

SUNDAY OF CHEESEFARE  
FORGIVENESS SUNDAY



*Icon of Christ Pantocrator*

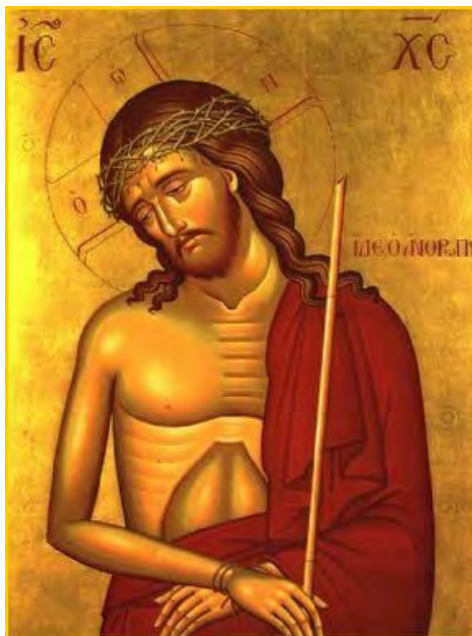
## A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

We have reached the gateway to the Great Fast of 2019. Are readings are taken from Paul's letter to the Romans and Matthew's Gospel.

Paul exhorts us to realize that **NOW** is the time to work on personal change for the time is short - *our salvation is closer than when we first accepted the faith*. This is a thought that we must ever keep in mind. We know not the day or hour when we will be called to make our transition to the next life. So, now is the time to make real our efforts to achieve as much as possible the goal of life which is personal transformation and change. We are here now for one reason: To grow in our likeness of Jesus.

The passage from Matthew's Gospel that we hear today deals with *purity of intention*. In fact he tells us to *Be on guard against performing religious acts for people to see*. He then expresses one important thing, namely the need to be able to **FORGIVE OTHERS**. In fact, this Cheese-fare Weekend is called **FORGIVENESS** weekend. Matthew writes: *if you forgive the faults of others, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours. If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you*.

These are extremely strong words. The real point is, however, that if we cannot give forgiveness, we are unable to receive forgiveness. It is much like love. If I am unable to love others, I make myself unable to receive true love. It is not so much that God refuses, for example, to forgive us but rather that we are incapable of receiving His forgiveness. You can't receive what you are unable to give!



So we begin this time of the Great Fast by not only asking for forgiveness from others but also extending forgiveness to them.

Think about it. One of the greatest lessons that Jesus taught us was the importance of forgiveness. In fact it was one of the last things He taught us before He died. He forgave those who betrayed Him, abandoned Him, caused Him pain and even killed Him. This all transpired, I truly believe, so that we might see how absolutely essential forgiveness is if we want to become children of God.

***Let us begin our 40 day effort by forgiving one another.***

## THE LENTEN TRIODION



The primary aim of fasting is to make us *conscious of our dependence upon God*. If practiced seriously, the Lenten abstinence from food - particularly in the opening days - truly involves a considerable measure of real hunger, and also a feeling of tiredness and physical exhaustion. The purpose of this is to lead us in turn to a sense of inward brokenness and contrition; to bring us, that is, to the point where we appreciate the full force of Christ's statement, *Without Me you can do nothing*. If we always take our fill of food and drink, we easily grow over confident in our own abilities, acquiring a false sense of autonomy

and self-sufficiency. The observance of a physical fast undermines this sinful complacency. Stripping from us the specious assurance of the Pharisee - who fasted, it is true, but not in the right spirit - Lenten abstinence gives us the saving self-dissatisfaction of the Publican. Such is the function of the hunger and the tiredness: to make us 'poor in spirit', aware of our helplessness and of our dependence on God's aid.

Yet it would be misleading to speak only of this element of weariness and hunger. Abstinence leads, not merely to this, but also to a sense of lightness, wakefulness, freedom and joy. Even if the fast proves debilitating at first, afterwards we find that it enables us to sleep less, to think more clearly, and to work more decisively. As many doctors acknowledge, periodical fasts contribute to bodily hygiene. While involving genuine self-denial, fasting does not seek to do violence to our body but rather to restore it to health and equilibrium. Most of us in the Western world habitually eat more than we need. Fasting liberates our body from the burden of excessive weight and makes it a willing partner in the task of prayer, alert and responsive to the voice of the Spirit.

