

SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE



Icon of the Publican and Pharisee

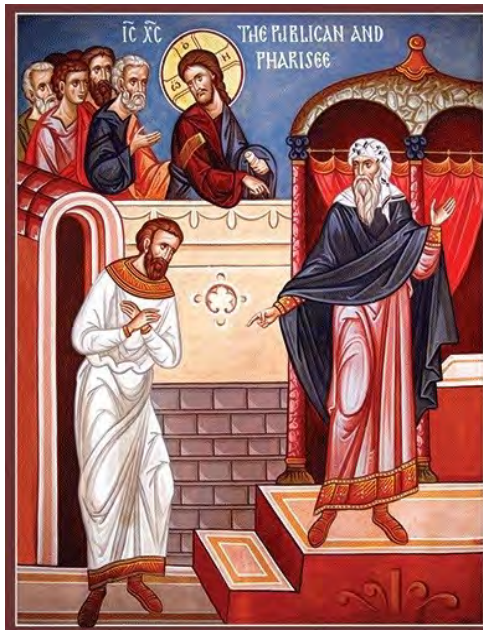
A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this second weekend of the five-week period prior to the Great Fast, during which we reflect upon the various meanings of *metanoia* or *repentance*, our readings are taken from Paul's second letter to Timothy and Luke's Gospel. Paul shares with Timothy all that he has endured for the sake of Jesus Christ and exhorts him, Timothy, to persevere in his commitment to the Jesus way of living since it is the way to salvation. Paul uses the example of his own life and teaching to encourage others to persevere in the faith.

Of course Luke's Gospel conveys the story of the Publican and the Pharisee. The story ends by saying: *Everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled while he who humbles himself shall be exalted.* This story highlights the need for **HUMILITY** if we are to spiritually grow.

But what is humility? The answer to this question may seem a paradoxical one for it is rooted in a strange affirmation: *God Himself is humble.* Yet to anyone who knows God, who contemplates Him in His creation and in His saving acts, it is evident that humility is truly a Divine quality, the very content and the radiance of that *glory* which, as we sing during the Divine Liturgy, fills heaven and earth.

So true humility is achieved when we understand who we are in God's creation and, while we are thankful for the gift of our position in His creation, we do not take unto ourselves the "glory" of our position. We truly realize that it is a gift - a gift given to us out of love. Humility allows us to honestly look at ourselves and be thankful



for the strengths and talents that have been given to us and also to accept our weaknesses and inabilities as true and real opportunities to spiritually grow. All is given to us to help us achieve, with God's help, greater union or communion with Him.

So perhaps humility can best be described as honest acceptance of ourselves as we have been created and rejoicing in the opportunities given to us to grow and mature. Knowing and accepting who we are and truly realizing that who we are right now is God's gift to us, is really important.

Humility brings about a balanced view of ourselves.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EASTERN SPIRITUALITY



One of the questions that has arisen as we think about the development of Eastern spirituality is whether the fourth Gospel, that of John, has been the prevailing Scriptural influence on the Eastern Church. It has often been said that the “Johannine” character of the Eastern Church is supposed to contrast with the “Petrinism” and “Paulinism” of other Christian confessions - whether the Apostle John has influenced the Eastern Church more than the other Apostles. Such an idea seems to have originated in the romantic, religious atmosphere which surrounded both the Russian Slavophiles and German exegesis and philosophy round about the 'forties of the last century. It has left lasting traces, recognizable, for instance, in the *Peter and John* of Father Sergius Bulgakov and in the *Three Dialogues* of Vladimir Soloviev (where Pope Peter II represents the Roman Church, Professor Pauli, Protestantism, and

the saintly elder John, Orthodoxy. It is true that the Gospel according to John is held in great veneration within the Eastern Church. Thus its prologue constitutes the Gospel lesson for the Easter service. It is the new Christian GENESIS - the new retelling of the story of creation.

The fourth Gospel has at the same time attracted simple, pious souls by the sweetness of its radiance, and captivated speculative intellects by the depth of its thought, and by its LOGOS and Light-Metaphysics. It is well known with what affection Origen pored over it. But the same thing could be said of Augustine. On the one hand the one hand the fourth Gospel has exercised on many more of the Latin Fathers and faithful exactly the same attraction which it did on Greek Fathers of a kindred spiritual type. On the other hand, if one considers the Greek Fathers as a whole, it does not appear that the fourth Gospel has molded their thoughts more than have the other writings of the New Testament.

