

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.

ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD
OCA – Diocese of New York-New Jersey

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson

Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky

Parish Council Vice President: Dean Inferrera



Sunday, August 6, 2017

Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9

Tone 8

Epistle: 2 Peter 1:10-19

9th Sunday after Pentecost:

The Holy Transfiguration of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ (the Second "Feast of the Savior" in August)

Troparion – Tone 7

You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ God, / revealing Your glory to Your disciples as far as they could bear it. / Let Your everlasting Light also shine upon us sinners, / through the prayers of the Theotokos. / O Giver of Light, glory to You!

Kontakion – Tone 7

On the Mountain You were Transfigured, O Christ God, / And Your disciples beheld Your glory as far as they could see it; / So that when they would behold You crucified, / They would understand that Your suffering was voluntary, / And would proclaim to the world, / That You are truly the Radiance of the Father!



The Holy Transfiguration of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ (the Second "Feast of the Savior" in August)

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Keeley Ryan Salcedo, on her 1st birthday (8/5), offered by her grandfather Sub-Deacon Vlashi.

His Eminence, Archbishop NIKON, Archbishop of Boston, New England, and the Albanian Archdiocese, suffering from shingles;

His Grace, Bishop SERAPHIM, Former Bishop of Sendai, presently hospitalized in New York;

Archpriest Steven Voytovich, Dean of St. Tikhon's Seminary, presently hospitalized in Connecticut; and

Matushka Tamara Cowan, being treated for a broken wrist, all offered by Archbishop Michael and the Diocese of NY/NJ.

The Philokalia: Daily Readings

Sufferings produce devotions to God and recognition of His gifts and our faults. These give birth to gratitude, and gratitude inculcates the fear of God which leads us to the keeping of the commandments, to inward grief, gentleness and humility. These three virtues produce discernment, which gives us spiritual insight....

- St Peter of Damascus, A Treasury of Divine Knowledge

Liturgical Schedule

Sunday, August 6th

9:40 am: Hours
9:45 am: General
Confession
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy:
The Holy Transfiguration
of our Lord God and Savior
Jesus Christ & Blessing of
fruits and nuts

Saturday, August 12th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, August 13th

9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Wednesday, August 16th

6:30 pm: Vesperal Liturgy:
Dormition of the Most Holy
Theotokos

Saturday, August 19th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, August 20th

9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, August 16th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, August 27th

9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Bulletin Sponsors

Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Readings:

The Prokeimenon in the 4th Tone:

O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! / In wisdom hast Thou made them all!
(*Psalm 103:24*)
vs. Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, Thou art very great!
(*Psalm 103:1*)

Epistle: 2 Peter 1:10-19

Brethren, be more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall; so there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore I intend always to remind you of these things, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to arouse you by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. And I will see to it that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word made more sure. You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Alleluia in the 8th Tone:

The heavens art Thine; the earth also is Thine.
(*Psalm 91:2*)
vs. Blessed are the people who know the festal shout!
(*Psalm 91:3*)

Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9

At that time, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led him up a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is raised from the dead."

Orthodox Quote of the Day

These holy men achieved such things because they had resolved to live for the soul alone, turning away from the body and its wants.

St. Neilos the Ascetic



The Holy Transfiguration of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ (the Second “Feast of the Savior” in August)

Discourse on the Holy Transfiguration of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ of Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica

For an explanation of the present Feast and understanding of its truth, it is necessary for us to turn to the very start of today’s reading from the Gospel: “Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James and John his brother, and led them up onto a high mountain by themselves” (Mt.17:1).

First of all we must ask, from whence does the Evangelist Matthew begin to reckon with six days? From what sort of day is it? What does the preceding turn of speech indicate, where the Savior, in teaching His disciples, said to them: “For the Son of Man shall come with his angels in the glory of His Father,” and further: “Amen I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death, until they have seen the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom” (Mt.16:27-28)? That is to say, it is the Light of His own forthcoming Transfiguration which He terms the Glory of His Father and of His Kingdom.

The Evangelist Luke points this out and reveals this more clearly saying: “Now it came to pass about eight days after these words, that He took Peter and John and James, and went up the mountain to pray. And as He prayed, His countenance was altered, and His raiment became a radiant white” (Luke 9:28-29). But how can the two be reconciled, when one of them speaks definitively about the interval of time as being eight days between the sayings and the manifestation, whereas the other (says): “after six days?”

