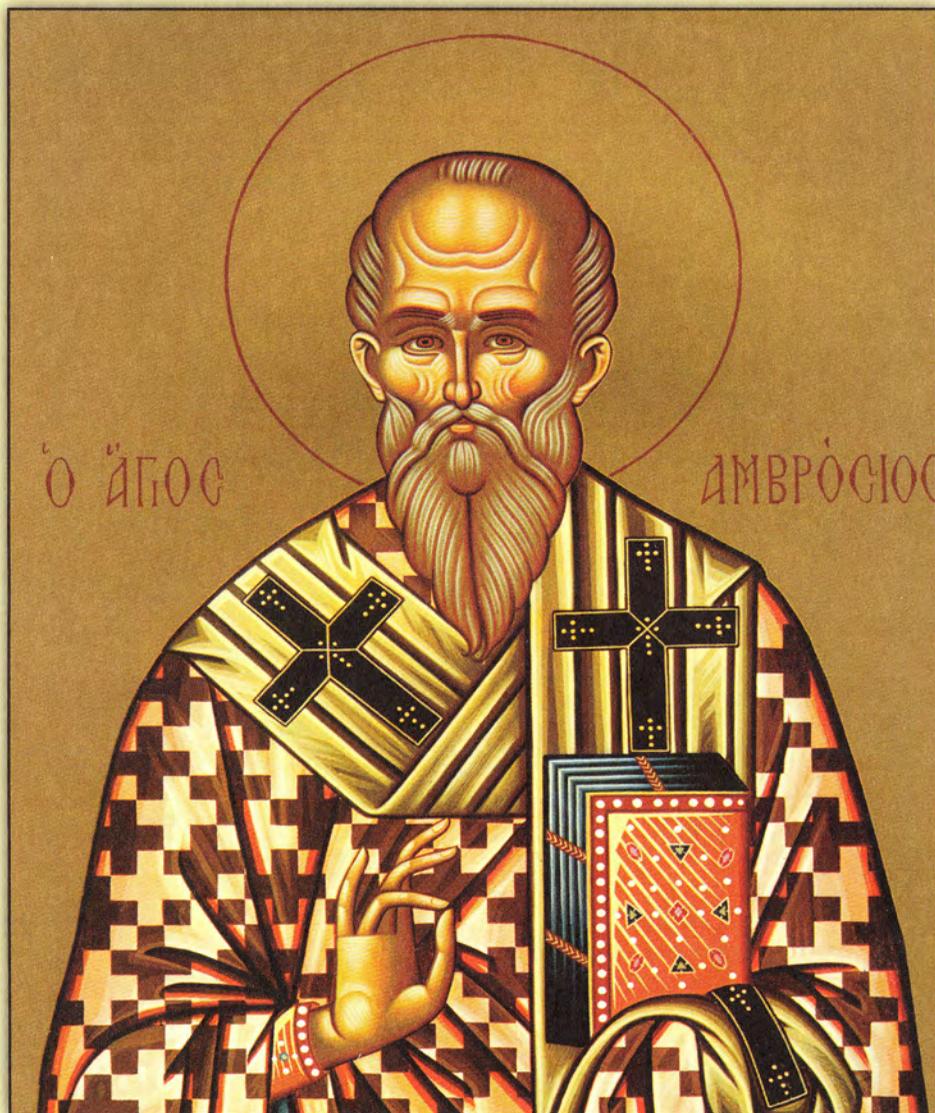


TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
TENTH SUNDAY OF LUKE



Icon of Saint Ambrose of Milan -- December 7th

FOR CONSIDERATION

From the Prologue of Ochrid by St. Nikolai

God returns a loan a hundredfold, when it is lent to Him through the poor.

At one time, there was a Christian woman married to a pagan, and they lived together in love and poverty. When the husband, with much difficulty, saved up fifty silver pieces, he told his wife that this money should be given to someone as a loan with interest. Otherwise, he stated, they would spend their savings coin by coin, and again they would be left with nothing. His wife replied: "If you want to loan it out, lend it to the Christian God." "And where is the Christian God?" the husband asked. His wife led him to the church and told him to distribute the money to the beggars in front of the church, saying to her husband: "The Christian God will accept this from them, since all of them are His." They distributed all fifty silver pieces to the poor and returned home.

After a period of time, they were left without any bread in the house. Then the wife told her husband to go to the church, and he would receive the money that he loaned to God. The man went to the church and saw only beggars there, and in his perplexity as to who would give him money, he walked around the church.

