

CHEESEFARE SUNDAY
SUNDAY OF FORGIVENESS



Icon of the Holy Napkin

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

On this last week of preparation for the Great Fast, our assigned readings are taken from Paul's Letter to the Romans and Matthew's Gospel. This section from Paul's letter focuses on several thoughts. He writes:

Take care...for our salvation is closer than when we first accepted the faith... Let us cast off deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.... Extend a kind welcome to those who are weak in faith. Our reading ends with his exhortation to not pass judgment on others.

Although it is true that Paul thought Jesus would return in Paul's lifetime, his exhortation is well taken. We do not know the exact hour when we will be asked to make our own transition to the next life. One should never put off growing spiritually for another day or time. Now is the time for us to actualize as much of the potential we have for becoming more like Jesus Christ - like God.

The passage from Matthew's Gospel that we hear this weekend truly proffers an abundance of sage advice. First, it tells us to *forgive others* so that we may be forgiven. Second, it tells us that when we fast we should not look glum. Fasting helps us see the beauty of life. Third, we should not lay up for

ourselves earthly treasure but, rather remember that *where your treasure is, there your heart is also.*

This, of course, challenges us to consider where our hearts are. Do we consider it important to develop good and genuine, loving relationships with others, know that this then allows us to develop a genuine, loving relationship with our God?

It further challenges us to think about what we treasure the most! Are we absorbed by the "things" we own or do we cherish our families and our friends? Do we truly realize that the "things" that we own cannot bring us love. Do we understand that the "things of this world" cannot really bring us happiness and contentment?

I have found that most people, if they have a lot of things, begin to fear that their "things" will be "stolen" and therefore become prisoners to the "stuff" they have.

During the Great Fast we are called to discover where our "hearts" are. We are called to strive after the Kingdom of our Heavenly Father, working diligently to grow more each day in the likeness of God as He is manifested in the Person of His only-begotten Son, Jesus. That's why we call Him Savior.



Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

The purpose of the Great Fast (Lent) is to prepare us not only commemorate, but to enter into the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. The totality of Eastern, Byzantine Church life centers around the Resurrection. The Great Fast is intended to be a "workshop" where the character of the believer is spiritually uplifted and strengthened; where his life is rededicated to the principles and ideals of the Gospel; where fasting and prayer culminate in deep conviction of life; and where apathy and disinterest turn into vigorous activities of faith and good works.

Lent is not for the sake of the Lent itself, as fasting is not for the sake of fasting. Rather, these are means by which and for which the individual believer prepares himself to reach for, accept and attain the calling of his Savior. Therefore, the significance of Great Lent is highly appraised, not only by the monks who gradually increased the length of time of the Lent, but also by the faithful. The suggested practices are the monastic rules. These rules exist not as a Pharisaic law, "burdens grievous to be borne", but as an ideal to be striven for; not as an end in themselves, but as a means to the purification of heart, the enlightening of mind, the liberation of soul and body from sin, and the spiritual perfection crowned in the virtue of love towards God and

Українська Греко-Католицька Церква

Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church



man.

In our Church, asceticism is not exclusively for the "professional" religious, but for each layperson as well, according to their strength. As such, Great Lent is a sacred Institute of the Church to serve the individual believer in participating as a member of the Mystical Body of Christ. It provides each person an annual opportunity for self-examination and improving the standards of faith and morals in his Christian life. The deep intent of the believer during Great Lent is encapsulated in the words of St Paul: "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus".

Through spending more time than usual in prayer and meditation on the Holy Scripture and the Holy Traditions of the Church, the believer in Christ becomes through the grace of God more godlike. The attitude towards this period is very positive, it is not so much a period of repentance as it is a time to more intensely focus on our spiritual development as humans.

