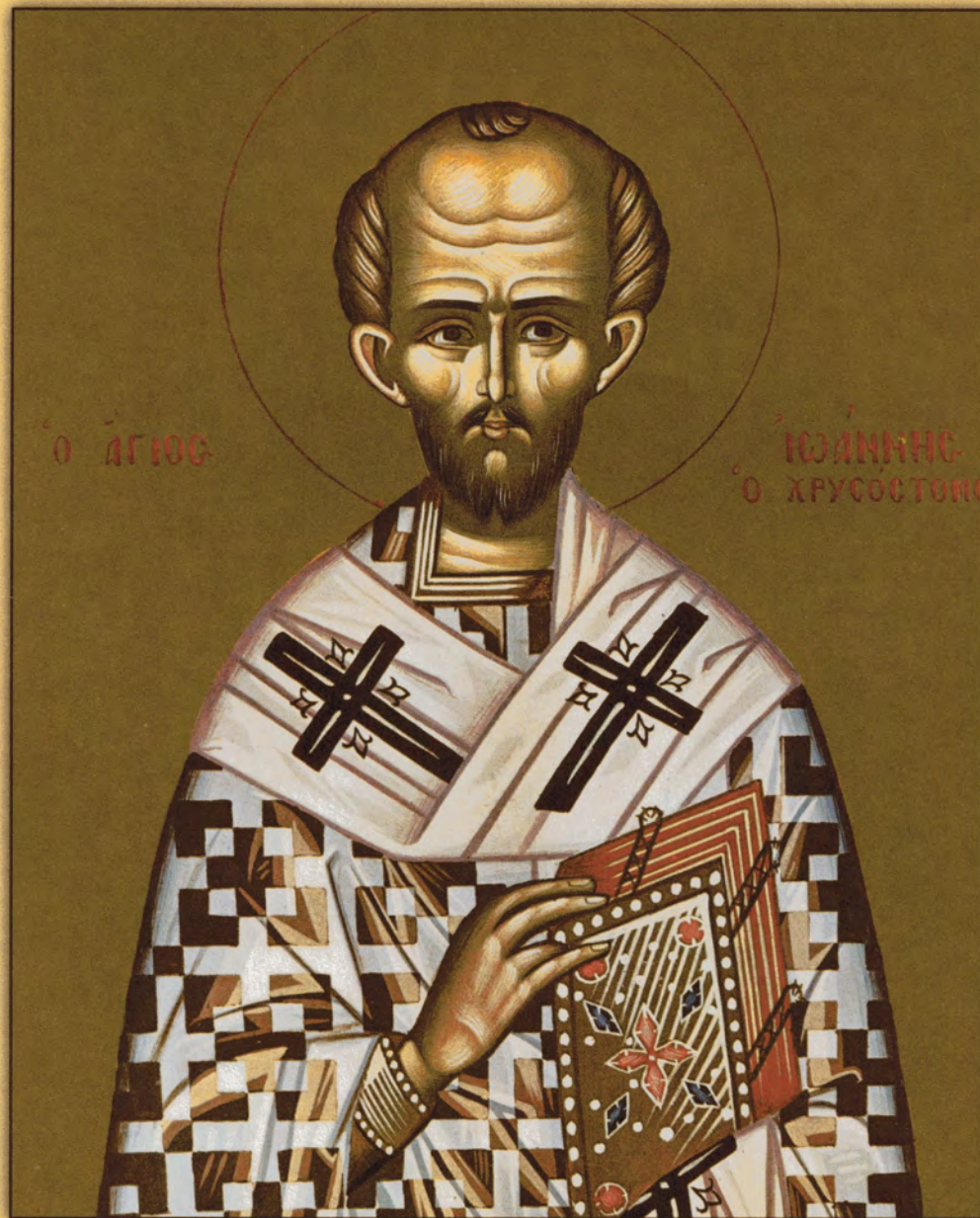


TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



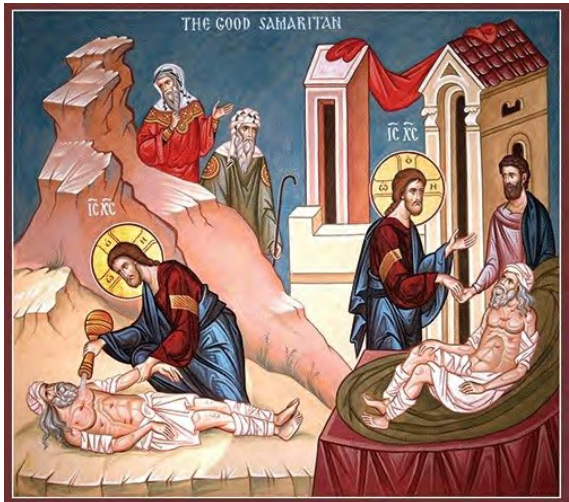
*Icon of Saint John Chrysostom -- November 13th*

## REFLECTIONS ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this 25th weekend after Pentecost our readings are again taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians and St. Luke's retelling of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Both readings have a poignant message.

In his letter to the Ephesians St. Paul call us we have received a *life worthy of the calling*. What is the calling we and the Ephesians have received? It is a calling to envision that all humankind is united through the Person of Jesus. Jesus, Who is God's revelation to us, tells us that all humans belong to the same human family and are related to one another. Further Jesus revealed that we are all a part of the same human family in order to *learn* how to unconditionally love others. Learning how to love in this manner is critical so that we can not only accept God's unconditional love but also return His love. How do we return God's unconditional love? By learning how to unconditionally love other human beings regardless of how they treat us. To do this means to accept all others, to refrain from judging any others and to forgive all regardless of their behaviors.

I think that all can immediately see how this message fits with the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan refused to disregard his Jewish brother who was in need even though he was very aware of what Jews thought of Samaritans. He saw someone in need and he responded with unconditional love.



In contrast to the Samaritan's response to the man who fell in with robbers, we see the behaviors of both a priest and a Levite, supposedly the leaders of their religion. They could not be bothered with the man in need even though he was a fellow Jew. They surely didn't live what they professed to believe. They didn't have time for "one of their own."

So our readings this weekend challenge us to look at how we live, think and behave. Do we truly see all other humans as members of our same human family? Are we willing to treat all others with kindness and respect regardless of how they respond to us? Are we caught in the vicious human cycle that seems to permeate our society today by *treating others as they treat us* in stead of *treating us in a manner that we want to be treated*? Do we truly want to become more like Jesus so that we can truly be God's children?