There were eight on the mountain, but only six were visible. Three, Peter, James and John, had come up with Jesus, and they saw Moses and Elias standing there and conversing with Him, so altogether there were six of them. However, the Father and the Holy Spirit were invisibly with the Lord: the Father, with His Voice testifying that this was His Beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit shining forth with Him in the radiant cloud. Thus, the six are actually eight, and there is no contradiction regarding the eight. Similarly, there is no contradiction with the Evangelists when one says “after six days,” and the other says “eight days after these words.”

But these twofold sayings as it were present is a certain format set in mystery, and together with it that of those actually present upon the Mount. It stands to reason, and everyone rationally studying in accordance with Scripture knows that the Evangelists are in agreement one with another. Luke spoke of eight days without contradicting Matthew, who declared “after six days.” There is not another day added on to represent the day on which these sayings were uttered, nor is the day on which the Lord was transfigured added on (which a rational person might reasonably imagine to be added to the days of Matthew).

The Evangelist Luke does not say “after eight days” (like the Evangelist Matthew says “after six days”), but rather “it came to pass eight days after these words.” But where the Evangelists seem to contradict one another, they actually point out to us something great and mysterious. In actual fact, why did the one say “after six days,” but the other, in ignoring the seventh day, have in mind the eighth day? It is because the great vision of the Light of the Transfiguration of the Lord is the mystery of the Eighth Day, i.e., of the future age, coming to be revealed after the passing away of the world created in six days.

About the power of the Divine Spirit, through Whom the Kingdom of God is to be revealed, the Lord predicted: “There are some standing here who shall not taste death, until they have seen the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom” (Mt.16:28). Everywhere and in every way the King will be present, and everywhere will be His Kingdom, since the advent of His Kingdom does not signify the passing over from one place to another, but rather the revelation of its power of the Divine Spirit. That is why it is said: “come in power.” And this power is not manifest to simply ordinary people, but to those standing with the Lord, that is to say, those who have affirmed their faith in Him like Peter, James and John, and especially those who are free of our natural abasement. Therefore, and precisely because of this, God manifests Himself upon the Mount, on the one hand coming down from His heights, and on the other, raising us up from the depths of abasement, since the Transcendent One takes on mortal nature. Certainly, such a manifest appearance by far transcends the utmost limits of the mind’s grasp, as effectualized by the power of the Divine Spirit.

Thus, the Light of the Transfiguration of the Lord is not something that comes to be and then vanishes, nor is it subject to the sensory faculties, although it was contemplated by corporeal eyes for a short while upon an inconsequential mountaintop. But the initiates of the Mystery, (the disciples) of the Lord at this time passed beyond mere flesh into spirit through a transformation of their senses, effectualized within them by the Spirit, and in such a

way that they beheld what, and to what extent, the Divine Spirit had wrought blessedness in them to behold the Ineffable Light.

Those not grasping this point have conjectured that the chosen from among the Apostles beheld the Light of the Transfiguration of the Lord by a sensual and creaturely faculty, and through this they attempt to reduce to a creaturely level (i.e., as something “created”) not only this Light, the Kingdom and the Glory of God, but also the Power of the Divine Spirit, through Whom it is meet for Divine Mysteries to be revealed. In all likelihood, such persons have not heeded the words of the Apostle Paul: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love Him. But to us God has revealed them through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God” (1 Cor.2:9-10).

So, with the onset of the Eighth Day, the Lord, taking Peter, James and John, went up on the Mount to pray. He always prayed alone, withdrawing from everyone, even from the Apostles themselves, as for example when with five loaves and two fish He fed the five thousand men, besides women and children (Mt.14:19-23). Or, taking with Him those who excelled others, as at the approach of His Saving Passion, when He said to the other disciples: “Sit here while I go over there and pray” (Mt.26:36). Then He took with Him Peter, James and John. But in our instance right here and now, having taken only these same three, the Lord led them up onto a high mountain by themselves and was transfigured before them, that is to say, before their very eyes.

“What does it mean to say: He was transfigured?” asks the Golden-Mouthed Theologian (Chrysostom). He answers this by saying: “It revealed something of His Divinity to them, as much and insofar as they were able to apprehend it, and it showed the indwelling of God within Him.” The Evangelist Luke says: “And as He prayed, His countenance was altered” (Luke 9:29); and from the Evangelist Matthew we read: “And His face shone as the sun” (Mt.17:2). But the Evangelist said this, not in the context that this Light be thought of as subsistent for the senses (let us put aside the blindness of mind of those who can conceive of nothing higher than what is known through the senses). Rather, it is to show that Christ God, for those living and contemplating by the Spirit, is the same as the sun is for those living in the flesh and contemplating by the senses. Therefore, some other Light for the knowing the Divinity is not necessary for those who are enriched by Divine gifts.