Again the work of spiritual growth involves the body, soul and spirit. How will you observe the Great Fast?

## ON PRAYER: AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE GREAT FAST



Prayer is infinite creation, far superior to any form of art or science. Through prayer we enter into communion with Him that was before all worlds. Or, to put it in another way, the life of the Self-existing God flows into us through the channel of prayer. Prayer is an act of supreme wisdom, of all-surpassing beauty and virtue. Prayer is delight for the spirit. But the circumstances accompanying this creative work are complex. Time after time we experience an eager upsurge towards God, followed repeatedly by a falling away from His Light. Time and again we are conscious of the mind's inability to rise to Him. There are moments when we feel ourselves on the verge of madness. Pain forces the cry, You gave me Your precept to love, which I accept with all my being, but there is no strength in me for this love. You Who are love, come and abide in me, and perform in me all that You have enjoined, for Your

commandment exceeds my powers. My mind is too frail to comprehend You. My spirit cannot see into the mysteries of Your life. I desire to do Your will in all things but my days go by in perpetual conflict. I am tortured by the fear of losing You because of the evil thoughts in my heart; and this fear crucifies me. I sink. Lord, save me, as You saved Peter who dared to walk on the water to go to You.

At times prayer seems over-slow in bringing results, and life is so short. Instinctively we cry, 'Make haste unto me'. But He does not always respond at once. Like fruit on a tree, our soul is left to scorch in the sun, to endure the cold wind, the scorching wind, to die of thirst or be drowned in the rain. But if we do not let go of the hem of His garment, all will end well.

It is vital to continue in prayer for as long as we can, so that His invincible strength may penetrate and enable us to resist every destructive influence. And with the increase of this strength in us comes the joy of hope in final victory.

Prayer assuredly revives in us the divine breath which God breathed into Adam's nostrils and by virtue of which Adam 'became a living soul.' Our spirit, regenerated by prayer, begins to marvel at the sublime mystery of being. The mind is filled with wonder. 'Being, how is it possible?' We stand in wonder at God's creation of which we are an integral part.



# Holy Ascension Community News

An Eastern Catholic Church in Plymouth Michigan

## LENT BEGINS MONDAY

March 4th



You are reminded that the Great Fast begins this coming Monday. If we are able to fast, the Church encourages us to make this first day with the STRICT FAST, that

is abstaining from both meat and dairy products.

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## WEEKLY LENTEN SERVICE

Wednesday Evenings at 7:30 PM

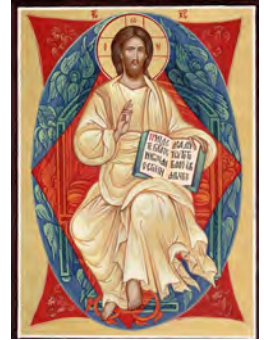
Each week during the Great Fast we will serve the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts, the Traditional Lenten Service of our Eastern Church. As you may know, it is a VESPERS SERVICE with the distribution of Holy Communion which is consecrated on the Sunday before the service.

## BE YOURSELF

*Because an Original is Worth more Than a copy*

## CALLED TO HOLINESS

The call to holiness is, as you might surmise when you put all the articles in the Eastern Herald together, is a call to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in doing the work necessary to grow in our likeness of Jesus, the image of God in human form.



The work that we are called to do is about *personal transformation or change*. It requires us to make a free choice about our life. We have to honestly answer this question: *Do I honestly want to become the person God intended when He created me? Do I realize that in order to become all that I have been created to be requires that I change and grow?*

Three things make this call to holiness difficult. Most people: (1) don't like **CHANGE**; (2) don't see how they **HAVE TO CHANGE**; and (3) **don't think its possible to become more like Jesus**. Most people are also not ready to do an honest assessment of themselves. It's quite hard to see the rough edges in our personalities - edges that

*(Continued on page 8)*

# A PRAYER A DAY DURING THE GREAT FAST

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## **MONDAY, MARCH 4<sup>th</sup>**