Suddenly he saw a silver coin in front of him. He took it, purchased a fish with it, and brought the fish home. He complained to his wife that he had not seen anyone and no one had given him anything, but that he accidentally had found a silver coin. His wife replied: "God is invisible and works in an unseen manner." When the wife cut open the fish, she found a glittering stone in it. She gave this stone to her husband and he took it to a merchant to see what he could get for it. The merchant offered him five silver pieces, and the man began to laugh, thinking that the merchant was joking by offering him such a high price. However, the merchant, thinking that the man was laughing because of the small price he had offered him, then offered him ten, then fifteen, then thirty, then fifty silver pieces. The man, realizing that it was a precious stone, began to hesitate. The merchant raised the price higher and higher until he reached the price of three hundred silver pieces. Then the man accepted the three hundred silver pieces and went home joyfully. "Do you see how good the Christian God is?" his wife said to him. The amazed husband was baptized and, together with his wife, glorified God.

Interesting Facts: Dumb California Laws

Sunshine is guaranteed to the masses.

It is a misdemeanor to shoot at any kind of game from a moving vehicle, unless the target is a whale.

Women may not drive in a house coat.

No vehicle without a driver may exceed 60 miles per hour.

Nobody is allowed to ride a bicycle in a swimming pool. (Baldwin Park)

A man can't go outside while wearing a jacket and pants to do not match. (Carmel)

Belvedere City Council order reads: "No dog shall be in a public place without its master on a leash."

It is illegal to shoot jackrabbits from the back of a streetcar. (San Diego)

The owners of houses with Christmas lights on them past February second may be fined up to \$250. (San Diego)

THE TAO OF “WHATEVER” AND THE ABOLITION OF MAN

By Fr. Vasile Tudora in *The Sounding*

Feb 18, 2014 myoca.net/tao-whatever-abolition-man

Living in a multi-cultural, post-modern world brought to us by the new era of rapid communication, we are more and more exposed to cultures that are, or at least seem to be, very remote from our own. Although many of them are in fact foreign, there are times when we find in them something that strikes a sensitive chord with us. Take for instance the concept of “Tao,” found in the homonym religious movement, Taoism, but also in Buddhism, Confucianism, and even in Eastern Martial Arts.

An easy explanation of Tao would be a path or way of life. James Legge, a famous researcher of Chinese culture, described

Taoism as “the exhibition of a way or method of living, which men should cultivate as the highest and purest development of their nature.” Tao is a way in which one should conduct oneself in order to fulfill their highest potential, make the best out of their existence.

I am not going to examine what this path really is in the context of far eastern thinking, but would like to stop and reflect on the very proposal of following a path in life in our contemporary social context.

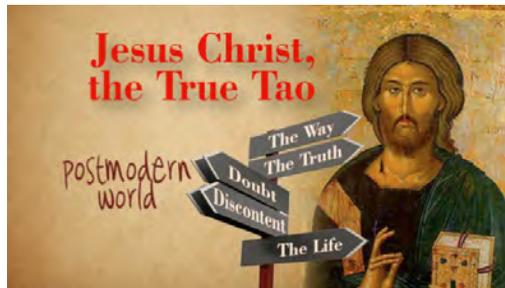
Nowadays we live in a postmodern world, a movement that was very simply and

accurately defined by Jean Francois Lyotard as “incredulity towards metanarratives.” I know these are some big words, so let me put it into simpler terms: it is a general mistrust of all the big stories of religions, all the empty promises of a better world through science that modernity has yet to deliver, all the hollow assurances of utopic societies like communism, socialism, capitalism, and all the other “isms” out there. The postmodern

man does not believe in the existence of a well-defined path in life anymore. The disheartened postmodern man lives an existence that is pathless; he seizes the moment based on ephemeral

feelings without thinking so much about the connections between yesterday and tomorrow.

Ask a teenager to conform to your moral principles, religious or any other kind, and you will get back a single-word answer: “Whatever!” This simple world expresses his attitude of life; he does not care if your principles are good, or based on science, or faith or anything else. All he cares about is what he feels about that particular thing in that very moment. No structure, no eternal moral values, no universal truth, just the whiff of the moment guides him. A recent study looking



at how young college students make moral choices revealed the following quintessential commentary: “I mean, I guess what makes something right is how I feel about it. But different people feel different ways, so I couldn’t speak on behalf of anyone else as to what’s right and wrong.” Basically, as the study concludes, moral choices nowadays are just a matter of individual taste.

