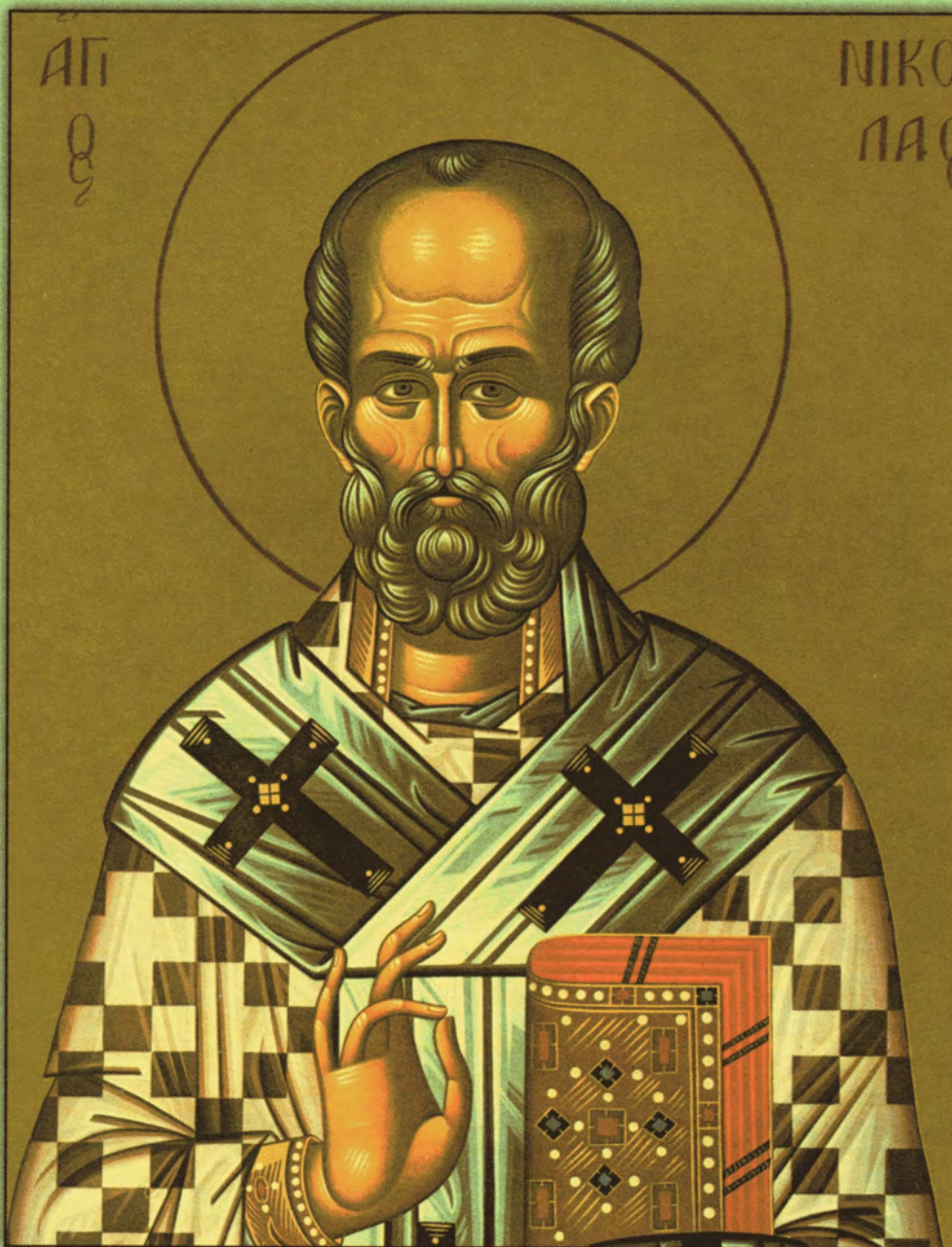


TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



*Icon of Saint Nicholas -- December 6th*

## A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND



On this 28th weekend after Pentecost we hear readings from Paul's Letter to the Colossians and Luke's version of Jesus' encounter with a man who asks: *Good teacher, what must I do to share in everlasting life?* In this version Jesus, instead of the rich man, responds with a repetition of a basic version of the 10 commandments, which were established by Judaism. You will recall in the version found in St. Matthew's Gospel, the response is to *love the Lord God with your whole heart, soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself.* In both versions, however, the man declares that He has lived according to these basic rules and wants to know what else he must do. In both instances the response is: *Sell all you have and give to the poor. You will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me.* So in both versions the solution is: Don't get consumed with "things" but, rather, seek first to become like Jesus Christ by making sure that your personal behavior treats all others as