Heavenly Father, as I begin this Great Fast to help me understand all the events that are celebrated during the Great and Holy Week, I ask Your help, through Your Holy Spirit, to truly make this a time of spiritual growth for me. I am thankful, in advance, for Your help and support. I know that You have called me to holiness, that is to a deeper union with You. I know that this can be achieved if I attempt to grow, with the assistance of Your Holy Spirit, in my likeness of Jesus. Help me, Heavenly Father, to understand how I must change my thinking and behaviors in order to be more like Jesus. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son

## **TUESDAY, MARCH 5<sup>th</sup>**

Heavenly Father, I ask Your help to truly observe this Great Fast in a manner that is be beneficial for my spiritual growth. Help me to block out the distractions that keep me from fully concentrating on my spiritual life. I find it so very easy to become distracted from the task of following Jesus since there seems to be so much hatred and anger in the world. I forget, sometimes, the message of Jesus to love my neighbors and my enemies as myself. I find so much of the News shared in our modern society is unchristian. Drive out from me any anxieties or fears that keep me from making this a spiritual time. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

## **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6<sup>th</sup>**

Heavenly Father, when I think about all the persons who have lived before me who suffered martyrdom for their belief in Your Son Jesus, I am ashamed of how weak my faith sometimes is. I find that at times I'm afraid, because I want to be accepted by others, to truly witness to Your Son's message of unconditional love for all others. I know, in my heart, that if I can truly learn how to unconditionally love all others, I will grow in my likeness of Jesus. Help me to truly desire to become more like Him. Help me to bear witness to His Gospel message as I interact with all others in my society. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

## **THURSDAY, MARCH 7<sup>th</sup>**

Heavenly Father, it is my sincerest desire to spiritually grow, truly becoming Your child. I know that to do this I must honestly look at myself and assess how I must change. I know I need to change if I want a deeper relationship with You, becoming the person You intended when You created me. I believe that You gave me the potential to spiritually grow, gifting me with Your Spirit as a help. I also know that if I engage in this noble work, I will come to know how much You love me and to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning and purpose of my life. This I truly desire to understand. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

# A PRAYER A DAY DURING THE GREAT FAST

## FRIDAY, MARCH 8<sup>th</sup>

Heavenly Father strengthen my will to make this Great Fast a time of spiritual growth. Help me to discipline myself by engaging in some of the traditional practices of my Church. Our Christian history teaches me that fasting and abstaining from certain things can support my work on my spiritual life. I know that if I discipline my body through such practices, I can focus better on my spiritual life. I know, Heavenly Father, that I must freely choose to observe this Great Fast. If I fail to use this time productively You will not lessen Your love for me, but I'll miss an opportunity to come to know how very much You love me. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 9<sup>th</sup>

Heavenly Father, as I come almost to the end of the first week of the Fast, help me to examine how I am observing it. Help me to honestly answer these questions: Am I disciplining my life, making it different from the rest of the year? Have I quieted my life, making more time for prayer and reflection? Have I thought about how I can bring about personal transformation, growing ever more in my likeness of Jesus? Do I sincerely know why I'm observing this fast? These are the questions, Heavenly Father, that I need to ask myself and I ask You, through the movement of Your Holy Spirit within me, to answer them honestly. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

*We prepare for the First Sunday of the Great Fast!*

## SUNDAY, MARCH 10<sup>th</sup>

Heavenly Father, on this first weekend of the Fast, the Church calls me to remember that "icons" of Your Son and other persons in Christian history, can be venerated and used to call their memories to mind. Jesus, I believe, is a true human image and reflection of You. I know and believe that I am called to grow in His likeness and, therefore, become a greater reflection of You in my world. I am called to be a "living icon" that makes Your Kingdom more real right now and where I am living. This I know I can only achieve with the help of Your Holy Spirit and my efforts to unconditionally love others. I make my prayer to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

## MAKING LENT REAL



How do we make this preparation time for Easter real? Here is a real two-fold challenge. First, have the courage to sincerely:

### **PRAY FOR THE POOR OF OUR COUNTRY**

and think of them as your brothers and sisters, realizing you could, but for the grace of God, be one of them. THEN, see if you can support one of the charities financially that actually serve the poor. Get out of your comfort zone. The only way to change is to think differently. Life's goal: change the way I think.