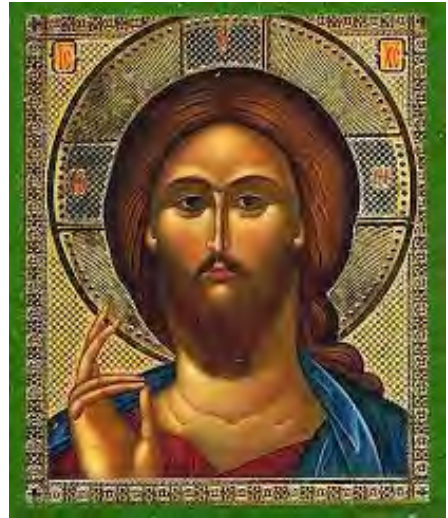
Through the whole evolution of Eastern thought, the two attitudes towards Scripture, which already existed in the third century can be traced: the literalist and historicist attitude of the School of Antioch and the allegorist and speculative attitude of the School of Alexandria. We do not embrace either the literalist or the historicist attitudes of the Scriptures.

Hopefully this makes sense.

LIFE'S PILGRIMAGE: GROWING IN THE LIKENESS OF JESUS

The “growing in the likeness of Jesus” is what the Eastern Church calls divinization. The essential conditions for fulfilling the divinizing process are the magnanimous divine initiative and willing human cooperation. This process is a cooperative act between God and us. Divine love expressed through grace, God’s help, is what makes human beings gods for nothing is more Godlike than divine love, nothing more mysterious, nothing more apt to raise up human beings to deification. The greatest testament to love of God for humankind is, as you might guess, God’s incarnation in the Person of Jesus. Through the process of incarnation, the Creator of nature Himself has clothed Himself with our nature, without change uniting it hypostatically to Himself in order to check to help what He created to achieve the potential He bestowed upon it - as Peter, and Athanasius later said, *God became man so that man might become god - not God in His essence but in His likeness.*

Thus the incarnation opens up the hidden ways by which human beings can arrive at the fulness of God. This requires, however, that there is a reciprocal responsibility on the part of the human beings. Maximus the Confessor suggests with confidence that “our salvation is contingent upon our will,” and “the mystery of salvation belongs to those who desire it, not to those who are forced to submit to it. The Confessor’s deepest conviction has “God providing equally to all the power that naturally leads to salvation, so that each one who wishes can be transformed by divine grace.” The appropriation of divinization is in direct correlation with one’s degree of spiritual appreciation and discernment. By realizing our



natural freedom we might become a child of God and divine by grace through the Spirit. For we cannot be revealed as a child of God through deification by grace without first being born by the Spirit in the exercise of free choice, because of the power of self-movement and self-determination inherent in human nature. Because God created us in His image and bestowed upon us free will, somehow our free will must be involved in the process of divinization - in becoming truly His children and being sharers in eternal life. Eternal life is NOT A REWARD for being good! It is something that happens when we desire to be God’s children.



Holy Ascension Community News

An Eastern Catholic Church in Plymouth Michigan

PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH

*Lord,
Hear Our
Prayer*

As I get closer and closer to retirement, I become more and more concerned what will happen to Holy Ascension Community. So I have decided that we need to reactivate something that we did many years ago, namely a PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH. We will say it after the Ambon Prayer in the Liturgy. I will be printing more and so I would ask that you take a copy home and integrate this prayer into your regular prayers. Then, after we begin to pray again about the future of this community, I'll just leave it in the hands of God.

CALLED TO HOLINESS

The call to holiness comes, as you might guess, from God. He always makes the first move in calling us to become all that we can potentially be - to become ever more like the person He intended when He created us. To respond to this call we must exercise our free will and try to respond to the challenges of life as Jesus did. The way He responded to the challenges in His life were truly and genuinely "transformative."



Think about it. If you can learn to *love others* when others *direct hate* toward you, something transformative happens to you. Their hatred becomes meaningless. Why? Because you know you are loved by God and, because you can decide to love instead of hate - their hatred has no sting or impact on your life. It is only when we are unsure of who we are and don't take responsibility for our own emotions, that we allow the actions of others to influence our behaviors.

Jesus showed us that it is possible to not allow the actions of others to dictate how

(Continued on page 8)

Benefits of Laughing:

- *Reduces chance of heart disease
- *Natural pain killer
- *Improves breathing
- *Helps you lose weight
- *Gives good sleep
- *Decreases stress
- *Makes you look young
- *Boosts relationships

There's no reason not to laugh!