Our Worship of God Through the Great Fast

The manner in which we liturgically observe the Great Fast reveals and communicates the spirit of Lent. It makes us see, feel and experience that *bright sadness* which is the true message and gift of Lent. It can be said without exaggeration that the spiritual fathers and the sacred writers who composed the hymns of the *Triodion* who little by little organized the general structures of the Lenten services, who adorned the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts with that special beauty which is proper to it, had a unique understanding of the human soul. They truly knew the art of repentance (*metanoia*) and have made this art accessible to everyone who has ears to hear and eyes to see.

If you have never experienced this special Lenten service, I would highly encourage you to attend, at least once, this beautiful Liturgy. Our chant melodies, which are different from those of our usual Divine Liturgy, have a unique character and melody. They are spiritually soothing and uplifting in a different way.

If you attend this evening Liturgy, you immediately understand this idea of *bright sadness*. A certain quite sadness permeates the service: the vestments are a deep red; the Royal Doors are closed more frequently; profound prostrations are made; and the beginning of the service is served in partial darkness. It tends to have a



calming effect after a long day and, if one is fasting, the fast is broken by the reception of the “Food Of Life”, that is the Body and Blood of Christ.

Through the gradual introduction of the fullness of light into the worship space, we experience a great truth” God came into the world in the person of Jesus in order to cast light on the meaning and purpose of life. The message of Jesus, the Gospel, sheds great light on our human lack of real understanding of earthly existence and the human condition.

One of the unique rituals during the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, is the offering of Incense, a very ancient rituals found in many, many different religions. We pray during this ritual: *Let my prayer ascend like incense before You and my hands lifted up like an evening sacrifice.* Again another experience of what is taking place when we gather together to worship our God. This service is served every week of Lent.



Holy Ascension Community News

An Eastern Catholic Church in Plymouth Michigan

GREAT FAST SCHEDULE

Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Wednesday Evenings at 7:30 PM

February 14, 21, 28

March 7, 14, 21

PLEASE NOTE the change of time from the last several years. The school is not being used on Wednesday evenings and so we have our service at an earlier hour.

ADULT DISCUSSION SESSIONS

Saturday Evenings at 5:00 PM

February 17, 24

March 3, 10, 17

I will provide an article one week before the session so that it can be read and we can have a discussion. First one February 10th.

LENTEN SOUP DINNER

Saturday March 3rd

We're making plans for the Great Fast. It has become a tradition in the parishes I serve to hold a MEATLESS SOUP DINNER at the mid-

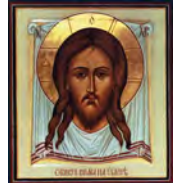
point of the fast. Would like to know how many people would be interested in such an event. PLEASE LET ME KNOW!

I think being in love with life is a key to eternal youth



CALLED TO HOLINESS

In the last issue of this article, I suggested that the word "holy" is often expressed as a "hunger" for a true relationship with God and that this *hunger* is referred to as a *physical hunger* or a *spiritual hunger*.



Spiritual hunger and thirst are purely states of the psyche, the soul. They have nothing to do with the body. They arise in the soul and are directed towards something incorporeal. In the Sermon on the Mount, their object is said to be righteousness (*dikaiosyne*), something spiritual. Gregory of Nyssa identifies righteousness and inner peace with the whole of virtue.

Very significant in Christ's statement is His promise that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness "will find fulfillment" for: "They shall be filled." This statement preserves the analogy between spiritual and physical hunger and thirst.

The parallelism between physical and spiritual hunger and thirst is vividly exemplified in St Nectarios' discussion of the desire for the Supreme Good, that is, for God. He speaks of the emptiness in the heart of man, of the pain in it and of the heart's strong (Continued on page 8)

A Prayer-A-Day For the Great Fast

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12th

Almighty God, let me joyfully begin this season of abstinence – this Great Fast. Let me shine with the bright radiance of the teachings of Christ, with the brightness of love and the splendor of prayer, with the purity of holiness and the strength of good courage. So, clothed in raiment of light, let me hasten to the Holy Resurrection on the third day, that shines upon the world with the glory of eternal life. Help me, O Father, to use this time well, using the practices and prayers that I have freely chosen, to spiritually grow more like Jesus, the Christ. Help me, O Father, to truly desire to become Your child by imitating Jesus. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13th

