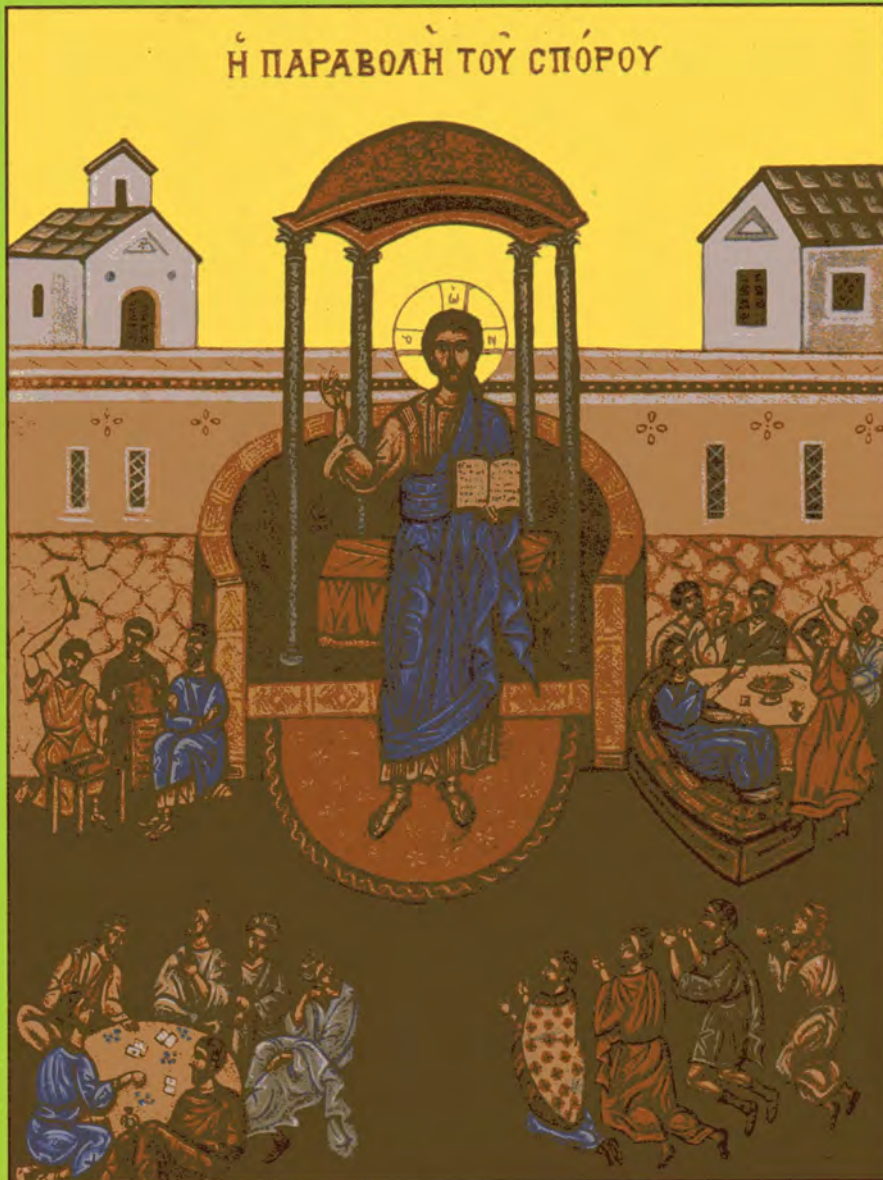


SUNDAY OF THE FATHERS OF THE  
SEVENTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL



*Icon of the Parable of the Sower and the Seed*

## Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

This weekend we have an interesting combination of readings to stimulate our thoughts about the revelation of God, through Jesus, about how to live this earthly life. I would challenge my readers to think about the two readings and try to come to some conclusion about the message God has for them.

The first reading, from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, presents what Paul perceived as God's response to his prayer for help to alleviate a "thorn" in his flesh - a personal challenge he constantly had to deal with. He wanted God to remove the "thorn." The response he received from God was this: *My grace is enough for you, for in weakness power reaches perfection.*

While we don't know what the "thorn" was, we know that God supposedly told him that His grace - His help - was sufficient for Paul to deal with the "thorn."

This clearly tells us that God sees the challenges of life as a means of effecting spiritual growth and He will help us deal with these challenges - not rescue us from them - so that they might be a means of our spiritual

growth.