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HOW TO BE A SINNER

The great 20th century poet W.H. Auden reflected on his friendship with the Christian writer Charles Williams in this way:

I had met many good people before who made me ashamed of my own shortcomings, but in the presence of this man I did not feel ashamed. I felt transformed into a person who was incapable of doing or thinking anything base or unloving.

He is describing what ideally happens when we place ourselves in front of goodness: not destructive shame, but the sense of possibility. The built-in potential for good is ultimately a sense of the true inner self.

Our exposure to anything that is really true, genuine, beautiful - or to someone who loves us completely, to the core of our being - can be a terrifying experience. We may want to turn tail and run, fast, because we know that to withstand that exposure entails the changing of our life. The pain of this experience is only tolerable when we know that we are being "judged" by someone who is pure love and mercy. And God is loving and merciful to an extent that is truly beyond our comprehension.

What this says is that when we

truly realize how much we are loved by God, we forget that we are imperfect. Too often, I believe, we think that God will only love us if we are "perfect", that is a person without any faults, who never makes mistakes and who is completely directed to growing in our likeness of Jesus. The problem is that we can never totally reach perfection because we are finite, fallible beings who God sees as good because

through a process of struggle and change we can come to freely and voluntarily return His love.

One of the things that must happen, I believe, is that we must learn to accept ourselves as fallible beings who know that God accepts us as we are and only calls us

to return His love. As we begin to return His love, which is accomplished by learning to more and more "Live Like Jesus", we will begin to see how very much He loves us. In attempting to "Live Like Jesus", we indeed are responding to God's call to enter into true "communion" with Him which also means entering into true "communion" with our fellow human beings. When there is harmony in His Creation - people loving one another - then He is truly present.

I wonder what you think?



THE HOLY TRINITY: STRUCTURE OF SUPREME LOVE

When the God in Trinity reveals himself to us, he reveals himself as a savior-God, and a God whom we experience in the saving activity that he exercises upon us and within us. He is revealed to us as an economic Trinity.

But in this revelation of Itself, the Trinity also draws our attention to certain premises about the intrinsic relations between the divine Persons. The theological teaching on the inner reality of the Holy Trinity is based on these indications and on the bond which joins the eternal relations between the divine Persons together with their saving activity.

A God who is one and three at the same time is a mystery beyond our logical grasp; it is the supreme apophatic reality. Yet this mode of God's being is the highest stage of the true spiritual life and the goal for which the Christian, as a spiritual being, yearns for continuously. Each and every Christian taken individually and all of us together want to reach a rich spiritual life; we want to achieve a perfect balance between the unity we share and the separate identities we maintain within this unity. We are aware that the most perfect and most meaningful unity is unity in love, that is, unity between persons who retain their own individual identities. Any other unity is devoid of meaning and spiritual life. Hence the expressions "one in being" and "three in Persons"



must not lead us to contemplate the divine being in itself as distinct from the Persons and from their mutual love, but rather as the love existing in persons and between persons.

Just as all humans are one because they share in a common human nature, we are also all uniquely individual because of our own distinct personalities. The Trinity is a model of what all humankind is. Multiple individuals but united in one common human life. This is why it is so critical that we learn how to unconditionally love others regardless of how others treat us because this unconditional love expresses our belief in one human life-force.

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 9 - Weekend of the Publican & Pharisee - Tone 5
5:30 PM - Special Intention

Saturday, February 16 - Weekend of the Prodigal Son - Tone 6
5:30 PM - Special Intention

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

we respond to the events of life. Its all about becoming the masters of our own lives. If I allow myself to hate others because I feel that they hate me, then I am no better than they are - I don't see God in my world and don't have the slightest clue about the meaning and purpose of this earthly life.

The meaning and purpose of this life is to change and transform myself into a truly spiritual-physical being who is in control of his/hers emotions and behaviors and freely chooses to respond to others and the events of life as a "child" of our Creator-God. In order to do this, we have to change. There is no person born into this world that doesn't have to learn how to live like a child of God. That's the learning of this life. Earthly life is all about growing and learning.



