



Parish Information Bulletin

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Fr Athanasios and
Fr Ephraim are available
at the Church every
Monday to Friday
between 4.00 and 6.00pm
for Holy Confession and
any spiritual need.

"When we call upon the
Saints in prayer,
if we pronounce their
names from the heart,
it already means that
we bring them near
our heart itself.
Therefore ask their
prayers and intercession
undoubtedly for
yourself.
They will hear you,
and will speedily
lay your prayers before
the Lord,
in the twinkling of an
eye, for He is
omnipresent and
omniscient."



St. John of Kronstadt

SUNDAY 2 AUGUST

8th SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, Matthew 14: 14-22

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

THURSDAY 6 AUGUST

Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

PLEASE NOTE:

(Dormition Fast: 1—14 August)

- 4.30pm
PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS will be live-streamed daily on our Facebook website excepting 5th August which will be replaced by Vespers for the Holy Transfiguration, 14th August for Dormition of the Theotokos, and Saturday, 8th August.

SUNDAY 9 AUGUST

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 3: 9-17
Gospel Reading: Matthew 22-34

THE HOLY TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

"Why did the Lord take only three disciples on Tabor and not all? Because Judas was not worthy to behold the divine glory of the Teacher, Whom he will betray and the Lord did not want to leave him [Judas] alone at the foot of the mountain so that the betrayer would not, by that, justify his betrayal.

Why was our Lord transfigured on a mountain and not in a valley? So as to teach us two virtues: love of labour and godly-thoughts. For, climbing to the heights required labour and height represents the heights of our thoughts, i.e., godly-thoughts.

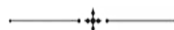
Why was our Lord transfigured at night? Because, the night rather than the day is more suitable for prayer and godly-thoughts and because the night, by its darkness, conceals all the beauty of the earth and reveals the beauty of the starry heavens.

Why did Moses and Elijah appear? In order to destroy the error of the Jews, as though Christ is one of the prophets; Elijah or Jeremiah or some other that is why He appears as a King above the prophets and that is why Moses and Elijah appear as His servants. Until then, our Lord manifested His divine power many times to the disciples but, on Mt. Tabor, He manifested His divine nature. This vision of His Divinity and the hearing of the heavenly witness about Him as the Son of God, should serve the disciples in the days of the Lord's passion, in strengthening of an unwavering faith in Him and His final victory."

-from the Prologue of Ochrid of St. Nikolai Velimirovic

Apolytikion

You were transfigured on the Mount, Christ God revealing Your glory to Your disciples, insofar as they could comprehend. Illuminate us sinners also with Your everlasting light, through the intercessions of the Theotokos. Giver of light, glory to You.



"Fasting gradually disperses and drives away spiritual darkness and the veil of sin that lies on the soul, just as the sun dispels the mist. Fasting enables us spiritually to see that spiritual air in which Christ, the Sun who knows no setting, does not rise, but shines without ceasing. Fasting, aided by vigil, penetrates and softens hardness of heart. Where once were the vapours of drunkenness it causes fountains of compunction to spring forth.

- St. Symeon the New Theologian



"Remember that not a single word is lost during prayer, if you say it from your heart; God hears each word, and weighs it in a balance. Sometimes it seems to us that our words only strike the air in vain, and sound as the voice of one crying in the wilderness. No, no; it is not so!...The Lord responds to every desire of the heart, expressed in words or unexpressed."

- St. John of Kronstadt

**“You Give Them Something to Eat”: Homily on the Importance of Offering Ourselves to the Lord During the Dormition Fast
in the Orthodox Church**

For the first two weeks of August, we are in the Dormition Fast which leads to the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos on August 15. “Dormition” means “falling asleep” and every year at this time we commemorate the end of the earthly life of the Mother of God, after which she followed her Son body and soul into the Kingdom of Heaven. We fast during this time just as we do in Lent, for we all need to humble ourselves and fight self-centred desires if we are to follow her example of complete obedience and receptivity to the Lord. During this period, we will pray the Paraklesis service to the Theotokos, for there is no better intercessor with the Son of God for us than His Mother. We need her prayers now especially, with so much violence and hatred around the world and so many who have health problems.

This Thursday we celebrate another great feast of the Church, the Transfiguration of our Lord. The eyes of Saints Peter, James, and John were opened on Mount Tabor to behold the divine glory of Christ as He shined with heavenly light. Of course, we want our spiritual eyes to be opened also so that we can know and experience the glory of the Lord as did those apostles on Mount Tabor. We want to be transfigured so that we will also shine with uncreated light, reflecting the brilliant holiness of our Saviour just as an iron left in the fire manifests the heat and light of the flames.