That same Inscrutable Light shone and was mysteriously manifest to the Apostles and the foremost of the Prophets at that moment, when (the Lord) was praying. This shows that what brought forth this blessed sight was prayer, and that the radiance occurred and was manifest by uniting the mind with God, and that it is granted to all who, with constant exercise in efforts of virtue and prayer, strive with their mind towards God. True beauty, essentially, can be contemplated only with a purified mind. To gaze upon its luminance assumes a sort of participation in it, as though some bright ray etches itself upon the face.

Even the face of Moses was illumined by his association with God. Do you not know that Moses was transfigured when he went up the mountain, and there beheld the Glory of God? But he (Moses) did not effect this, but rather he underwent a transfiguration. However, our Lord Jesus Christ possessed that Light Himself. In this regard, actually, He did not need prayer for His flesh to radiate with the Divine Light; it was but to show from whence that Light descends upon the saints of God, and how to contemplate it. For it is written that even the saints “will shine forth like the sun” (Mt.13:43), which is to say, entirely permeated by Divine Light as they gaze upon Christ, divinely and inexpressibly shining forth His Radiance, issuing from His Divine Nature. On Mount Tabor it was manifest also in His Flesh, by reason of the Hypostatic Union (i.e., the union of the two perfect natures, divine and human, within the divine Person [Hypostasis] of Christ, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity). The Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon defined this Hypostatic union of Christ’s two natures, divine and human, as “without mingling, without change, without division, without separation.”

We believe that at the Transfiguration He manifested not some other sort of light, but only that which was concealed beneath His fleshly exterior. This Light was the Light of the Divine Nature, and as such, it was Uncreated and Divine. So also, in the teachings of the Fathers, Jesus Christ was transfigured on the Mount, not taking upon Himself something new nor being changed into something new, nor something which formerly He did not possess. Rather, it was to show His disciples that which He already was, opening their eyes and bringing them from blindness to sight. For do you not see that eyes that can perceive natural things would be blind to this Light?

Thus, this Light is not a light of the senses, and those contemplating it do not simply see with sensual eyes, but rather they are changed by the power of the Divine Spirit. They were transformed, and only in this way did they see the transformation taking place amidst the very assumption of our perishability, with the deification through union with the Word of God in place of this.

So also she who miraculously conceived and gave birth recognized that the One born of her is God Incarnate. So it was also for Simeon, who only received this Infant into his arms, and the aged Anna, coming out [from the Jerusalem Temple] for the Meeting, since the Divine Power illumined, as through a glass windowpane, giving light for those having pure eyes of heart.

And why did the Lord, before the beginning of the Transfiguration, choose the foremost of the Apostles and lead them up onto the Mount with Him? Certainly, it was to show them something great and mysterious. What is particularly great or mysterious in showing a sensory light, which not only the foremost, but all the other Apostles already abundantly possessed? Why would they need a transforming of their eyes by the power of the Holy Spirit for a contemplation of this Light, if it were merely sensory and created? How could the Glory and the Kingdom of the Father and the Holy Spirit project forth in some sort of sensory light? Indeed, in what sort of Glory and Kingdom would Christ the Lord come at the end of the ages, when there would not be necessary anything in the air, nor in expanse, nor anything similar, but when, in the words of the Apostle, “God will be all in all” (1 Cor.15: 28)? That is to say, will He alter everything for all? If so, then it follows that light is included.

Hence it is clear that the Light of Tabor was a Divine Light. And the Evangelist John, inspired by Divine Revelation, says clearly that the future eternal and enduring city “has no need of the sun or moon to shine upon it. For the Glory of God lights it up, and the Lamb will be its lamp” (Rev 21:23). Is it not clear, that he points out here that this [Lamb] is Jesus, Who is divinely transfigured now upon Tabor, and the flesh of Whom shines, is the lamp manifesting the Glory of divinity for those ascending the mountain with Him?