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

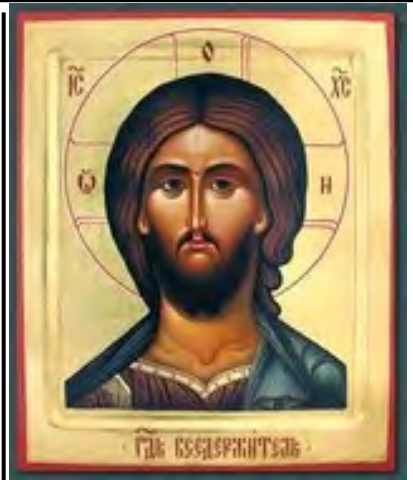
Absolutely central to the way in which the Fathers understand the nature of humanity is the notion that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. This doctrine is central not only to the Fathers' understanding of human nature, but also to their theology as a whole. In a little-known article, written over half a century ago, the Dominican theologian, Pere Camelot, remarked:

Now this theme of the image is, in the theology of the Fathers, above all the Greek Fathers, truly central: there one sees at the same time the meeting of Christology and Trinitarian theology, of anthropology and psychology, of the theology of creation and that of grace, of the problem of nature and the supernatural, the mystery of divinization, the theology of the spiritual life, the laws of its development and of its progress.

The foundation of the doctrine of the image is to be found in the creation narrative of Genesis. There we read:

And God said, Let us make humankind according to our image and according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and the cattle and all the earth and all the creeping things that creep upon the earth. And God made humankind, according to his image God made him; male and female he made them. And God bless them, and said, Increase and multiply and fill the earth and rule over it.

However, in the rest of the Bible little is made of this doctrine. In chapter 5 of Genesis, the events of the creation of man are summarized: 'In the day that God made Adam, he made him in the image of God; male and female he made them, and he blessed them'. In the next verse, we are told that 'Adam begat a child according to his form and according to his image; and he named his name Seth.' Thereafter, there is no mention of the



of the doctrine of the image until the Wisdom literature, where we read that God 'made [human kind] an image of his own self [or eternity]' (Wis 2.23) and that God 'made them according to his image' (Sir 17.3). Wisdom itself is said to be 'an image of his goodness'.

In the New Testament we are told that man (not woman) is 'the image and glory of God' (1 Cor 11.7) but it is Christ, too, who is said to be the image of God. Language of the image is used of our relationship to Christ: we are to be 'conformed to the image of his son'; it is also said that we are in his earthly image.

Something to think about!

MORE ABOUT HOLY SCRIPTURES: THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

I would continue to share further information about the Gospel of Luke. Luke omits episodes found in the other Gospels for various reasons: they were not interesting for Luke's non-Jewish readers (Mk 9:11-13), or they were already to be found in the Supplemental Collection (Mk 12:28-34; see Lk 10:25-28), or above all (as in the case of Luke's great omission of Mk 6:45-8:26) because it was not in Luke's copy of the Gospel of Mark or because, if it was there, Luke regarded it as unnecessarily repetitive.

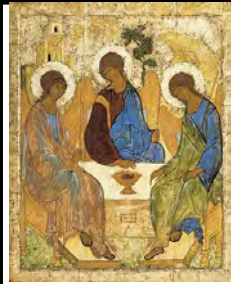
Luke's most obvious difference from Mark is his great intercalation (see 9:51-18:14) which, as has been seen, combines Logia or Sayings of Jesus from some Collection with information he had found out for himself. This central section uses a journey to Jerusalem for its framework (see the reiterated indications, elaborating the datum of the Gospel of Mark 10:1, in Lk 9:51; 13:22; 17:11). But it is not a reminiscence of actual journeys; it is rather a device by which Luke is able to bring out one of his chief theological notions: namely that the Holy City is the predestined stage for the drama of salvation (9:31; 13:33; 18:31; 19:11). Because it is from Jerusalem that the evangelization of the world must begin (24:47; Acts 1:8), his Gospel had to start there (1:5f) and there he will have to bring it to a close (24:52f) — the post-resurrection apparitions and conversations recorded by Luke do not take place in Galilee (see 24:13-51 and see 24:6 with Mk 16:7; Mt 28:16-20).