## SOME THOUGHTS ON PRAYER



True prayer is not easily defined since it so depends on the person praying. All I can say, however, is that true prayer is not just the repetition of prayers composed by others, even if it is me. Prayer is when I can use the prayers written by others and then turning them into an opportunity to *lift my mind and heart to God*. While I can use the written prayers of the Church or others to begin the process, prayer must, eventually, result in my personal lifting of my mind and heart to God.

For example, I personally love the prayers of the Divine Liturgy and find that they can lift my mind and heart to God. But I also know that it is important that I make these prayers my own personal prayers. How I hopefully accomplish this is by letting God's Spirit within me to respond to certain *words or phrases*. Anytime we use written prayers we can allow the Spirit within us to choose certain words or phrases to lift our minds and

hearts to God. The Spirit will do this if we allow Him to do it. There are several prayers in the Divine Liturgy that I find allow me to do this. One is the prayer before the Gospel. If you have prayed the Liturgy with me, you know that I attempt to say it aloud as the congregation sings the Alleluia. The words are wonderful. The first words are important to me:

O gracious Master, pour forth into our hearts the spotless light of Your divine wisdom and open the eyes of our minds that we might understand the teachings of Your Holy Gospel.

When I say these words I truly desire that the words of the Gospel will not only influence my mind and heart but also those who listen to the Gospel. So you can use the words of the Church to stimulate true prayer. The clue is not to just say the words but allow your mind and heart to reflect upon the words and make them a part of your praise and worship of God. The rest of this pre-Gospel prayer is:

Instill in us the fear of Your blessed commandments so that, having curbed all carnal desires, we may lead a spiritual life both thinking and doing everything that pleases You.