John the Theologian also says about the inhabitants of this city: “they will not need light from lamps, nor the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shed light upon them, and night shall be no more” (Rev 22:5). But how, we might ask, is there this other light, in which “there is no change, nor shadow of alteration” (Jas 1:17)? What light is there that is constant and unsetting, unless it be the Light of God? Moreover, could Moses and Elias (and particularly the former, who clearly was present only in spirit, and not in flesh [Elias having ascended bodily to Heaven on the fiery chariot]) be shining with any sort of sensory light, and be seen and known? Especially since it was written of them: “they appeared in glory, and spoke of his death, which he was about to fulfill at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:30-31). And how otherwise could the Apostles recognize those whom they had never seen before, unless through the mysterious power of the Divine Light, opening their mental eyes?

But let us not tire our attention with the furthestmost interpretations of the words of the Gospel. We shall believe thus, as those same ones have taught us, who themselves were enlightened by the Lord Himself, insofar as they alone know this well: the Mysteries of God, in the words of a prophet, are known to God alone and His perpetual proximity. Let us, considering the Mystery of the Transfiguration of the Lord in accord with their teaching, strive to be illumined by this Light ourselves and encourage in ourselves love and striving towards the Unfading Glory and Beauty, purifying our spiritual eyes of worldly thoughts and refraining from perishable and quickly passing delights and beauty which darken the garb of the soul and lead to the fire of Gehenna and everlasting darkness. Let us be freed from these by the illumination and knowledge of the incorporeal and ever-existing Light of our Savior transfigured on Tabor, in His Glory, and of His Father from all eternity, and His Life-Creating Spirit, Whom are One Radiance, One Godhead, and Glory, and Kingdom, and Power now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.



Bulletin Sponsor: Use the sign-up sheet at the candle stand for the health of, eternal memory of or a Pannikhida for a loved one or friend, for a donation of \$10. Sponsors will be remembered during Divine Liturgy for the day/week that you signed up for.

Memorial Candles: Candles be purchased at the candle stand, suggested donation of \$10 for a large one.

Private Confessions: Can be heard a half hour before any service. See Father Matthew for other times.

General Confession: Will be at 9:45 am on the first Sunday of the month.

Pannikhida Service: The third Sunday of each month there will be a Pannikhida after Divine Liturgy. If you would like your loved ones to be remembered please give a list of names to Father Matthew before that Sunday for those to be remembered in the month.

Special Announcements for the bulletin can be submitted by E-Mail:

OrthodoxChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com ; reader.charles@hotmail.com or sub-deacon.vlashi@outlook.com

The Living Clean Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Friday from 8-9:15 pm downstairs in the community room.

The Grey Book Step Meeting Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Tuesday from 7-8:00 pm downstairs in the community room.



Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Parish News

Today, Sunday Aug 6th the blessing of fruits and nuts will be done after Divine Liturgy. Bring a basket or bowl full and place it on the small table in the church.

Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos Vespers Liturgy on Wednesday night at 6:30 pm August 16th, 2017.

Next week there will be a new section starting titled; **Reflections in Christ: Thought-provoking articles by OCA clergy and faithful.**

Wisdom of the Church Fathers

"My children, very much do I entreat you, arm yourselves with the armor that God gives, That you may withstand the devil's tricks. You can't imagine how evil he is. We don't have to fight with people but with rulers and powers, in effect the evil spirits. Take care! It's no use to the devil for anyone to think and feel that he is close to him. A hidden and unknown enemy is more dangerous than a visible enemy. O how large and terrible is the army of the demons. How numberless is their black horde! Unchanged, untiring, day and night, seeking to push all of us who believe in the name of Christ, to lure us on the road of unbelief, of evil and of impiety. These unseen enemies of God have made their sole purpose, day and night to seek our destruction. But do not be afraid, take power from the name of Jesus."

**Saint Luke the Surgeon, Archbishop of Simferopol and Crimea
(1877-1961)**

NY/NJ Diocese News

2017 YOUTH DAY at Six Flags Great Adventure



The **Annual Diocesan Youth Day** will again take place at Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson NJ on **Thursday, 24 August 2017**. The day is open to all Orthodox Youth and their friends, from elementary school age to college students. For more information and registration visit the dioceses' website: <http://www.nynjoca.org/>

ST. ANDREW'S CAMP: Annual Bike Ride! Sign-up for summer programs!