you want to be treated. One of the basic teachings of Jesus is: don't get attached to "things" but, rather, learn how to truly treat others as you want to be treated.

Paul's message to us supports this approach. He tells us that if we truly engage in doing "good works", that is helping others, we can be sure that we will have God's blessings. He goes on to say in so many words that, if we live like Jesus lived, we will be made worthy to share the lot of the saints in light. This means, that if we try to live like Jesus, being open to the needs of others as He was, we will be given a place among the saints.

The road to sainthood, which should be the road that all followers of Jesus attempt to walk on, is achieved by growing in our ability to treat all others, regardless of how they may treat us, with love and kindness. The Christian message truly is: *transform yourself* and you will truly come into *communion (union)* with God.

Do you see *union with God* as the goal of this earthly life? Life is designed by God to help us enter into true *union or communion* with Him. He created us to be His children. The way that we become truly His children is by acting like His children, namely by acting like Jesus Christ. This is what life is all about! Do you believe this?

The true meaning and purpose of earthly, human life is to grow in our ability to be true children of God - to be more like Jesus Christ!

## SOME THOUGHTS ON PRAYER



The alternating states that we find in our lives as we attempt to integrate prayer into our daily lives, teach us the difference between our natural gifts and those that we receive from God. Through prayer of repentance we become closer to God and make it even more possible to actually have a communication - a dialogue - with Him. It is at this time that He comes to us. This struggle allows us to remain for longer periods of time in a place where we can enter into true dialogue with God, the One with Whom we desire to have a relationship.

If we keep our minds firmly fixed on God, the moment will come when the Immortal Spirit will touch our hearts and we will sense the presence of God. Patience, however, is needed and we have to continue to hope and trust in Him. Even though we may not feel His presence, we must believe that He desires a relationship with us and, of course, a relationship requires that we

have communication with Him - that we are in communion with one another.

Any communication with God - any vision of God - places us before the necessity of self-determination in relation to Him. In essence our every action inevitably either approaches us to God or, on the contrary, distances us from Him. By this I mean that as we approach any real experience of God in our prayer life, we must also be able to redefine ourselves. We are His children and His creations. We have to truly begin to recognize that He created us with free will and that we have to be the ones to decide that we truly want to have a relationship with Him - that we want to enter into true dialogue with Him. He will not force us to do this. He only invites us and calls us to enter into communion with Him. So we have to do our part. We have to desire to have a relationship with Him. This means that we have to put aside any “magical” ideas we have about God and see Him as the source of our life and deeply desire to be in union or communion with Him.

So, while God invites us to enter into communion with Him, we have to desire to enter that communion without wanting Him to just rescue us from the challenges of life or to think of Him just as the one we turn to in order to, hopefully, get whatever we want. He grants us what is for our benefit, not what we necessarily want.

# ACQUIRING THE MIND OF CHRIST

The content of a transformed Christian life gives content to the liturgical art of the Church. Man, through prayer, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done,” brings the Kingdom of God to his world, to the extent that he becomes like unto Christ through his effort and participation in the Life of the Holy Spirit. Through his repentance, man begins to actualize the Kingdom of God within himself; it begins to pour forth from him like a living fountain which transfigures, sanctifies and reorders the entire world around him.

So, as each of us attempts to “transform” ourselves, becoming more like Christ, our world changes around us. Why? Because we change and we influence the world around us. It may not be much, but even a little change is truly significant.