C.S. Lewis foresaw this trend a long time ago in a little-known study called “The Abolition of Man.” Talking about the modern education of his times, he reflects with sadness: “We make men without chests and expect from them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst.” He goes on to say that there are certain core values that are shared, with minor variations, by all the major religions of the world; he calls this common trunk the “Tao.” Without this common Tao, he resolves that man cannot make any solid moral judgments but is condemned to reach the wrong conclusions because his rationality is not based on anything stable. “The rebellion of new ideologies against the Tao is a rebellion of the branches against the tree: if the rebels could succeed, they would find that they had destroyed themselves.”

Now, I don’t want to sound like I agree that all religions are the same. I know it is not true. I agree, however, that one should have a path in life that is based on core, unyielding values. A pathless life does not lead anywhere; it only moves you round in circles, an existence without a goal, empty of meaning, consumed in the satisfactions of

the moment. This is the “Tao of whatever,” a world of men without chests, who live only for themselves and couldn’t care less if their full potential as human beings has been fulfilled or not as long as they are gratified.

As Christians, we are not to follow this path, but we are to base our life’s journey on the unmovable Truth that is the incarnate Logos, Jesus Christ. He is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” He is the One who by His Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection exemplified for us humility, bravery, and sacrifice and affirmed the beauty of a life dedicated to serving others. He opened our eyes to see that we should embrace our enemies as brothers and turn the other cheek to fulfill the commandment of love. He is the only One who can give meaning and true value to our existence.

A life spent in imitating Christ is the only Tao leading to eternal life. He is the only assurance that man’s highest potential can be achieved. He is the new Adam who shows us what we can be if we choose to follow in His footsteps. Choosing any other path, or choosing no path, is a waste of one’s existence. We should live not randomly but wisely, trying to stay on the path that leads, through Christ, to our fulfillment as human beings. Otherwise, I am afraid that C.S. Lewis is right, and we are heading towards the abolition of man.



THE SACRAMENT OF REPENTANCE

From “*The Inner Kingdom*” by Bishop Kallistos Ware

The experience of repentance is felt with especial force in the sacrament of Confession. The meaning of this “mystery” may be found summed up in the short exhortation addressed by the priest to the penitent in the Russian rite (the italics are my own):

Behold, my child, *Christ invisibly stands here to hear your confession*; therefore, neither be ashamed nor afraid, and hide nothing from me; rather fear not to tell me all that you have done *so that you might receive forgiveness from our Lord Jesus Christ*. Behold His holy icon is before us; and I am only a witness, that I may bear witness of all that you tell me. If you hide anything from me, you shall have the greater sin. Take heed, therefore, that *having come to the place of the Physician* you do not depart unhealed.

In Confession we are to see Christ the Judge lifting from us the sentence of condemnation; but also, and more fundamentally, we are to see Christ the Physician, restoring what is broken and renewing life. The sacrament is to be envisaged not primarily in juridical but in therapeutic terms. Above all it is a *sacrament of healing*.

It is significant that in some of the Byzantine liturgical commentaries Confession and the Anointing of the Sick are treated not as two distinct sacraments but as complementary aspects of a single “mystery” of healing. What we see in Confession is much more than external, forensic absolution; above all we desire spiritual medicine for our chronic spiritual wounds. Indeed, what we bring before Christ is not just specific sins but also the fact of deep sinfulness within us – the profound corruption that cannot be fully expressed in words, that seems to elude our conscious brain and will. It is of this, above all else, that we ask to be cured. And as a sacrament of healing, Confession is not simply a painful necessity, a discipline imposed on us by church authority, but an action full of joy and saving grace. Through Confession we learn that God is in full reality “the hope of the hopeless” (The Liturgy of St. Basil).

“There are only three of us here” – priest, penitent, and Christ the Physician. What does each of these three do, and whose action is the most important? Many people tend to put the greatest emphasis on what the *priest* does, on his words of counsel and encouragement; and

if the priest fails to say anything eloquent or unexpected, they tend to assume that little or nothing has been achieved. Or else they overstress the second aspect, what *they themselves* are doing. They imagine that they must be deeply stirred on an emotional level – even though, as we have said, repentance is not primarily a matter of the emotions. And because they put the main emphasis on their own efforts, they are in danger of regarding Confession in bleak and discouraging terms, as something to be got over and done with, necessary yet disagreeable, like a cold bath. But in reality the most important action is not that of the penitent or the priest, but that of *God*. While the penitent is required to prepare himself by self-examination and to conduct a searching scrutiny of his conscience, in the last resort he comes to Confession empty-handed, helpless, not claiming to be able to heal himself, but asking for healing from another. And this other whose help he invokes is not the priest but God. The priest is simply a witness, bearing testimony before God of what we have to say. To vary the analogy, he is no more than “God’s usher,” introducing us into the divine Presence; he is merely the receptionist in the hospital waiting room or the attendant in the operating theatre, whereas the surgeon is Christ Himself.