Comparing the Gospel of Luke and his two sources, (a) the Gospel of Mark, the best known, and (b) the sources behind the Gospel of Matthew passages which are paralleled in Luke, it becomes apparent that Luke was a craftsman whose concentration never slackened. His changes are very slight — just small omissions and additions —



but through them he gives his work a character peculiarly his own. He avoids or whittles down anything he or his readers found offensive (8:43; see Mk 5:26; he omits Mk 9:43-48; 13:32) or anything they could not be expected to understand (he omits Mt 5:21f,33f; Mk 15:34; etc.). He omits anything derogatory to the dignity of the apostles (Mk 4:13; 8:32f; 9:28f; 14:50) and makes excuses for them (Lk 9:45; 18:34; 22:45). He explains obscure phrases (6:15) and clears up points of topography.

Why not read Luke?



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.

Vol. 65 No 6

Weekend of the Publican & Pharisee

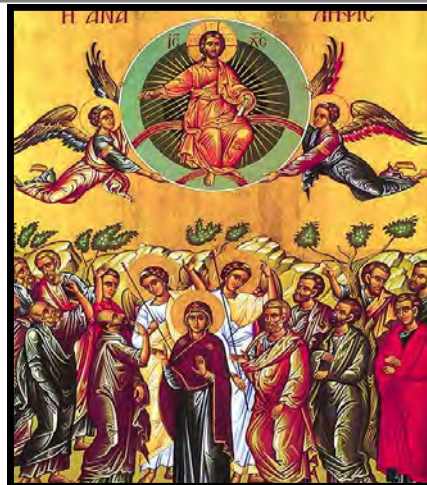
February 9-10, 2019

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

Another term used for deification/divinization is “Christification.” This is based on the idea that there is a christological structure to a human being and the destiny of humanity is to be found in Christ. *Theosis* is the mystery of human nature’s perfection in Christ, not its alteration or destruction, because *Theosis* is the mystery of eternal life in communion with God in the divine Logos.

So think about this. We have been created with free will. We start out with no knowledge of the meaning and purpose of life. We are called to engage in a process of *discovering the meaning and purpose of life* and then to direct our energies and activities to pursue actions that will allow us to enter into greater communion with God, our Creator. This process, however, requires that we “change” - go through a process of true personal transformation so that we might become more attuned to God’s lifeforce within us. The process of personal transformation is all about discovering the true meaning and purpose of life. Why are we here? Why has life given us the talents and strengths as well as the deficits and weaknesses that we have? They are all coordinated to *help us* become the persons that God created us to be.

The combination of our weaknesses and strengths are unique to each of us and they are given to us to help us to achieve the true goal of



Life's Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

human life, which is namely personal transformation.

Human life, like all life in creation, is in constant change and transformation, becoming all that it can possibly be. We humans are no different. We are given the opportunity in this present earthly life to progress in the process of becoming more like Jesus. Is that what you are doing, becoming more like Jesus?

Faults of the Pharisee

Many are the faults of the Pharisee. First of all, he is boastful, and without sense, for he praises himself, even though the Sacred Scriptures cry aloud, "Let a neighbor praise you, and not your own mouth: a stranger and not your own lips" (Prov. 27:2). ... Our virtue, therefore, must not be contaminated with fault, but must be single-minded and blameless and free from all that can bring reproach. For what profit is there in fasting twice a week, if you so doing serve only as a pretext for ignorance and vanity, and if it makes you prideful, haughty and selfish? You tithe your possessions and make a boast of it; but in another way you provoke God's anger, by condemning men generally on this account and accusing others. And you yourself are puffed up, though not crowned by the divine decree for righteousness, but on the contrary, heap praises upon yourself. For I am not, he says, as the rest of mankind. Moderate yourself, O Pharisee: "Set a guard, O Lord, over your mouth, keep watch over the door of your lips" (Ps. 140:3).

You speak to God Who knows all things. Await the decree of the Judge. None of those skilled in the practice of wrestling ever crowns himself; nor does any man receive the crown of himself, but awaits the summons of the arbiter. Lower your pride, for arrogance is both accursed and hated by God. Although, therefore, you fast with puffed up mind, your so doing will not avail you; your labor will be unrewarded; for you have mingled dung with your perfume. Even according to the law of Moses a sacrifice that had a blemish was not capable of being offered to God; for it was said unto him, "Of sheep, and ox, that is offered for sacrifice, there must be no blemish therein" (Lev. 22:21). Since, therefore, your fasting is accompanied by pride, you must expect to hear God saying, this is not the fast that I have chosen (Cf Isa. 58:5) ... You offer tithes, but you wrong in another way Him Who is honored by you, in that you condemn men generally. This is an act foreign to the mind that fears God.

St. Cyril of Alexandria