The liturgical art that exists within the traditional canonical framework of the Church’s life reflects and participates in this outpouring of the Kingdom into this world through the heart, mind and body of the believer who has become part of Christ’s Body, the Church. As man continues in his ascent to a great communion with God, so too the world around him begins to be changed. We cannot underestimate the change that

takes place when at least one believer gives him/herself totally to a life of personal transformation. Our world finds its transfiguration through its contact with the believer who is part of Christ’s Body, just as Christ’s clothing shone forth on Tabor through contact with His Body.

This transformation of man and his life takes place primarily through the transfiguring vision of God, taking place in the depths of the heart of man, encompassing every faculty of his body, mind and soul and embracing every aspect of his life. Through the sacramental-ascetical life of the Church, man can begin to see God in all things, at every moment, within and without, through the purity of his heart. God is seen in and through Christ and His Church, actively reconciling,



transfiguring and deifying it. Man, as the high priest of creation, works cooperatively with God through the tradition and Liturgy of the Church in offering the creation back to the Creator.

So, each time we come and sincerely pray the Liturgy we help make real the Father’s Kingdom in the here and now. Our little efforts do make a difference.



# Holy Ascension Community News

An Eastern Catholic Church in Plymouth Michigan

## WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Saturday, December 22nd: 5:30 PM

Monday, December 24th: 5:30 PM

Saturday, December 29th: 5:30 PM

*You will note that for the sake of reducing any confusion, our worship time remains the same throughout the season.*

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## CHRISTMAS FLOWERS



We would like to beautify our worship space for Christmas. If you would like to donate for flowers for Christmas, please see Mary Christie. You can

donate in memory of someone who is deceased.

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## ST NICHOLAS' FEAST

Saturday, December 8th

If you have children and will be here with us next week, please get in touch with Mary Christie since we will celebrate the feast of St. Nicholas on that day.

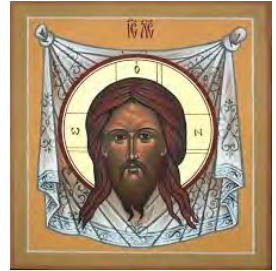


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***He who has not Christmas in his heart will never find it under a tree.***

## CALLED TO HOLINESS

In the last issue of this article, I gave my readers a real challenge: find ways to put Christ back into Christmas. This, of course, requires thought about what



we believe. Perhaps the call to holiness is truly connected with "learning to keep God on our minds." Ask yourself this: *How many times during the day do I think about God? Do I see God in my world and in my life?*

Holiness involves being "connected" to God in some real, concrete way. When He is on my mind - when I think about Him frequently - I am developing a relationship with Him AND, of course, the call to holiness is a call to enter into a REAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

For example, the suggestion that we engage in creating HOLY MOMENTS throughout the day is a call to have God on our minds. If we stop and think about creating HOLY MOMENTS, we indeed are thinking about God.

Like any loving relationship, the person we love has to be constantly present to us - we think about them often. How often (Continued on page 8)

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

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## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup>

Today I remember, Heavenly Father, the Prophet Habakkuk whose name means "loving embrace." He encourages believers to wait on the Lord, expecting and believing that He will indeed work out all things for our good. I beseech You, Heavenly Father, to help me wait on You and truly believe that life's challenges are meant to help me spiritually grow. Deepen my awareness, Heavenly Father, that You are always with me, ready to help me positively respond to the challenges of life. Help me to be aware of your loving embrace and, in turn, lovingly embrace all others who cross my life's path. Help me, especially at this Christmas time to genuinely share my love with others without conditions. I make this prayer to You, my God, Who I believe to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN**

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup>

Heavenly Father, on this nineteenth day of this fast, I join the Church in remembering the Prophet Sophonias. He proclaimed Your manifestation and wrote: Rejoice greatly, O daughters of Sion and of Jerusalem, for behold your King comes, bringing salvation. Help me Father to believe and understand that these words are also directed to me and remind me that You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to help me understand the true meaning and purpose of this earthly existence. Help me to truly see that Your revelation through Jesus helps me to face life's challenges and learn from them. Help me to understand that true salvation is growing in my understanding of my relationship with You. I make this prayer to You, my God, Who I believe to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN**

## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4<sup>TH</sup>

Heavenly Father, today the Church remembers the great martyr Barbara and our righteous Father John of Damascus. They are truly outstanding examples of people who genuinely embraced belief in Your Son, Jesus, and lived their lives deeply committed to living the way that He did. They were steadfast in their faith. Barbara refused to renounce her faith and, as a result, was executed. John defended the veneration of icons and composed many of the prayers we use in our worship. Help me to stand steadfast in my faith and raise my voice in praise of You, my God. Help me to learn how to live as Jesus, Your Son, did and to grow in my likeness of Him. I make this prayer to You, my God, Who I believe to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN**

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup>

Heavenly Father, today the Church remembers our God-bearing Father Sabbas. On his feast the Church prays: *O blessed Sabbas, you were offered from your infancy to God.* Heavenly Father help me to remember that I too, at my Initiation into the Church, was offered to You. Help me, by living a virtuous life, to offer praise to You and, by my efforts to grow in my likeness of Jesus, help me to make Your Kingdom real, right now. Help me to be the person You intended when You created me and to contribute to the fullness of Your Kingdom. Help me to understand that I am alive right now and in this place in order to complete Your Kingdom. I make this prayer to You, my God, Who I believe to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN**

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

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## **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup>**

On this twenty-second day of this fast, Heavenly Father, I join the Church in remembering our Father Among the Saints, Nicholas the Wonderworker. I understand that as a young man he desired to lead a solitary life, devoting himself to prayer. I hear that it was made known to him that this was not Your will for him and that he then returned to Myra and became a cause of salvation for many. I know that I have been called to be the cause of salvation for myself and others by the way that I live my faith. I beg You, Heavenly Father, to give me the strength to grow in my likeness of Jesus. I make this prayer to You, my God, Who I believe to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN**

## **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup>**

Heavenly Father, today I join the Church in remembering Father Ambrose. I understand that he was recognized as an icon of meekness, a teacher of temperance and that he achieved the heights of humility. I would, Heavenly Father, ask him to intercede with You to help me develop the virtues of meekness, temperance and humility, knowing they will help me to become more like Jesus Christ. As I continue my preparation for the coming Great Winter Feasts, Heavenly Father, I would ask You to help me persevere in this effort and to truly grow in my faith. Help me to draw on the witness of such saints as Ambrose to fortify me in my efforts to spiritually grow. I make this prayer to You, my God, Who I believe to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN**

## **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup>**

Today, Heavenly Father, I would pray with the Church: In you, Father Patapius, the image of Christ was preserved. You took up your cross and followed Him, teaching others to overlook the flesh and to attend to the soul. Help me Father Patapius to embrace the Jesus way of living and to prepare myself to celebrate the coming Winter Feasts. As I strive to continue this St. Philip's Fast, I ask you, Father Patapius and all the other saints that I have remembered during this fast, to help me focus, as you did, on my spiritual growth and not be distracted by things of this world. Help me to truly desire to grow in my likeness of Jesus. I make this prayer to You, my God, Who I believe to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN**

## **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup>**

Heavenly Father, on this feast of St. Anna's conception. I offer You my thanks for all that You have done for me and humankind. Out of the childlessness of Joachim and Anna, You brought forth Mary, who, because of her faithfulness to You, allowed You to come into our world as Jesus Christ. Help me to develop the same degree of hope and trust in You that was present in Joachim and Anna. Help me to join with the Church in praying: "All the world celebrates Anna's conception on this day with festive joy, because it came to pass through God. For by divine grace Anna conceived Mary that beyond words conceived the Word of God". I make this prayer to You, my God, Who I believe to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **AMEN**

# Schedule of Services

**Saturday, December 1-28th Weekend after Pentecost - Tone 3**

**5:30 PM - Divine Liturgy**

**Saturday, December 8-29th Weekend after Pentecost - Tone 4**

**5:30 PM - Divine Liturgy**

**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*

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

do you think about God? If He is constantly on your mind then you can probably be sure that you are attempting to have a real relationship with Him. The call to holiness is having a real relationship with God. It doesn't mean being perfect. It means that I'm trying to know and love the Person that we call God - I'm trying to form a relationship with Him.

