’ve got cancer - there is a tendency to sink in our trust and faith in our loving God.

## ST BASIL THE GREAT AND THOUGHTS ON GENESIS

It is interesting to note that Genesis, after Cain killed Abel, resumes with a domestic detail; Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch.

Cain also built a city, which he names after the name of his son, Enoch. The word for city does not necessarily mean a 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 desires to look to the future and to building for his descendants a new start.

I am sure that my readers have never considered this as a part of Genesis. As I have suggested, most Christians, and probably Jews, stop at the "sin" of Adam and Eve in the Garden and never look at the remaining portion of Genesis. This is tragic, since Genesis presents much

more about human life if you want to think of Genesis as a commentary on human life.

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 Methushael, and Methushael 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, his son's accomplishments 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.

Honestly, have you ever heard about Lamech? If not, why not?



# St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



## CHOOSING TO LIVE A NEW LIFE

Again I cannot emphasize it enough, our personal in how we live, figures into our salvation. While I would acknowledge that it does not depend entirely on us alone, it does depend on our relationship with Christ and the Holy Spirit.



Each day is a challenge to meet the day, despite of what it presents to us, with love and acceptance. So each day is an opportunity to draw upon the power of the Holy Spirit within us to

respond as Christ would respond. Christ was given the power to the challenges of His life because of the Holy Spirit. That has been granted - guaranteed - to us if only we believe.

If the true goal of earthly life for us humans is to grow in our likeness of Jesus, we know that this means that we have to cooperate with Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

We have the power to **CHOOSE** to live like Jesus if we **WANT TO**. It is all a matter of personal choice. Of course we have to first get over being afraid to be more like *(Continued on page 8)*

Life is not simple. We constantly have to make decisions about how we respond to life and to life presents.

## PRAYING FOR THE DECEASED



During the course of the liturgical year, our Church calls us to pray five times for the deceased. Two of these times we tend to actually go to the cemeteries and

“bless graves.” This year, we shall pray for our deceased on two separate weekends, this weekend and next. If you would like me to include the

deceased members of your family and friends, please make sure that I have a copy of the their names.

We pray for the dead because we believe that they exist with God in the next dimension and are still alive. To pray for them strengthens our belief that there is life after earthly death. As we pray for the deceased we pray that their “memories might be eternal.” We make this more possible by saying their names in prayer.

## THE MEANING OF PENTECOST

There are a number of different versions of icons for Pentecost. Some, as the one depicted here, has “MARY” as a part of the assembly of the Apostles who received the Holy Spirit. If correctly depicted, Mary does not receive a ‘flame’ that represents the giving of the Holy Spirit since she was given the Holy Spirit at the INCARNATION.

Fifty days after the Jewish Passover, the Jewish people by tradition, celebrated the feast of Pentecost - which celebrated the “harvest” at the time and also the “giving of the law” which transpired after Moses received the TEN Commandments on Mt Sinai during the Exodus of the captives from Egypt. These ten, particular statements or commandments were already present in the Babylonian world as “rules for an ordered society. They all dealt with how people treated one another.

When the 10 Commandments are analyzed, you become aware of the fact that it is only the first four that don't directly which deal with how we treat other persons. The first two deal with our relationship with God, the third with how we observe a week as

God Children, and the third, how we deal with our parents. The rest, all deal with how we interact with others and are in Hammurabi's Code.

The Christian Pentecost, which Christians assumed as the new giving of the “Law of Living”, namely the Good News of Jesus, deals completely with how we deal with other human beings. Other human beings are the “Key” to our salvation. Learning how to deal with all others - that is leaning how to truly unconsciously love all others, regardless of how they treat us, is the Key to salvation.

I would emphasize this point. Learning how to react to others NOT as they treat us but, rather as we would like them to treat us, is the clue to eternal life. I must learn how to treat others as Christ would have treated them. He never placed any conditions on their response. He simply loved them and cared about them without any expectation of love or kindness in return.

**THAT IS THE NEW LAW GIVEN TO US ON PENTECOST.** Live as Jesus lived. Love as Jesus loved. Base your response to others on your faith and not how you would like to be treated.





## A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SPIRITUALITY

One of the terms used to describe Eastern Christian spirituality is "asceticism." It comes from the Greek *askesis* and actually describes the training of an athlete. The idea of training for the spiritual life is one that the apostle Paul refers to:

Do you not know that those who run in the race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who *beats the air*. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

No athlete who competes seriously, whether for the Olympics or a weekend soccer team, does so without some kind of training to improve things such as strength and coordination. To complete without doing so is to invite injury and embarrassment. Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France bicycle race by riding miles every day. It is the only way to develop the necessary stamina to complete such a race. St Paul uses the example of an athlete's training to make the point that a Christian trains spiritually to learn how to exercise faith and live in God's Kingdom. Of course, he says, we do not do this to win an earthly reward, the bottle of champagne awarded by a

lovely woman, but a heavenly one - eternal life with God. And in this contest you do not have to come in first, second or third in order to get one of the prizes; you simply have to compete to the best of your ability. Think of it as a Special Olympics for the spiritually challenged. God's very gracious to us.