Our second reading, taken from Luke's Gospel, presents the parable of the "Sower." The explanation of the parable Jesus once uttered, is an explanation that developed in the early Church. Luke simply appends this explanation here.

The "seed" in the parable is the "word" of God, that is the Gospel or Christian preaching of salvation that is proposed to men. If the "word" is received with an open heart, it leads to a deeper and truer understanding of the meaning of life. If, however, the word is received by a person who has a certain "hardness" of heart, a "closed mind," then it cannot take root and it cannot lead a person to the fullness of life.

If we take these two readings together, they tell us that we must be careful not to allow the struggles or disappointments of life to harden our hearts, thereby not allowing the Word of God to grow in our hearts and lives. If I am not at peace with others and myself, God's Word cannot grow in my life. That is why Jesus said: *Love others as you love yourself.* If you don't love yourself God's Word can't grow within you.



# Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

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The Pope is the supreme earthly authority of the Catholic Communion. The central organ of the Holy See that deals with the Eastern Catholic Churches within this Communion, is the called the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. While the prefect of this congregation is the pope himself, a cardinal pro-prefect performs the ordinary functions of chairman. This Congregation is competent for the Eastern churches in all matters (except certain specified cases) and has exclusive jurisdiction in specified countries in eastern Europe and the Middle East. The individual Eastern Catholic churches are organized differently according to their historical and ethnic situation, the number of adherents, the degree of evolution, and so on. The following organizational units are found.

Patriarchates comprise a certain number of dioceses of a single church, under the jurisdiction of a patriarch. The patriarchs, according to the Eastern canon law, have special rights and privileges; in the general hierarchy they rank with the cardinals according to seniority (following the titular cardinal bishops of the suburban sees of Rome) and before all other bishops. There are six Eastern Catholic patriarchates: the Coptic Catholic Church, which is based in Egypt and is governed by the patriarch of Alexandria; three of Antioch, one each for the Syrians,



Maronites, and Greek Melkites; the Chaldean Catholic Church, which , which is based in Baghdad and is governed by the patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans; and the Armenian Catholic Church, which is based in Lebanon and is governed by the *katholikos* of Sis, or Cilicia.

Major archiepiscopates are those that govern a certain number of dioceses or eparchies of their Church but whose territory has not yet been erected into a patriarchate. This is the current situation with our own Church.

Metropolitanates govern ecclesiastical provinces independent of the patriarchates and major archiepiscopates and comprise a number of dioceses. One of them is the metropolis; and its archbishop, the metropolitan, is the head of the whole metropolitanate. This is the case with the Ukrainian Province in these United States.

Eparchies correspond to the Latin dioceses. Although they are usually subject to one of the aforementioned higher organizations, a few are immediately subject to the Holy See or to a Latin metropolitan see. This is the case in Argentina. More about the structure of our Church.

# The Divine Liturgy and Our Worship of God

As many who worship with me know, I like to engage people in what I call a Liturgical Scavenger Hunt - that is an exercise of paying close attention to what we pray and do during the Divine Liturgy and find that answer to a question that I pose. One of the recent hunts was to find the three things that the Liturgy directs us to God. The answer, of course, is found in the first Prayer of the Faithful wherein we are exhorted to offer to God: prayers, supplications and unbloody sacrifices.

The first two are relatively straight forward. Prayers are articulated expression of thanks addressed to God who is the object of our worship. The second, supplications, are short requests asking or begging for something earnestly or humbly. Our Litanies are filled with supplications.

The third, unbloody sacrifices, is probably not evident to the person who does not understand our worship. The unbloody sacrifices that we offer, as I have repeatedly stated, are meant to represent the offering of our own lives together with Jesus Who offered His life to the Father in thanksgiving for the gift of human life. Jesus truly accomplished this, and therefore we do, by taking “food gifts” (i.e., bread and wine) and, after praying over them to truly represent Jesus and us, to offer them up to God. In essence, the request to change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus, is a request to have these gifts represent



our human lives so that we can, in turn, offer them up to God in the same manner as Jesus did. The very act of offering ourselves back to the Father means that we desire to truly change ourselves into people who desire to be more like Jesus.