One of the ways that we can think about this is to think about what we do when we want to have a real relationship with another person - when we, perhaps, fall in love. That person is constantly on our mind - we think about them often. If we truly want to have a relationship with God, then the same thing must happen - He must be constantly on our mind.



## **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**

**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

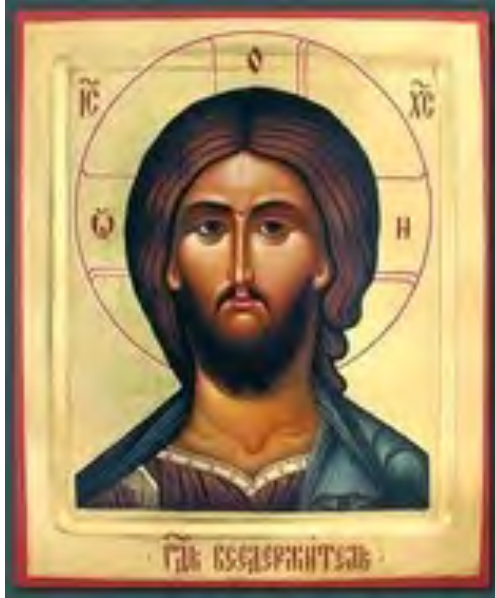
*Involvement in these programs is not limited to Holy Ascension members. Family members, neighbors and friends can help.*



## MORE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

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What Christians claim about Christ can be put in this way: that in Christ we encounter the meaning of the universe, or better, the one who gives meaning to the universe. This is the foundation for what we call the *Logos* theology, the word *Logos* referring to Christ Jesus. This is truly a Eastern theology and it truly recognizes that glimpses of the truth can be found in the philosophies of the classical past, that is in such persons as Socrates and Plato. It is the belief of the Eastern Church that God, in His infinite wisdom, has and is planting the seeds of truth in all of the thinking of humans. The Greek Fathers of the Church truly found truth in the philosophies of their time and incorporated them into the Christian understanding of things. This truly recognizes that God, from the very beginning of His creation, allowed a “developmental path” for humans to come to the truth. Even the religions prior to Christianity - and perhaps even the religions after the establishment of Christianity - can add to our total and true understanding of the meaning and purpose of life and the meaning and purpose of all creation.



This approach is seen clearly in the beginning words of John’s Gospel which is used at the Easter Liturgy and which has been characterized as the New Genesis. We read:

In the beginning was the Word or Logos, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Everything came into being through Him.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.

So we see that John formulated the idea that God worked through the Son in the Spirit to bring all things into existence and to give us some insight into how He

worked and works. The Father has the desire to create. He has a thought which is transformed into the WORD, a formulized idea and then, the power of the Holy Spirit brings it all into existence. This supports the Eastern Church’s idea that the Trinity always acts as ONE: the Father acting through Christ in the Spirit.

So Christ - the Son - is truly an example and model of how humans should live. He lived as He did because of the Holy Spirit within Him.

## UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY GOSPELS

Luke had almost two years at his disposal - during Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea - to seek information and interview persons who had known Jesus or heard about him from firsthand witnesses. He met the deacon Philip, the apostle of Samaria. From him Luke could have gained knowledge of events described in 9:52-56; 17:11-19. The penitent woman, whose name Luke kept secret, felt confident to relate her conversion to Luke the physician. Although Luke, like Paul, never married for the sake of the Kingdom of God and the apostolate, he recognizes a more important role for women than does any of the other evangelists. The reasons for this can be traced to his Hellenistic background, where society permitted women to occupy a more prominent, public place than was true within Judaism.

Another source, more important for Luke's general attitude than for detailed information, lay in his association with the apostle Paul. Scholars have commented on Paul's influence on Luke. Paul may have contributed to Luke's strong positions on the universality of salvation. Jesus' will to save and His cool attitude toward the Law.