To go into training for the spiritual contest, you have to establish a training regimen, deciding how much time each day you are going to set aside to work on this or that kind of exercise. For our preparation, the exercises will consist of activities such as prayer, fasting and meditation rather than wind sprints and set-ups, but I can assure you they will not be any easier to do. Abba Agathon once described prayer as a warfare to the last breath," which is a pretty good description of the level of difficulty involved in our training. To coin a phrase: *no pain, no gain*.



# Schedule of Services

**Sunday, May 23 - Feast of Pentecost**

**10:00 AM + The Deceased - Divine Liturgy - Live-Streamed**

## PENTECOST WEEK

**Monday, May 24 – PENTECOST MONDAY**

**8:00 AM - Divine Liturgy**

Tuesday, May 25 - 3rd Finding of St. John the Baptizer's Head

*No Service Scheduled*

Wednesday, May 26 - Carpus, Apostle

*No Service Scheduled*

Thursday, May 27 - Therapont, Bishop-Martyr

*No Service Scheduled*

Friday, May 28 - Nicetas, Bishop

*No Service Scheduled*

Saturday, May 29 - Theodosia, Venerable Martyr

*No Service Scheduled*

**Sunday, May 30 - Weekend of All Saints**

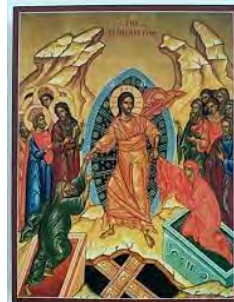
**10:00 AM + The Deceased - Divine Liturgy - Live-Streamed**

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

Jesus. I truly believe that our fear of being more like Jesus is knowing that He was tortured and crucified. We're afraid that we have to do the same. SO? I know, we don't like to think about physical pain. In fact our whole economy is geared to "relieving" us from the pain that we have to occasionally sorry! The week since Easter have had me thinking about this very directly. So now do I reasonably accept the pain of life without trying to totally escape the pain of life? I have been dealing with this every day since Easter.

I do believe that we have the power to alleviate physical pain without forgetting what the physical pain is attempting to call our attention to. I do believe that physical pain is meant to call us to some kind of "different human behavior".

Choosing to life a new life requires us to think about all of these things!



St. Michael the Archangel  
Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church  
6340 Chase Road  
Dearborn, MI 48126

Rev. Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.  
Pastor

Rectory: (313) 582-1424  
Cell: (313) 580-4412  
WRuchgy@gmail.com

### LITURGY SCHEDULE

**Sundays @ 10:00 AM**

Ukrainian & English

**Weekdays @ 8:00 AM**

English

### SACRAMENTS

**Penance**

*By Appointment*

**Baptism & Matrimony**

*In most instances membership  
required for six months*

**Funerals**

*Membership of an immediate  
family member required*

### Parish Life Council

Bob & Corinne Boyko  
734.451.1893

John & Janet Dicky  
586.755.3129

Daria Drobny  
313.791-0292

Robert Krokosky  
248.734.7078

Leo & Mary LaDouceur  
313.278.7378

Gordon Malaniak  
734.564.9817

Rev Deacon Leonard Mier  
313.584-6795

Greg & Esther Petrovich  
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter  
313.624.9867

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



## THE BEATITUDES INTERPRETED: GREGORY OF NYSSA

By studying the teachings of the Church and the saints, we may learn how to begin this journey, a journey that is one of struggle and difficulty and one that paradoxically begins in and leads to the Kingdom of God.

When the Holy Fathers speak of seeing or knowing God, they differentiate between God's essence and His *energies*. While many of the Fathers make this distinction, St. Gregory Palamas is the most widely known for his expositions on this subject. His explanation goes far beyond our present scope and need to be placed in the contest of "study". It is important, however, to have an understanding of how the two differ. In doing so, we gain a clearer understanding of the seemingly *contradictory references* found in Scripture.

Kallistos Ware explains: "God's essence remains unapproachable, but His energies come down to us." The essence of God is that which remains transcendent, thus unknowable and inapproachable. Hence we find statements both in the Old and New Testaments that speak of the inability to see God; yet through His energies He communicates to humanity. The energies of God are the "qualities," for

lack of a better word, or that which we can know about Him. Through His "activities" we are able to know Him. Thus we see God not in His transcendent holiness, but in His manifestations or self-revelations.

We know that God is love, and we experience His love. By seeing God's creation we may ascertain that He is wise and a lover of beauty. In such ways God manifests Himself to us so that we may know Him and worship Him. Such are the energies of God. They are not separate from Him anymore than what we say and do is separate from ourselves. Again Ware writes, "The energies are truly God *Himself* - yet not God as he exists *within* Himself, in His inner life, but God as He communicates Himself in outgoing love." In the same way, a work



of art may tell us something about the artist, but it does not allow us to know the inner workings of the artist, his true self.