I use this by way of example. Don't stop just reciting the prayer but allow the prayer to turn into something very personal and individual. True prayer becomes prayer when it becomes an individual expression of our thoughts to God, our Creator and Father.

## ACQUIRING THE MIND OF CHRIST

In this life we are free, but after death, the potential tragedy that exists with human freedom will be honored: our choice is set. John Chrysostom explains that there is a universal rule that we can use to discern the reality of heaven and hell: no one from among those who strive to please God and live a virtuous life according to the commandments will ever doubt the teaching about the judgment and hell. From their own experience, they come to know and understand, to varying degrees, the death that sin causes and the life that virtue brings. St. Gregory of Sinai tells us that “passion-embroiled states are foretastes of hell’s torments, just as the activity of the virtues is a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven”.

In our life, we place the different ‘ingredients’ within our souls, either the virtues or passions and sins. Once we encounter the uncreated flame of God’s presence outside this world, these ingredients are indelibly ‘baked’ into our souls. For St. Gregory of Sinai, after death,

The fire, darkness, the worm, and the nether world correspond to ubiquitous self-indulgence, total ignorance, all-pervasive lecherous pleasures, and the fear-fullness and foul stench of sin



[which already now] can be seen to be active, as foretastes and first fruits of hell’s torments in sinners in whose souls they have taken root.

I know that these words are scary. I also know that their true meaning is cloaked in an effort to call all persons to truly embrace the revelation made by God through Jesus Christ. When you contrast these words to the words by the Fathers

about *Theosis*, that is the call to union with God, they take on a different meaning.

All I know is this. We have been created by God with free will and placed in an environment, namely this present world, to learn how to become *spiritual* people - His children. We are given many opportunities to grow and change. How we respond to this situation is totally within our free will. God continues to call us, through life, to change and become spiritual persons like His only-begotten Son, Jesus. It is up to us. God, however, never gives up on us and continuously calls us to come into communion with Him. All He does is to continue to love us and hope that we will respond to His love by trying to become His true and genuine children. He calls us to cooperate with Him in our salvation.



# Holy Ascension Community News

An Eastern Catholic Church in Plymouth Michigan



Holy Ascension Christian Community has had a long tradition of working together with the First Methodist Church of Plymouth to provide a dinner to persons who are temporarily seen as homeless.

## HOMELESS SHELTER DINNER

*Friday, November 16, 2018*

*Please let Mary Christie know you can help*

## ST. PHILIP'S FAST

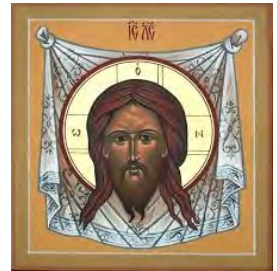
Our preparation for the Winter Feasts of Christmas and Theophany begins this week on Thursday November 15th. What will you do to prepare?

Always believe that something wonderful is going to happen. Even with all the ups and downs, never take a day for granted. Smile, cherish the little things and remember to hug the ones you really love.



## CALLED TO HOLINESS

The everyday Holy Moments of ordinary people like you and me is what will change the world again. I say "again" because our faith ancestors, the first Christians, already changed the world once. The culture they had to overcome and transform was even more brutal than today's society. By transforming it, the first Christians created a blueprint for cultural transformation that every generation of Christians should closely consult. But the essence of that blueprint is the idea that holiness is possible.



The future of Christianity and the world will rise or fall based upon the unconsidered possibility that the average person in the street is capable of collaborating with God to create Holy Moments on a daily basis.

Whenever and wherever Christians have taken the idea that holiness is possible seriously, Christianity has thrived. Whenever and wherever the biggest lie in the history of Christianity has prevailed and everyday holiness has been set aside,

*(Continued on page 8)*

# A PRAYER A DAY FOR THE ST. PHILIP'S FAST

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## **THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup>**

Heavenly Father, help me to begin my preparation for the feast of Your Incarnation as a human person, Jesus Christ, with an open mind and heart. I beg your assistance as I attempt to prepare myself for a meaningful celebration of this feast since I know that my world becomes so hectic at this time. Help me to truly understand why You chose, from all eternity, to become a human being and what Your Incarnation reveals to me about human life. Help me to not get so tied up with preparing for this holy day that I forget to think about what this feast truly means. Help me to focus on giving the gift of genuine love to others during this time and not just things. I make this prayer to You Who I believe to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