By Jesus performing this act at the end of His life, He gave us the means to do the same. One of the things that Jesus taught us through His actions, is that we must not just offer things to God in worship that we own. Rather, we must offer ourselves to God. Of course if we sincerely and voluntarily do this, we are transformed - we are changed.

Think about it! If you come and worship and truly desire to offer yourself to God, you have to change the way that you live and the way that you treat and interact with others. It has to open your heart.

So, if this is not happening when you come to church and join in the Divine Liturgy, ask yourself why? It usually means that you are still too self-centered - thinking too much about yourself and not about others.

***More to follow!***



# Holy Ascension Community News

An Eastern Catholic Church in Plymouth Michigan

## PROMOTING CHURCH GROWTH

I have been reading a lot about how to promote Church Growth. There is an abundance of material on the Internet. Apparently this is a main topic for most small churches. Here is the first of several things that I read.

Pastors often do a really great job encouraging their people to invite their friends, neighbors, and co-workers. It is believed that encouragement and equipping are two different things.

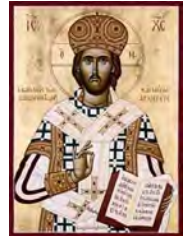
Authors on church growth believe that people don't just need encouragement to invite others, they need the tools. A pastor needs to do more than ask them to bring people to church. Pastor's need to give people resources that make it easy to follow through. Some ways you can do this are to:

- Print invite cards and place them at the doors.
- Write a Facebook post and send it to people with specific directions on when to post.
- Create sharable graphics for people to use on social media.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

## CALLED TO HOLINESS

The call to holiness is a call to become perfectly ourselves. I find that most people have a certain "hunger" or common yearning for something more in life - a yearning that seems to linger in our hearts throughout our lives. I truly believe, as many other authors do, that that hunger is for "immortality" and a union with the Creator which will give us the answers to many of the questions that seem to surface in our lives. The greatest question seems to be: *What is the meaning and purpose of my life?* Most of us strive to know why we are here and what life is all about.



This is a true part of the call to holiness which God, I truly believe, embeds within our hearts and minds and which signals the "potential" that we have to be more like Jesus, to be a true child of God.

Of course some people associate this hunger with a desire for more money or things of this world. Others respond to this hunger by seeking the perfect partner and what they believe will be happiness. It is my experience that they never really seem to find happiness.

*(Continued on page 8)*

# FROM OUR DEACON CANDIDATE

By Len Mier  
Old Testament Studies

## Question 3:

Wisdom literature is an attempt to come to terms with the impenetrable mystery of God's presence in the world, how does Job come out? Where is Job and how would you characterize him? What does it say about wisdom – and what message does it provide for modern Christians reading this material?

Job is probably one of the Old Testament characters that I felt I knew the most about, that was until I read the book for myself. I have always been told by the good sisters who taught me in grade school “You need to have the patience of Job,” and “Job never complained about his state.”

I don't think that Job was all that patient. A patient person does not spend most of his time trying to justify himself before God in the way Job does. Job is an upright man who is blameless and walks in the path of the righteous. He does have hardships and losses befall him. Job never loses faith in God but does question why the things that are happening are happening to him. In the end Job does come out with an understanding and realization of the purpose and meaning of life to the extent of his ability to understand.

I think that for me this says that wisdom is not just about knowledge but is about understanding the broader scope of events. Wisdom is realizing that God is in control and it is His plan not ours, that is important. Wisdom is finding the meaning and purpose to

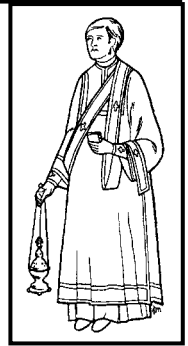
this life here at the present time.

After rereading the text we had in the first year, *An Introduction to the Bible a Journey into Three World* by Hauer and Young, one line in the chapter on “The Way of Wisdom” sticks out as summarizing Job. “The universe does not revolve around humanity; therefore. Retribution is not part of the cosmic order. Job is chastised for making erroneous assumptions about God's ways based on too narrow a viewpoint.”

Again it is my way of understanding or wanting things to be that gets me into trouble and causes me problems. We as modern Christians need to understand that when problems come we try to make God in the image we want and not accept Him as He is. This means accepting the fact that sometimes things happen that are beyond our comprehension because we cannot understand God's plan This is the start of wisdom.