Besides oral sources, Luke employed several documents and, in fact, drew from them rather freely. His most important written source was the Gospel of Mark. Luke incorporates 60 per cent of Mark's 661 verses. Marcan passages make-up one-third of Luke's 1149 verses. Examples:

Luke 4:31-6:19 follows Mark 1:21-3:12

Luke 8:4-9:50 follows Mark 1:21-3:12

Luke 18:15-21;38 follows Mark 10:13-13:37

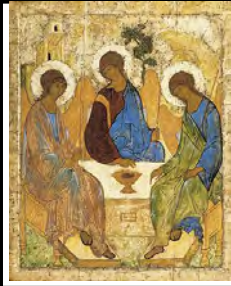
The question is still open whether Luke depends on a text of Mark's Gospel anterior to the one we now possess.

The dependence of Luke on Matthew is still more complicated. Narrative sections seem to have come at times from Matthew through Mark:



Luke 4:1-3 relies upon Mark 1:13, which may have depended on Matthew 4:1-3. There are other occasions, especially in the report of Jesus' sayings, where Luke has a word for word agreement with Matthew. Here Luke and Matthew are probably depending upon a common written source, "Q". Because Luke shows important differences from Matthew in particular sayings, we suspect that he is at times using another source.

As you can tell, it is difficult, because of these findings, to take a very "literal" approach to the Gospels. We need to look to their "meaning".



# THE EASTERN HERALD

## СХІДНИЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.  
Vol. 64 No 48 28th Weekend after Pentecost December 1-2, 2018

### THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

To gain a proper perspective on the Eastern view of salvation, we have to be aware of its distinctive anthropological (i.e., relating to the study of humankind) outlook and its implications. In the main, Eastern anthropology looks forward to the development of the true image of God in human beings. Indeed it means believing that we humans have been created in God's image and have the potential to grow in His likeness. The underlying anthropology is, in my estimation more positive than that which we find in the West which is filled with guilt. Eastern anthropology, rather, says that we were created to grow in our image of God. We are created with the need to grow and learn. God saw this as important in order to preserve our free will. This sets the tone for the rest of soteriology (i.e., the doctrine of salvation) and theology in general.

The view of the human being in the Christian East is based upon the notion of "participation" in God. This participation, however, is not a static givenness. It is a challenge to grow in divine life. Divine life is a gift, but also a task which is to be accomplished by a free human effort.

A person becomes the perfect image of God by discovering his/her likeness to God, which is the perfection of the nature common to all human beings. The Greek term *homoiousios*, which corresponds to *likeness* in Genesis 1:26, means precisely that dynamic progress and



*Life's Journey is an Ascension to*

growth in divine life. In Greek patristic thought there is no opposition between freedom and God's grace. When man works to grow in the image of God, he does not lose his human freedom. To grow in God's image makes man more fully man and neither destroys his freedom nor limits the necessity for him to become fully himself by his own effort.

***Think about this!***

### *Who Was Saint Nicholas?*

Saint Nicholas of Myra, also known as Nicholas of Bari, was an early Christian bishop of the ancient Greek city of Myra in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) during the time of the Roman Empire. Because of the many miracles attributed to his intercession, he is also known as Nicholas the Wonderworker. Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of sailors, merchants, archers, repentant thieves, children, brewers, pawnbrokers, and students in various cities and countries around Europe.

Very little is known about the historical Saint Nicholas. The earliest accounts of his life were written centuries after his death and contain many legendary elaborations. He is said to have been born in Patara, Lycia in Asia Minor to wealthy Christian parents. In one of the earliest attested and most famous incidents from his

life, he is said to have rescued three girls from being forced into prostitution by dropping a sack of gold coins through the window of their house each night for three nights so their father could pay a dowry for each of them. Other early stories tell of him calming a storm at sea, saving three innocent soldiers from wrongful execution, and chopping down a tree possessed by a demon.

In his youth, he is said to have made a pilgrimage to Egypt and the Palestine area. Shortly after his return, he became Bishop of Myra. He was later cast into prison during the persecution of Diocletian, but was released after the accession of Constantine. An early list makes him an attendee at the First Council of Nicaea in 325, but he is never mentioned in any writings by people who were actually at the council.