Heavenly Father, let me accept the grace of this Fast as a gift from You. Help me to make it a time of personal change, opening my heart and mind to believe that to become Your child, I should imitate Jesus. Help me to grow in my understanding of the meaning and purpose of my life and, by my spiritual practices, to discover how deeply You love me. Grant me the courage to humbly live my life and to know that You desire me to be a part, at this very time, of Your wonderful creation. Help me understand the teachings of Jesus and then grant me the courage to try to live like Him. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14th

O Heavenly Father, as I begin this Fast, I beg You to help me to make it a time of spiritual growth. Help me, through my observances, to focus my mind and life on growing more like Jesus. Help me understand all that You have done for me through Your Son, Jesus. Help me to truly believe that through His Passion, He gave me freedom from my passions, putting to death the passions of my flesh by His Cross. Through my observance of this Fast, count me worthy to see Your Divine Passion and glorious Resurrection and that, having been well-pleasing to Your glory through this Fast, I may receive Your great and abundant Mercy. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15th

Almighty God, when You created me, I believe You gave me the freedom to return Your love. As I think about this, I realize that You have, through Jesus, revealed to me how to do this. The way is to imitate Jesus Christ. Help me to engage in practices during this Fast that can help me to freely begin to cooperate with Your grace and become the person You created me to be. I know that I am called to change the way I think and behave, imitating how Jesus lived, so that I might realize and learn how to love my neighbors as myself. It is in this way that I return Your love. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

A Prayer-A-Day For the Great Fast

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16th

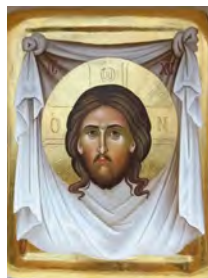
O Heavenly Father, source of all purity, help me to persevere in my efforts to observe this Fast. Look upon me as I make my prostrations before You. Be attentive to the lifting up of my hands in prayer. Help me to understand what Your Son, my Lord and Savior, did for me through His sacrifice on the Cross. Since His sacrifice destroyed Death, help me to understand what this means for me. Help me to grow in His likeness. Help me to understand that the meaning and purpose of my earthly life is to grow in His likeness so that every day I may become more like the person You created me to be. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17th

Heavenly Father, today I use the prayer of our Church saying: Armed with courage through your sufferings, O great martyr Theodore, by God's power you have invisibly defended the true spiritual worship. The impious idols and the cruel tyrant you have rendered powerless, scorning torments and the fire that burns for but a moment. Alike in name and in reality, you are a gift from God. By your intercession, O holy martyr, save me who celebrates your memory and help me to persevere, as you did, in growing in my likeness of Jesus. O Gracious and Loving Father, I offer this prayer honoring Your martyr knowing that You have given him to me as an example. To You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit I render glory. AMEN

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18th

Today, O Merciful Father, I declare the Church's belief that icons of Your Son, His Mother and all the saints are worthy of veneration. I pray: Illumined by the light of the Church's belief, I offer praise and thanksgiving to You, my God, for the persons whose icons I venerate. I humbly venerate the holy icons of Christ, of the all-pure Virgin and the saints, knowing they represent persons who have reflected Your great glory. For, as Basil says, the honor shown to an icon passes to the Person it represents. Through the prayers of Your Undeiled Mother and of all the saints, I beseech You, Christ our God, to bestow upon me Your great mercy. I offer praise to You, Father, and to Your Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN



A GOOD WORK FOR THE WEEK

Perhaps this week you might think about remembering a person in your prayers that you have lost touch with and, then, send them a brief note. If there is a person who you have been estranged from, it would be even better.

OR, if you are not personally getting enough sleep, why not trying to go to bed a little earlier. You have to love yourself so that you can love your neighbor.