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I would encourage all who read this reflection on Job by Len to pick up their Old Testaments and read Job for themselves. It is classified as part of the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament. It is classified in the way for a reason. See why message it has for you.



## FROM OUR DEACON CANDIDATE

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(Continued from page 6 - Mier)

Question 4:

Give one psalm that is particularly meaningful/important or challenging for you. Explain what is going on in the psalm, and relate why it holds personal meaning for you?

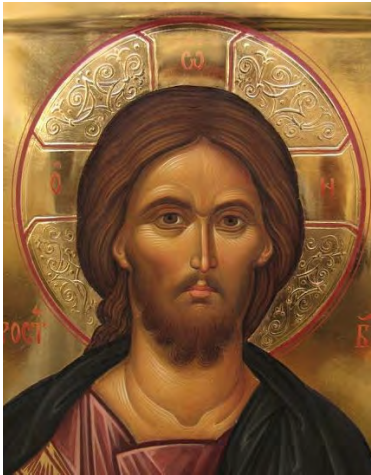
### **Psalm 43**

#### **Prayer to God in Time of Trouble**

Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people; from deceitful and unjust men deliver me! For thou art the God in whom I take refuge; why hast thou cast me off? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? Oh send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me to thy holy hill and to thy dwelling! Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and I will praise thee with the lyre, O God, my God. Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

This psalm is particularly important to me at the present time. It is one that I heard when I would serve as an acolyte for the elderly priests in the minor seminary. The elderly missionary priests were given an indult to say Mass according to the extraordinary Latin Rite. The prayer at the foot of the altar is psalm 43. I did not pay much attention to it until I began reciting the psalms in the rotation that is found in the Byzantine office.

This psalm is a lament and is usually combined with psalm 42 since they share the same theme. It holds meaning for me today because I use it as a prayer to strengthen me as I discern my vocation. The psalmist seems to lament his situation, which to me is a world removed from God and His presence. I can identify with the psalmist. What I am preparing to do with my life seems counter to the culture I find on the campus of the state university where I work. Some coworkers have told me it would be better for me, if I want to help people to become a social worker and not let this “God stuff” interfere with really helping people.



I sometimes wonder if it would be easier to do that, but then I ask, “O God defend my cause, and deliver me from those who think that human kind is the center of the universe and that everything is relative to the way modern culture see the cosmos.” I read this psalm and sit and reflect on it and ask God to lead me where He wants me to go. I hope that it is to His altar where I can find hope and healing for my life and then try to bring others to that hope and healing in a troubled world - to bring people back to the purpose for which we are created.

***Why not read this Psalm?***

# Schedule of Services

Saturday, October 14 - 19th Weekend after Pentecost - Tone 2

5:30 PM - Divine Liturgy

Saturday, October 21 - 20th Weekend after Pentecost - Tone 3

5:30 PM - Divine Liturgy

*(Continued from page 5 - Call to Holiness)*

Sooner or later this hunger tends to lead most people to the area of personal development. Some people turn their attention to health and well-being, others to gaining financial independence, others to improving a relationship, and some to spirituality.

This hunger is really a desire for connection and union with God, or, as some might say, the source of life itself. It also manifests as a desire to be more perfectly yourself, because every step toward the-best-version-of-yourself is a step toward God. It can express itself in hundreds of ways, but all are born from the single desire to feel more at home with who you are - to truly be able to "love yourself" so that you can love others.

*(Wonder what you think?)*



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WRuchgy@gmail.com

## LITURGY SCHEDULE

Saturdays

5:30 PM English

Lenten Services

Wednesday @ 7:45 PM

Religious Education

September-June

## SACRAMENTS

Penance

*By Appointment*

Baptism & Matrimony

*Six-month membership  
required*

Funerals

*Membership of  
immediate family  
member required*

## Prayer Request

Please remember in your  
prayers.

Loretta Simon

Larry Tailard

Life's Journey is  
an *ascension* to the  
Heavenly Father that  
is made  
through personal  
attitudinal change  
and spiritual  
transformation

Promote Holy Ascension by sharing our website with them  
<http://www.holyascensionugcc.com>

## Everyday Fund-Raising For Holy Ascension

*Here are several ways to help raise funds for Holy Ascension.*

**KROGER CARD:** Register your name and number

**GOOD SEARCH:** Use this Internet search engine to gain credit  
for Holy Ascension. Use *Good Shop* to shop online.

### GIFT CARDS

Holy Ascension offers gift cards for a variety of stores in the  
community. Use them and help Holy Ascension.