## **FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup>**

Heavenly Father, on this second day of the St. Philip's Fast, we remember the Apostle and Evangelist Matthew. In his Gospel he shared that Isaiah the prophet foretold that "the virgin shall be with child and give birth to a son and they shall call him Emmanuel", a name which means "God is with us." Help me to truly understand what it means that You, my God, are with me. Help me to reach down into the very depths of myself and find Your Spirit and

Lifeforce within me. Help me to genuinely believe that Your Incarnation has revealed to those who dare to believe in Your Son Jesus, that He reveals to us the truth of my sharing in Your Lifeforce and Spirit. I make this prayer to You, my God, Who I believe to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

## **SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17<sup>TH</sup>**

Heavenly Father, on this third day of the Fast in preparation for the feast of the Nativity of Your Son Jesus, I ask You to strengthen my resolve to truly make this time of preparation a time of spiritual growth. Help me to take time each day to think about what I am preparing to celebrate together with my Parish Family. I find that it is so easy to become distracted from the true meaning of this feast since our society has turned it into a commercial "gift-buying" season without any thought to what Christmas truly means. Help me not to get consumed in the frantic search for "bargain" gift deals by increasing my awareness of what I am about to celebrate. I make this prayer to You, my God, Who I believe to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

## **SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18<sup>TH</sup>**

Heavenly Father, on this fourth day of this Fast, we remember the holy martyrs Plato and Roman who voluntarily died rather than deny their belief in Jesus Christ. As I think about their act of self-sacrifice, I realize that it is imperative that I truly focus on the real meaning of Christmas and voluntarily refuse to get so consumed with "giving things" to others and "having parties" that I forget to remember that I am celebrating Your revelation to me that You are the source of my life. This feast tells me that Jesus, Your only-begotten Son, was a human like me and He willingly chose to live a life that extended unconditional love to all others. Help me to grow in His likeness. I make this prayer to You, my God, Who I believe to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

## THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY - WHO IS GOD?

Since the being of the Holy Trinity is one, whatever the Father wills, the Son and the Holy Spirit will also. What the Father does, the Son and the Holy Spirit do also. There is no will and no action of God the Father which is not at the same time the will and action of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In Himself, in eternity, as well as towards the world in creation, revelation, incarnation, redemption, sanctification, and glorification—the will and action of the Trinity are one: from the divine Father, through the divine Son, in the divine Holy Spirit. Every action of God is the action of the Three. No one person of the Trinity acts independently of or in isolation from the others. The action of each is the action of all; the action of all is the action of each. And the divine action is essentially one. *(This is why all of our prayers are directed to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are religiously truly Trinitarians).*

Since each person of the Trinity is one with the others, each knows the same Truth and exercises the same Love. The knowledge of each is the knowledge of all, and the Love of each is the Love of all.

If taken in distinction, each person of the Trinity knows and loves the others with such absolute perfection, knowledge and love that there is nothing unknown and nothing unloved of each in the others, and all in all. Thus, if the creaturely knowledge of men can unite minds in full unanimity, and if the creaturely love of men can bring the divided together into one heart and one soul and even one flesh, how incomparably more perfect and absolutely uniting must be the oneness when the Knowers and Lovers are eternal and divine. In Eastern Christian terminology, the Father,



the Son and the Holy Spirit are called three divine persons. Person is defined here simply as the subject of existence and life - hypostasis in the traditional church language.

As the being, essence or nature of a reality answers the question “what?”, the person of a reality answers the question “which one?” or “who?” Thus, when we ask “What is God?” we answer that God is the divine, perfect, eternal, absolute and, when we ask “Who is God?” we answer that God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

***It is a dogma of our faith that  
God is Three-In-One!***

# 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, November 10--25th Weekend after Pentecost - Tone 8**  
**5:30 PM - Divine Liturgy**

**Saturday, November 17--26th Weekend after Pentecost - Tone 1**  
**5:30 PM - Divine Liturgy**

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

Christianity has fumbled along clumsily with limited impact or become stagnant. For example, in Europe today, worse than having limited impact or truly stagnating, we are witnessing Christianity retreating from the culture.