It is to Christ, not to the priest, that the confession is made (“Christ invisibly stands here to hear your confession”); and it is from Christ, not from the priest, that forgiveness comes (“so you will have pardon from our Lord Jesus Christ”). Once we regard Confession as fundamentally Christ’s action rather than our own, then we shall begin to understand the sacrament of repentance in a far more positive way. It is an experience of God’s healing love and pardon, not merely of our own disintegration and weakness. We are to see, not just the prodigal son, plodding slowly and painfully upon the long road home, but also the father, catching sight of him when he is still a long way off and running out to meet him (Lk 15:20). As Tito Colliander puts it, “If we take one step towards the Lord, He takes ten towards us.” That is precisely what we experience in Confession. In common with all the sacraments, Confession involves a joint divine-human action, in which there is found a convergence and “cooperation” between God’s grace and our free will. Both are necessary; but what God does is incomparably the more important.

Sunday offering for November 23

Amount	Number
\$2.00	1
\$10.00	3
\$15.00	1
\$20.00	2
\$30.00	1
\$40.00	2
\$50.00	1
\$60.00	2 (loose)
\$75.00	1
\$150.00	1
\$200.00	1
\$300.00	1
<hr/>	
\$1092.00	

Parishioner Total: \$1090.00
 Guest: \$2.00

Average / parish household (42): \$26.59
 Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00
 Deficit: **(\$1035.00)**

Sunday offering for November 30

Amount	Number
\$3.00	1
\$5.00	1
\$10.00	1
\$15.00	1
\$20.00	2
\$40.00	1
\$50.00	2
\$55.00	1 (loose)
\$75.00	2
\$100.00	1
\$300.00	1
\$400.00	1
<hr/>	
\$1238.00	

Parishioner Total: \$1140.00
 Guest: \$98.00

Average / parish household (42): \$27.80
 Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00
 Deficit: **(\$985.00)**

Please Note:

When you are away, please don't forget that the church still relies on your contributions. Our bills do not go on vacation. Your absence on any Sunday does not negate your obligation to support your home parish.

Goal:
\$120000

2014

Stewardship Pledges

Pledges received: 18

Pledges: _____

\$39116

It is impossible to plan any sort of budget until all pledge forms are turned in. If you haven't returned your pledge, please do so.



Parishioners That Are Home Bound

If you or a loved one cannot make it to Church, Fr. James would be more than pleased to visit at your home, in the hospital, at a nursing home, or any other place. Please schedule a visit with Fr. James.

Haven't seen someone in a while?

Give them a call. See how they are doing. Let them know that you not only miss them but also care enough to see if everything is okay. A kind word can go a long way.

Pastor:

Fr. James Bankston: (619) 905-5278

Pastoral Council:

Fr. Deacon Frank Avant: (760) 805-1667
 Vladimir Bachynsky: (619) 865-1279
 Mark Hartman: (619) 446-6357
 Luke Miller: (858) 354-2008
 Jeanine Soucie: (718) 674-4529

Social Committee Chairperson:

Megan Hartman (619) 540-4291

Finance Committee:

Bohdan Knianicky: (619) 303-9698
 Fr. Deacon Frank Avant: (760) 805-1667



**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква
Святого Йоана Хрестителя
St. John the Baptizer
Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church**

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Preaching the Good News

The Church of the Lord is built upon the rock of the apostles among so many dangers in the world; it therefore remains unmoved. The Church's foundation is unshakable and firm against the assaults of the raging sea. Waves lash at the Church but do not shatter it. Although the elements of this world constantly beat upon the Church with crashing sounds, the Church possesses the safest harbor of salvation for all in distress. Although the Church is tossed about on the sea, it rides easily on rivers, especially those rivers that Scripture speaks of: The rivers have lifted up their voice. These are the rivers flowing from the heart of the man who is given drink by Christ and who receives from the Spirit of God. When these rivers overflow with the grace of the Spirit, they lift up their voice.

There is also a stream which flows down on God's saints like a torrent. There is also a

rushing river giving joy to the heart that is at peace and makes for peace. Whoever has received from the fullness of this river, like John the Evangelist, like Peter and Paul, lifts up his voice. Just as the apostles lifted up their voices and preached the Gospel throughout the world, so those who drink these waters begin to preach the good news of the Lord Jesus.

Drink, then, from Christ, so that your voice may also be heard. Store up in your mind the water that is Christ, the water that praises the Lord. Store up water from many sources, the water that rains down from the clouds of prophecy.

St. Ambrose of Milan

**For more information on the Eastern Churches,
visit www.mytheosis.com**