### BUSCH'S and HILLERS

Re-loadable gift cards available for these stores.

**USED CANS:** Holy Ascension recycles eligible cans

*Involvement in these programs is not limited to Holy Ascension  
members. Family members, neighbors and friends can help.*



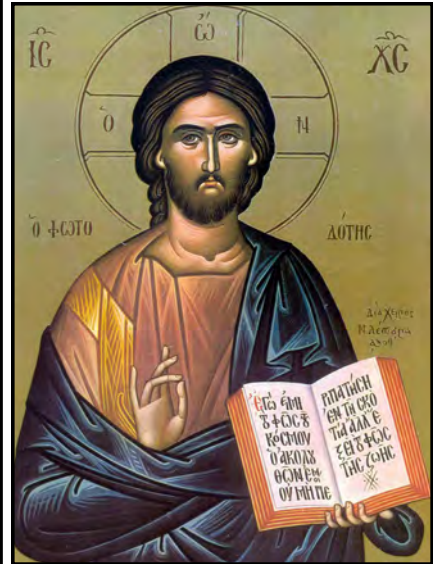
## Gaining a Deeper Understanding of the New Testament

Gospel Truth! What is it? First, let's clear some ground. "It's the Gospel truth!" How often have we heard that phrase? Not very often of late, but it used to mean that something was as certain as it could be, as certain as what was written in the Gospels. This was an older generation's approach to the Gospels. What was written there recorded with absolute veracity exactly what was said and what happened in the life of Jesus Christ. The Gospels were to be taken at face value as reporting every word, every incident exactly as it transpired.

Why? Because the Gospels were the word of God to man. Since God does not lie, the Gospels were true as written. They were, after all, the memoirs of two apostles, Matthew and John, and of two companions of apostles, Mark (who worked with Peter) and Luke (who traveled with Paul). These four men wrote biographies of Jesus Christ while firmly in the grip of the Holy Spirit's guiding hand. As the products of God almighty, these Gospels were something one could swear by - the Gospel truth.

Recent interpreters of the Gospels, however, have noted several things which make us understand the "Gospel truth" in a richer, truer way. They make the following points.

- Overemphasis on the divine element in Gospel production does little justice to the human. God habitually works through human agents, and he works with them as they are. If these human agents are to be authors, they must do the work entailed in authorship and not simply be lifeless, inert, unthinking pens in the Lord's hand, faithfully reproducing only what comes from above. Like us, they have to work to achieve; accomplishment does not come easily. This is an important point -



the Gospels are not only the work of God, they are the work of man.

Christianity is different from other religions in this regard. Some religions believe that God dictated all that is in their sacred literature and that humans only were scribes to the words of God. Christianity does not believe this and, although we say that our Sacred Literature is indeed inspired, it does not mean that the authors had nothing to do with what they produced. Again, it is humans cooperating with God to produce inspiring literature that reveals the meaning of life.

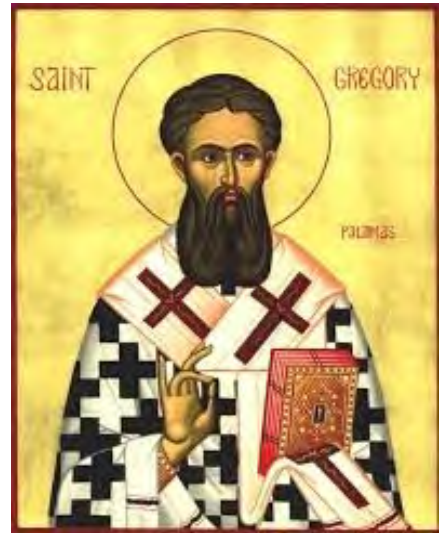
## Learning Our Faith From the Greek Fathers of the Church

The principal point of his argument, Gregory maintains, is that his opponents, those who would deny the deity of the Holy Spirit, do so out of a misplaced desire to maintain the unity of God. “If, say they, there is God and God and God, how is it that there are not three Gods, or how is it that what is glorified is not a plurality of principles?” Gregory responds, “There is one God, for the Godhead is one, and all that proceeds from him is referred to one, though we believe in three Persons.