# Schedule of Services

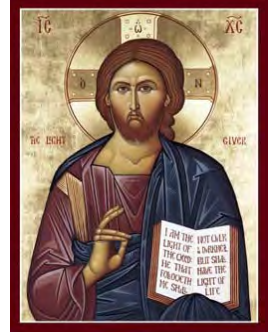
**Saturday, March 2 - Weekend of Cheesefare - Tone 8**  
**5:30 PM - Special Intention**

**Saturday, March 9 - First Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 1**  
**5:30 PM - Special Intention**

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

need to be smoothed off if we are to become more like Jesus. Most people also find it hard to challenge their own way of thinking and yet find it extremely easy to judge the thinking of others. Its much easier to see the flaws and weaknesses in another person's personality than in our own. The call to holiness is a call to look honestly at ourselves and embrace a life of growth and change. It is a call to understand more clearly the meaning and purpose of our earthly existence. It helps us to answer the question: *Why did God create me? Why is life the way that it is?*

The call to holiness helps us find answers about life and it also destroys the greatest fear we have, namely death.



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## **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*

## **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.*



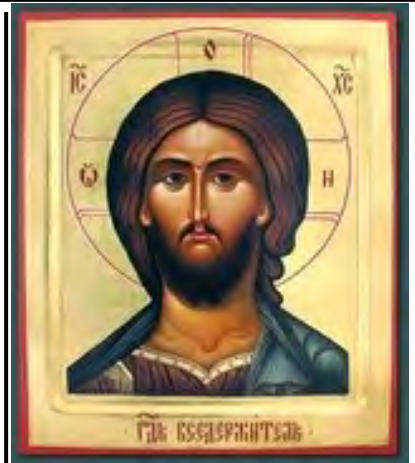
## MORE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST AND US HUMAN BEINGS

Here is what Athanasius wrote about being in the “image of God,”

...creating human beings not simply like all the irrational animals upon the earth, but making them according to his own image, and giving them a share of the power of his own Word, so that having as it were shadows of the Word and being made rational, they might be able to abide in blessedness, living the true life, which is really that of the holy ones in paradise.

Being in the image, however, is not, for Athanasius, simply a matter of being rational, for otherwise the angels would be in the image, too, something that he denies: being in the image is a gift to humanity, body and soul, which grants rationality to the human, but must mean more than this. The more is, I think, for Athanasius, tied up with the fact that the image of God is Christ, the Word of God, whom we cannot understand apart from the Incarnation. It is in some way according to the image of God, understood as the Word of God Incarnate, that humankind was fashioned. This more complex notion unfolds in two ways.

First, we need to remember that it was in Greek that these ideas were thought through, and that something of what is meant is lost in translation, whether into Latin or into English. For the key word here is *logos*, which can be translated as “word”, or reason, or meaning, or principle; and the word translated “rational” is, in Greek, *logikos*. So the translation ‘rational’ only preserves part of the meaning of the Greek *logikos*, and disguises the link the Greek suggests between the Word, or *Logos*, and *logikos*. The word *logikos* suggests, as its root meaning, participating in the *Logos*, or Word; it implies a relationship, rather than simply a property. And there is a parallel to be found here between the relationship *logikos-Logos* and



the relationship ‘being according to the image’ - Image, *kat’ eikona* - *Eikon*. In passing, it is striking that what is a rather clumsy expression in English, ‘that which is according to the image’, to *kat’ eikona*, is a truly common term in Byzantine Greek.

Limiting the notion of being in the image of God to being rational and possessing free will falls short in two respects of what the Greek Fathers generally mean by being according to God’s image. I shall share those in the next issue.