OR, you could think of something that you are doing to focus your efforts at spiritual growth and send it to me to share with others.

Schedule of Services

Holy Ascension
Eastern Catholic Church
1062 Church Street
Plymouth, MI 48170

Rev Wayne J. Ruchgy PhD
Serving Priest

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

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Saturdays

5:30 PM English

Lenten Services

Wednesdays @ 7:45 PM

Religious Education

September-June

SACRAMENTS

Penance

By Appointment

Baptism & Matrimony

*Six-month membership
required*

Funerals

*Membership of an
immediate
family member required*

Saturday February 10 - Weekend of Cheesefare & Encounter - Tone 3

5:30 PM - Divine Liturgy

Wednesday, February 14 - Auxentius, Venerable

7:30 PM - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Saturday February 10 - First Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 4

5:00 PM - First Adult Discussion Session

5:30 PM - Divine Liturgy

(Continued from page 5 - Call to Holiness)

desire or thirst to enjoy the Supreme Good. There is, he says, an emptiness in the heart of man, in his emotional center. This emptiness, he explains, can be satisfied neither by material wealth, nor by worldly glory, nor by anything else on earth that is regarded as good. It cannot be satisfied by worldly goods, because the soul, being spiritual in nature and immortal, has infinite spiritual longings. Therefore, "she longs for and seeks, like a thirsty deer, the enjoyment of the Highest Good, God. That God alone can fill the great emptiness in us, satisfy our spiritual hunger, is taught by the God-Man Christ Himself. In the Gospel according to Saint John, Christ says: *"I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst"*



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

<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

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.

Learning our Faith from the Greek Fathers of the Church

I have been sharing the argument that St. Cyril had with Nestorius about the Person of Christ which lead to two things: (1) the Church developing precise statements with regard to what she believes about Christ, and (2) Nestorius being declared a heretic. I present all this so that you, my readers, might hopefully have a clearer understanding of what we believe about Jesus and how this came about.

Cyril wrote this: Indeed the mystery of Christ runs the risk of being disbelieved precisely because it is so incredibly wonderful. For God was in humanity. He who was above all creation was in our human condition; the invisible one was made visible in the flesh; he who is from the heavens and from on high was in the likeness of earthly things; the immaterial one could be touched; he who is free in his own nature came in the form of a slave; he who blesses all creation became accursed; he who is all righteousness was numbered among transgressors; life itself came in the appearance of death.

How is this possible? "All this followed because the body which tasted death belonged to no other but

to him who is the Son by nature.

The Son's birth from the Virgin Mary, his supernatural conception through the Holy Spirit, ties in closely with the *purpose* of his entrance into human history. The purpose of that coming is that sin might be conquered and human nature joined to his divine nature. As Cyril puts it, the Son became a human being "in order

to reconstitute our condition within himself; first of all in his holy, wonderful and truly amazing birth and life. This is why he himself became the first one to be born from the Holy Spirit - according to the flesh - so that he could trace a path for grace to come to us.

Through the union of the Son with genuine human nature, "he transmits

the grace of sonship even to us so that we too can become children of the Spirit, insofar as human nature had first achieved this possibility in him. Christ has become a new "rootstock" for the human race, "a new beginning".

Think about this. God has always decided to do this for humankind. What great love



CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

The Courage to Pray

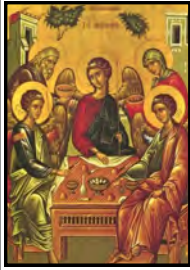
As I expressed in the last issue of this article, we encounter the Lord in a number of particular situations. A second form of encounter is the encounter in the truth. An encounter is only true when the two persons meeting are true. And from this point of view, we are continually falsifying this encounter. Not only in ourselves but in our image of God, it is very difficult for us to be true. Throughout the day we are a succession of social personalities, sometimes unrecognizable to others or even to ourselves. And when the time comes to pray and we want to present ourselves to God we often feel lost because we do not know which of these social personalities is the true human person, and how no sense of our own true identity. The several successive persons that we present to God are not ourselves. There is something of us in each of them but the whole person is missing. And that is why a prayer which could rise powerfully from the heart of the true person cannot find its way between the successive men of straw we offer to God. Each of these speaks a word which is true in its own partial way, but does not express the other partial personalities we have been during the day. It is extremely important that we find our unity, our fundamental identity. Otherwise we cannot encounter the Lord in truth. The search for this unity may take time. We should be on the watch all the time to see that none of our words and actions are incompatible with the fundamental integrity we are seeking. We must try and discover the real person we are, the secret person, the core of the person to come and the only eternal reality which is already in us.