As you can tell, the belief that God is Three-In-One is a very difficult concept. It cannot really be proven, it can only be believed. When the Church began to see Jesus as the God-Man, equal to the Father, it had to begin seeing God in a different manner. It took great debates and many Fathers of the Church to come up with the idea that our God is TRIUNE. It is our belief.

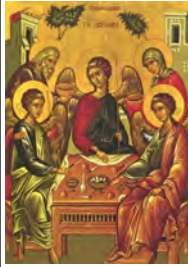
Among the three persons of the Trinity, there is “not [one] more and another less God.” That is, the Spirit is God as fully as the Son and the Father. Whatever pertains to deity, apart from the distinction between the persons, is genuinely true of all three. In terms of existence, all exist eternally. The persons are one in will as well as power. As far as essence of Godhead goes, it is “undivided in separate Persons; and there is one mingling of lights, as it were of three suns joined to each other.” If we speak, then of the Godhead, the First Cause, we conceive of God as one. However, “when we look at the Persons in whom the Godhead dwells, and at those who timelessly and with equal glory have their being from the first cause, there are three whom we worship.”

In order to convey this belief, the Fathers had to adapt philosophical language and ideas to support this religious belief. They realized they



needed to maintain the idea of ONE GOD, since they believed that God had revealed this through His Chosen People, and yet they believed that Jesus was also God because of all He did and taught. Thus, the idea of God as Triune in Persons and yet One in Nature, emerged.

God’s unity of essence and plurality of persons would seem to provide a reliable model for truly understanding what the Church means by the Trinity despite the fact that the Scriptures seem to be silent regarding the deity of the Spirit. And yet our idea of God would be incomplete without this belief.



# THE EASTERN HERALD

## СХІДНИЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.  
Vol. 63 No 42 19th Weekend After Pentecost October 14-15, 2017

### The Spirituality of the Christian East

In this article I began sharing the thoughts of Maximus the Confessor. He shared his belief that God did finish the creation of the primary *logoi* of His acts and the general essences of beings, as He knows. In other words, God's creation is complete according to His Divine Plan. Maximus also contends, however, that God is still working today, not only sustaining them in existence, but also helping all created beings, most especially humans, in fulfilling their potential. As you know, it is the understanding of the Eastern Church that we humans have been made in God's image and have been given the potential to grow in His likeness. So God continually helps us actualize our potential to be more like Jesus IF we cooperate with Him.

The spiritual and physical order of the created world develop together, by a mutual influence which holds for the whole universe. Thus, each person is

responsible for the development of the whole of the physical and spiritual universe. Our smallest gesture makes the world vibrate and changes its state. At the same time, the existence of every person as well as of everything is continually dependent on the convergence of the factors produced by the unfolding of the whole.

All this says is that when we respond to God's call to help us actualize our potential to be more like Jesus, we also influence the entire creation. We are all part of a greater whole - a whole which is vivified by the very Spirit of God. When we spiritually grow

and give ourselves to this task, we also help the entire universe to become more like God intended it to be when He created it and us.

Eastern spirituality sees us connected in a very intrinsic manner to God's total creation - we are all a part of something greater than us.

***Think about this!***



Life's Journey is an Ascension

## *The Sower and the Seed*

Dearly beloved, the reading from the holy gospel about the sower requires no explanation, but only a word of warning. In fact, the explanation has been given by Truth Himself, and it cannot be disputed by a frail human being. However, there is one point in our Lord's exposition which you ought to weigh well. It is this. If I told you that the seed represented the word, the field the world, the birds the demons, and the thorns riches, you would perhaps be in two minds as to whether to believe me. Therefore, the Lord himself deigned to explain what He had said.

Store up in your minds the Lord's words which you receive through your ears, for the word of the Lord is the nourishment of the mind. When His word is heard but not stored away in the memory, it is like food which has been eaten and then rejected by an upset stom-

ach. A person's life is in danger if he cannot retain his food; so if you receive the food of holy exhortations, but fail to store in your memory those words of life which nurture righteousness, you have good reason to fear the danger of everlasting death. Be careful, then, that the word you have received through your ears remains in your heart.

Remember these words: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." All who were there listening to Christ had ears of the body. But He who said to those same people: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," was referring, beyond doubt, to the ears of the heart. See then that the discourse which you hear takes root in your heart.

*St. Gregory the Great*

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