Ask yourself: *What do I think it means being created in God’s image?*

## MORE ABOUT HOLY SCRIPTURES: THE GOSPEL OF MARK

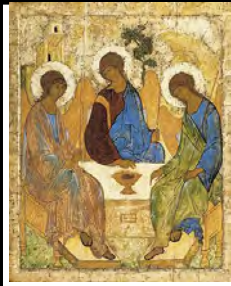
The tradition of the early Church is unanimous in ascribing the Second Gospel to Mark the disciple of Peter. The earliest statement is from Papias of Hierapolis who, writing in the early 2nd century, quotes and comments upon a still earlier attestation: "This also the presbyter used to say: 'When Mark became Peter's interpreter, he wrote down accurately, although not in order, all that he remembered of what the Lord had said or done.' For he had not heard or followed the Lord, but later, as I said, [heard and followed] Peter, who used to adapt his teaching to the needs [of the moment], without making any sort of arrangement of the Lord's oracles. Consequently, Mark made no mistake in thus writing down certain things as he remembered them. For he was careful not to omit or falsify anything of what he had heard". Later testimonies may derive from Papias' statement, but the fact that this Gospel was universally accepted as the work of an otherwise unimportant person in the apostolic Church, may be taken as an index of the soundness of this tradition.

The Evangelist is usually identified with the John Mark of Acts (12:12, 25) and the Mark of 1 Peter (5:13). The fact that he had a Jewish name (John) and a Hellenized Latin name (Mark) suggests that he was a Jew from the Greek-speaking world; in fact he belonged to the Hellenists of the Jerusalem community. He was a cousin of Barnabas and presumably the same "John who was also called Mark." Paul and Barnabas "had John with them as their assistant" on Mission 1; but he subsequently left them and returned to Jerusalem. Later, at Antioch, Barnabas wished to take him on a missionary tour. But Paul disapproved, and the disagreement between him and Barnabas eventuated in the latter's taking Mark and sailing for Cyprus instead of accompanying Paul. Writing



from house arrest in Rome, Paul mentioned Barnabas' cousin Mark as being with him; similarly, a Mark is named in Philemon as Paul's fellow prisoner. In 2 Timothy Paul instructs Timothy in Ephesus to "get Mark and bring him with you." Finally, the author of 1 Peter sends greeting from Rome from himself "and Mark my son". The identification is not altogether certain, there is no positive reason why all these texts should not refer to the same person.

*As you can see, the history of our sacred writings is complex*



# THE EASTERN HERALD

## СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

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

Vol. 65 No 9

Weekend of Cheesefare

March 2-3, 2019

## THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

There is a pronounced difference in orientation in Christology and soteriology between the East and West. According to Eastern theology, Western theology has been dominated by legal, juridical and forensic categories. Eastern theology, on the contrary, understands the need of salvation in terms of deliverance from mortality and corruption for life everlasting. Union with God is the goal of the Christian life, even becoming “in-godded.” The idea of divine-human cooperation in salvation is not only accepted but is enthusiastically championed, although it is not understood as nullifying the role of grace.

According to the Eastern view, “the descent of the divine person of Christ makes human persons capable of an ascent in the Holy Spirit. It was necessary that the voluntary humiliation, the redemptive emptying of the Son of God should take place so that men and women might accomplish their vocation of *Theosis*, the deification of created beings by uncreated grace.”

This is all based on the understanding that God, Who created humans in His image and unto His likeness, desired humans to freely embrace the idea of developing a true relationship - a relationship of love, with Him. This desired union is why He created us as He did with not only an intellect but also a free will.

Eastern theologians do not speak of deification only as a metaphor; they also stress



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

the reality of the union with God promised to the faithful. The words of St. Peter are explicit: *partakers of the divine nature*. We already see that Peter had some idea about the meaning and purpose of Jesus coming into the world. It took, however, many, many more years before the Church finally pronounced Her firm belief in His divinity.

### *True Fasting*

“Why do we fast, and you do not see it? afflict ourselves, and you take no note of it? Lo, on your fast day you carry out your own pursuits, and drive all your laborers. Yes, your fast ends in quarreling and fighting, striking with wicked claw. Would that today you might fast so as to make your voice heard on high! Is this the manner of fasting I wish, of keeping a day of penance: That a man bow his head like a reed, and lie in sackcloth and ashes? Do you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; Clothing

the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own.

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; Your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!

If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech; If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; Then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday.”

*The Prophet Isaiah (58:3-9)*