I don't know if this makes any sense. I guess to even begin to comprehend this we have to



take time and just think about who we are and to reflect on what we discover. I find that it is not easy in this hectic world to just stop and think about who we think we are - our true and real identity.

To *know yourself* - to know who you really are - is critical. To know yourself you have to know your thoughts about yourself, about others, about God, about your world and feel that you can actually state what each are. This is, in truth, the beginning of prayer. Knowing yourself, you can then attempt to encounter God.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 64 No 6 Weekend Of the Cheesefare February 10-11, 2018

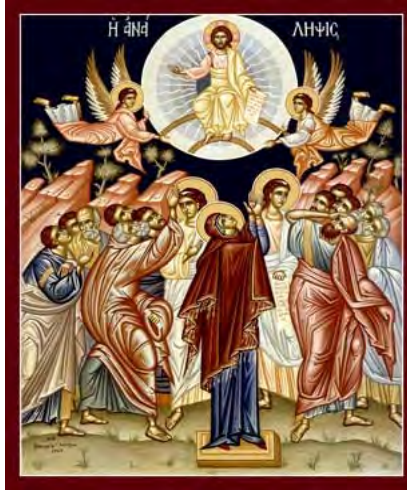
The Spirituality of the Christian East

When I thought about our Eastern Spirituality I realized that it truly has seven characteristics. I thought that I would present each of these characteristics and then comment on them.

The first of these seven is that is based on the Creed and can be captured by the term TRINITARIAN. We pray the following:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Only-begotten, born of the Father before all ages, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made.... And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke through the prophets.

All of our prayers end with declaring that God is Triune, that is



Life's Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

Three Persons united in One Godhead. Why is this important? It is important for several reasons. First, because the Second Person of the Trinity also has a human nature due to His Incarnation as a human being. This very fact connects us to God in an unique way.

Second, because we are connected to God in some way, we believe that we are brought into

and maintained in existence by the Power of God, the Holy Spirit.

Third, because we are made in God's image and have the potential to grow in His likeness, as manifested in the person of Jesus, we share, albeit in a manner that compatible with our human nature, some of God's powers.

Therefore our *spirituality* is one that draws us to understand who we are in God's creation and to work to gradually actualize our potential to grow in the likeness of Jesus, Who is the Image of God.

Forgive, So That You May Be Forgiven

Let us fix our attention on the blood of Christ and recognize how precious it is to God His Father, since it was shed for our salvation and brought the grace of repentance to all the world.

Recall especially what the Lord Jesus said when He taught gentleness and forbearance. Be merciful, He said, so that you may have mercy shown to you. Forgive, so that you may be forgiven. As you treat others, so you will be treated. As you give, so you will receive. As you judge, so you will be judged. As you are kind to others, so you will be treated kindly. The measure of your giving will be the measure of your receiving.

Let these commandments and precepts strengthen us to live in humble obedience

to His sacred words. As Scripture asks: Whom shall I look upon with favor except the humble, peaceful man who trembles at my words?

Sharing then in the heritage of so many vast and glorious achievements, let us hasten toward the goal of peace, set before us from the beginning. Let us keep our eyes firmly fixed on the Father and Creator of the whole universe, and hold fast to his splendid and transcendent gifts of peace and all His blessings.

St. Clement of Rome

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