The more our hearts are purified the more we see what *is*, not the false reality that we see through a veil of selfishness, greed, and lust. We begin seeing God at work in His creation, in His people and in His church. In doing so, we see God in the present—that He is "Present and fills all things."

## THE DOCTRINES OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY



The New Testament Canon includes only two short “letters” of Peter (in some ways amazing since he was seen as the chief of the apostles). Only recently have some biblical exegetes begun to consider this his first letter as one of the major sources for our knowledge of the first Christian generation. Among the reasons for this neglect were two important ones: the prevailing view about the structure of the epistle, and the question of its authorship. The epistle was regarded either as a homily or as a composite work and not as a genuine letter, and its author

was assumed to have written it in the second century, far removed from the time of the Apostle Peter. These two basic assumptions influenced the evaluation of the epistle itself. In the last few decades, however, certain scholars have seriously challenged these views of the structure of the epistle, as well as the problem of its authorship, and they have proposed new solutions, with new insights into its nature. They regard the letter as a genuine epistle written in the first century, during the time of Peter or else soon after his death.

The presence of Pauline ideas in the epistle was for some the cause of the most serious objections to Peter’s authorship. The well-known Pauline expression “in Christ” is found in 1 Peter and similarities with ideas expressed in Paul’s letters have been detected in several other passages in 1 Peter. Was this a literary borrowing? Did Peter know of the Pauline letters?

In answer to these arguments, we may summarize some of the suggestions and findings of those modern scholars who are known as “form critics”. Substantial similarities between Peter’s and Paul’s writing can be accounted for by their dependence upon a common tradition. Form critics remind us that a common tradition was not only incorporated into the Gospels but was also used for the New Testament epistles. The theory that the author of 1 Peter depended upon the Apostle Paul for his epistles “must now be rejected in favor of a common Petrine and Pauline use of a broadly varied tradition.”



# THE EASTERN HERALD

## СХІДНИЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, STL, Ph.D.  
Vol. 68 No 21                      Week of Pentecost                      May 22-23, 2021

### VARIOUS ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Although we may not be totally aware of it, feelings enter into everything we do, I especially prayer. In this article I have been attempting to stress that the way that we deal with our feelings as we try to enter prayer is by first asking Christ to be with us, for we would



not want to come into contact with any powerful emotion if we were not secure in the Lord of Christ. We ask Jesus to bless us, to bless the place in which we are praying and to protect us and support us so that we can touch the depth of our feelings without fear of being lost in them or controlled by them. If we place ourselves trustingly in the hands of Christ at the beginning of prayer, we are assured that the results of the prayer will be healing for us. It is only when we feel healed in prayer that we can be a truly “healing person” to others.

Next, praying and under the guidance of the Spirit, we choose a feeling we need to accept more

completely. Many people find it helpful in learning to accept a feeling to experience it first as a bodily reaction. While some are at first too inhibited to do this, maybe these people are the ones who would benefit from it the most, for it would bring their

bodies, minds, and spirits into a greater unity, and thus make them more whole. To acknowledge a feeling bodily, we focus our minds on the feeling (for example, fear) and we ask ourselves: “When I am afraid, how does my body react to fear? What muscles become tense? Do aches or pains come into any particular parts of my body? How would express fear by using my body, that is, what position of my hands, arms, legs, torso and head would be a ‘picture’ or ‘sculpture’ of this feeling to me?”

Unless we deal with our feelings in some positive way, we can never truly be free to “pray”, that is to enter into conversation with God.



### *There is Life in the Church because in the Church is the Spirit*

My brothers and sisters, if you want the Holy Spirit to dwell in you, listen carefully. Our spirit, by means of which each individual lives, is called the soul. And look what the soul does in the body. It gives life to all the limbs. It sees with the eyes, hears with the ears, smells with the nose, speaks with the tongue, works with the hands, walks with the feet. It is present at one and the same time in all the limbs to make them live. It gives life to all the limbs and to each limb its function. It is not the eye that hears, not the ear that sees, not the eye or the ear that speaks. Yet they are nonetheless alive. The ear is alive, the tongue is alive. Their functions are different, the life is the same.

The Church of God is like that. By means of some believers she performs miracles, by means

of others she teaches the truth; by means of some she keeps virginity, by means of others she respects marital fidelity. The tasks are different, the life is the same. What the soul is to the body of a human being, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, the Church. The Holy Spirit does for the whole Church what the soul does for the body of the individual. Look then and see what you ought to fear and what you ought to avoid. If the body suffers an amputation (for example of a finger or a hand or a foot) does the soul go with the limb that has been cut off? While it was in the body, that limb was alive; when it is cut off it loses its life. It is like that with Christians. They are alive only while they are in the Body. If they are cut off from the Body, the Holy Spirit is no longer with them.

*St. Augustine of Hippo*