We must be careful, however, to resist the temptation of thinking that participating more fully in the life of Christ is simply a passive matter of asking Him for a miracle or otherwise to help us out according to our own preferences. In other words, we have to take responsibility for doing our part in actually obeying His commandments. The point is to become the kind of people who actually do His work in the world; it is certainly not to manipulate Him somehow into following our preferences. For example, in today’s gospel lesson the disciples understandably did not want to take responsibility for feeding thousands of hungry people. They asked Christ to send the people away to buy their own food, for they had collected only five loaves and two fish. But the Lord did not let them off the hook so easily. He told them to bring Him their few loaves and fish, which they did. Then the Saviour blessed the food, had the disciples distribute it, and everyone had more than enough to eat. I bet that the disciples were as shocked as everyone else at how well things turned out that day.

Notice that Jesus Christ required the apostles to bring the offering, to give what they had, and to take responsibility for their role in feeding the people. The very same thing is true for you and me. We are all tempted at times to ask the Lord for this or that, to solve a problem, or to get something done according to our own desires. We may think that we have done our part then; of course, there are some circumstances in life about which we can do little other than pray. But most of the challenges we face daily are not like that. What we think, say, and do really does matter; we need to grow in our ability to fulfil the role to which God calls us in the circumstances we face. To let ourselves off the hook by asking for God’s help and then continuing life as usual with no changes on our part is irresponsible and a sign that we view Him more as magician than as our Lord. We will never develop the spiritual eyes to behold the divine glory by living like that.

Jesus Christ fed thousands of people miraculously, but the disciples had to do their part of offering what little they could find for the meal. He required them to provide the material for the project, you might say. Imagine what the story would have been like had the disciples refused to bring the loaves and fish to Him. What if they had been offended at His command and walked away or simply did not follow through? What if they had decided to eat all the food themselves in place of bringing it to Him? Instead, they obeyed the command: “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” And through their obedience, the Saviour worked a miracle that fed thousands of hungry people and fulfilled so much imagery from the Old Testament.

No, the disciples did not earn or deserve anything as a result of their obedience. But their obedience surely changed them at least a bit. It made them stronger spiritually and helped to solidify in them the good habit of doing what Christ said and offering what they had to Him. They got many things wrong during the time that they followed the Saviour during His earthly ministry, but that day they got it right and played their intended role in fulfilling God’s will for their lives.

Though our lives and circumstances are very different from theirs, we all need to become more like them in learning that the point of our faith is not to get Christ to do more of what we want Him to do. Instead, it is for us to gain the spiritual clarity and health both to recognize what He calls us to and then actually to carry it out. In order for that to happen, we must be transfigured or changed from people who basically want God to do our will into those who want to do God’s will. We want to become like the Theotokos in her simple, honest, and pure response to the Archangel Gabriel: “Behold the handmaiden of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word.” That was how she received Christ into her life in a truly miraculous way as His virgin mother: through humble obedience.

Each parish is blessed by those whose obedience includes giving of their time and talents to chant, to serve at the altar, to teach Sunday School, to offer their assistance in a variety of ways, and to attend services regularly, even when it is inconvenient and requires sacrifices. We all have the opportunity to offer our lives to Christ in humble obedience when we observe the Dormition Fast, pray and read the Bible daily, come to Confession, mend broken relationships with others, and refuse to worship the false gods of money, pleasure, and power that are so loved in our corrupt world. If we are not making a serious effort to offer our lives to the Saviour in obedience to His command, we really cannot expect to grow in our participation in His life or the joy of His kingdom.

In a sense, Christ says to each and every one of us: “You give them something to eat.” Everyone we encounter is hungry for the Bread of Life. Everyone needs to be fed. And we sometimes feel like idiots with our few loaves and fish in the face of such overwhelming need. Yes, we can refuse responsibility and tell God that it is all His business and we have better things to do. We do not want to go down that road, of course, for we know that it is a dead end. Far better to be like the disciples and offer our meagre resources to Him, trusting that He will do with them what we cannot. In ways that we cannot fathom, He will use us—and heal and transform us—to accomplish His glorious purposes for our parish, our neighbours, our families, our enemies, and for those at home and abroad who bear burdens far too heavy for anyone to bear. So in this busy season of the life of the Church, let us all be like the Theotokos and the disciples, offering ourselves to the Lord in humble obedience as best we can. At the end of the day, that is what it means to be a Christian.

Fr. Philip LeMasters