The single idea that holiness is possible, effectively communicated to Christians of all ages and activated on a massive scale, is enough to turn the tide for Christianity in our society.

At the same time, Christianity needs a serious image overhaul in modern societies around the world. Too many people have accepted too many of the lies that have prevailed in society. The result is that Christianity is seen as a thing of the past.

## Prayer Request

Please remember in your prayers.

Loretta Simon  
Larry Tailard

**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.*

**Life's Journey is  
an *ascension* to the  
Heavenly Father that  
is made**

**through personal  
attitudinal change  
and spiritual**

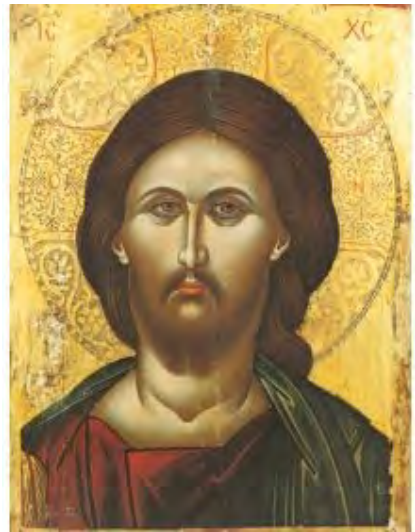


## MORE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

Given the incomplete state of the nature of humankind, the redemptive death of Christ makes mankind's spiritual growth possible. But the death of Christ is truly redemptive and "life-giving" precisely because it is the death of the Son of God in the flesh. In the East, the cross is envisaged not so much as the punishment of the just one, which "satisfies" a transcendent Justice requiring a retribution for man's sins. As one author Eastern Theologian puts it: "the death of the Cross was effective, not as a death of an Innocent One, but as the death of the Incarnate Lord." The point was not to satisfy a legal requirement, but to vanquish the frightful cosmic reality of death, which held humanity under its usurped control and pushed it into the vicious cycle of sin and corruption. Athanasius of Alexandria has shown in his polemics against Arianism, God alone is able to vanquish death, because He "alone has immortality".

So think about this. God creates us as free beings and then, in order to call us to union with Him, He does all in His power to eliminate death in order to call us to deeper union with Him. He did not create us as mindless beings that could only return His love. Rather, He created us as free beings - made in His image - so that we might voluntarily return His love. He then came and revealed to us, through the Person of Jesus, how to live in order to spiritually grow. Although we still must go through physical death, He showed us that physical death does not catapult us into nothingness but, rather, into an eternal cycle of growing in our union with Him.

When the Church declares that Christ destroyed death, she declares that He destroyed the possible results of death, namely the loss of all existence. By His resurrection He revealed that



physical death does not destroy our "person" but rather allows it to continue in a different way.

Prior to the coming of Jesus, mankind, as he was forced to deal with human death, had no understanding of "eternal" life/immortality. God revealed through Jesus that human life, because it is a sharing in divine life, is indestructible and continues after physical death. Indeed redemption is not primarily a justification, but, rather, a victory over death.

Jesus is God's revelation to us about the meaning and purpose of life. He is the prototype of human nature. In Him we see what it means to be human.

## UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY GOSPELS

In Luke's Gospel Jesus never preaches immediately to Gentiles, nor is the kingdom fully established with Jesus. The kingdom must include the Gentiles, but this universal scope is realized only after Jesus' ascension, in the ministry of the Church, as described by ACTS. Luke repeatedly reminds his readers that the time of the Parousia (i.e., *the Second Coming of Jesus*) is quite indefinite; the kingdom did not appear in full glory with the resurrection of Jesus, nor with the fall of Jerusalem; now, within the Church it is gradually but surely being revealed - in anticipation of the final fulfillment of all promises and hopes.

Within this larger framework, Luke will develop other, subordinate themes. He writes the "Gospel of Mercy": or the "Gospel of Great Pardons." Luke alone of the Synoptic Gospels includes such episodes or parables as: the sinful woman; the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son; Jesus' presence in the house of Zacchaeus; Jesus' executioners; the good thief. Luke records Jesus' words, "Be merciful as your Father is merciful," which Matthew reads as "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father". The entire sermon "on the plain": focuses attention upon the social bond of charity; Matthew's catechetical sermon "on the mount" delays over the legal aspects of the subject and the relevance of the Mosaic Law. Luke makes other, notable additions to the text of Mark. At 5:32 he inserts the phrase "to repentance" after the statement that "I have not come to call the just but sinners". A similar modification occurs at Luke 8:12.

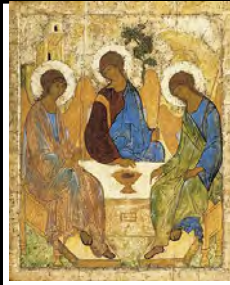
The pardon of Jesus reaches out to all men, so that Luke has composed the "Gospel of Universal Salvation." The genealogical table (3:23-38) does not limit Jesus' ancestry to the royal line of David, as in Matthew 1:1-6, but places Jesus within the family tree of the entire human race as a son of Adam who was of God. The faith of Abraham can be shared



with all men, thereby making them Abraham's children. Immediately preceding this statement was the fuller rendition of an Isaiah text; Mark 1:3 and Matthew 3:3 omit the words that "all mankind shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6).

This same merciful concern reaches to the poor and lowly, so that Luke merits to be called the "Gospel of the Poor". This spirit shines brightly in the Infancy Narrative, where the poor and insignificant are chosen for the greatest of privileges. I shall continue in the next issue, sharing how this true.

***Why not read Luke?***



# THE EASTERN HERALD

## СХІДНИЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.  
Vol. 64 No 45 25th Weekend after Pentecost November 10-11, 2018

### THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

The Bible offers a sufficient number of passages about human participation in God for it to be taken as an important image of salvation. But perhaps it does not speak about it as much as Eastern theologians. The two primary biblical texts are

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires (2 Peter 1:4)

I said, 'you are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.'" (Psalm 82:6)

The Petrine passage accentuates one of the leading motifs in the Eastern Church's understanding of salvation, namely release from the corruption and mortality caused by the evil desires of the world. Our Eastern theology does not focus so much on guilt as on mortality as the main problem of humanity. In addition, in the East, the concept of sin is viewed as something human beings do and choose for themselves rather than something "hereditary" as the result of the first human beings' sin in the distant past. Cyril of Alexandria comments on this passage from 2 Peter to note that we are all called to participate in divinity, not just a few "saints." Although Christ alone is God by nature, all people are called to become God "by participation." In such participation we become likenesses of Christ



*Life's Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father*

and perfect images of God the Father. Our Eastern theologians claim that the doctrine has a solid biblical basis that goes beyond the two explicit texts I have mentioned. There are other texts which I shall share in subsequent issues that form the true foundation for our approach to spirituality - that support our Eastern concept of *Theosis*.

*More to follow!*

### *Reflection on the Good Samaritan*

First, we must pity the ill fortune of the man who fell unarmed and helpless among robbers, and who was so rash and unwise as to choose the road in which he could not escape the attack of robbers. For the unarmed can never escape the armed, the heedless the villain, the unwary the malicious. Since malice is ever armed with guile, fenced round with cruelty, fortified with deceit, and ready for fierce attack...

He poured in wine, that is, the blood of His passion, and oil, that is, the anointing of the chrism, that pardon might be granted by His blood, sanctification be conferred by the chrism...

The wounded parts are bound up by the heavenly Physician, and containing a salve within themselves, are by the working of the remedy restored to their former soundness. Having

poured in wine and oil, he placed him upon His beast...

For the Inn is the Church, which receives travelers, who are tired with their journey through the world, and oppressed with the load of their sins; where the wearied traveler casting down the burden of his sins is relieved, and after being refreshed is restored with wholesome food. And this is what is here said, and took care of him. For outside is everything that is conflicting, hurtful and evil, while within the Inn is contained all rest and health...

He said, if you see any one oppressed, say not surely he is wicked; but be he Gentile or Jew and need help, dispute not, he has a claim to your assistance, into whatever evil he has fallen.

*St. John Chrysostom*