Do a charity bike ride this year! Mark your calendar for Saturday, 26 August 2017 and bike for **Saint Andrew's Camp**. This ride is ideal for the person who has never attempted a charity bike ride. You CAN do this ride! The Ride offers 3 distances from which to choose, each on flat to rolling terrain. Overnight accommodations are available at the camp. Make the Ride part of a Weekend getaway. Reunite with an alumnus. Nearby attractions are available for family members not riding. Reach out and ask a friend to bike with you and support the Camp at the same time. **Information for the Bike Ride is here:** <http://www.nynjoca.org/>

Congratulations to:

Presbyter Leonid Schmidt, awarded the kamilavka by His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, in Christ the Saviour Church, Paramus NJ, on Sunday, July 23.

Michael Vlachos, tonsured a Reader, by Archbishop Michael, also in Christ the Saviour Church, Paramus NJ, on Sunday, July 23.

May God protect and preserve His servants, the Presbyter Leonid Schmidt and Michael Vlachos, for many blessed years! "Mnogaya Lyeta!"



Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News

Monasteries prepare for annual August pilgrimages

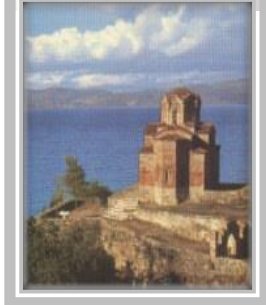
The word "pilgrimage" means "a journey of spiritual significance." And every year, the month of August proves to be significant for three monastic communities of the Orthodox Church in America observing their annual pilgrimages in conjunction with their patronal feast days.

The Monastery of the Transfiguration, Ellwood City, PA, will celebrate its annual pilgrimage on Saturday and Sunday, August 5 and 6, 2017. The pilgrimage will open with the celebration of Vigil and dinner at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday evening. The following morning, the Akathistos Hymn "Glory to God for All Things" will be celebrated at 9:00 a.m., followed by the procession to the outdoor chapel and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at 9:30 a.m. His Grace, Bishop Thomas of the Antiochian Archdiocese will preside. A picnic luncheon will be served at noon. At 2:00 p.m., Archpriest Daniel Ressetar will offer a dramatic monologue and youth will offer oratorical presentations. The Sacrament of Holy Unction with the anointing of pilgrims will be celebrated at 3:00 p.m. After light refreshments at 5:00 p.m., the pilgrimage will close with the celebration of Vespers at 6:00 p.m. Additional information is available on-line.

The annual pilgrimage to New Skete, Cambridge NY, will open with the celebration of Matins at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, August 12, followed by a tour of New Skete's Holy Wisdom Temple. A talk on monastic life will be offered at 12:30 p.m. A presentation titled "We Shall All Be Changed: Armenian Artist-Theologians Ponder the Transfiguration" will be offered by this year's guest speaker, Dr. Roberta Ervine, Professor of Armenian Studies at Saint Nerses Armenian Seminary, Armonk, NY. She will explain how the Armenian Fathers used the story of the Transfiguration to illuminate other Biblical themes, experiences and events in words, music and the visual arts. Other afternoon events include a guided hike, an iconography demonstration, a dog training demonstration, and a photo exhibit. Pilgrims are also invited to visit the meditation gardens and the Monks' and Nuns' gift shops and to enjoy Greek and Lebanese food, which will be available for purchase throughout the day. The pilgrimage will close with the celebration of the Vigil and a Healing Service at 5:00 p.m. Further information is available on-line.

The Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery, Rives Junction, MI, will hold its 30th annual Pilgrimage August 13-15, at which Archbishop Nathaniel will preside. On Sunday, August 13, the Akathistos Hymn and the Third and Sixth Hours will be celebrated at 9:00 a.m., followed by the Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m. Vespers will be celebrated at 5:00 p.m. On Monday, August 14, Vigil with Lamentations for the Great Feast of the Dormition will be celebrated at 6:30 p.m. On the Great Feast of the Dormition—Tuesday, August 15—the Akathistos Hymn, followed by the Third and Sixth Hours, will be celebrated at 9:00 a.m. The procession to the pavilion and the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy will begin at 9:45 a.m., with lunch to follow. The Sacrament of Holy Unction will be celebrated at 2:30 p.m. The pilgrimage will close with the celebration of Vespers at 5:00 p.m., followed by supper. The monastery bookstore will be open continuously except during the celebration of the liturgical services. Additional information is available on-line.

Prayers by the Laker, St. Velimirovich, XVIII:



Repent of your ways, inhabitants of the earth. Behold, the eye of the Master of the world is keeping watch deep within you. Do not trust your seducible eyes, let the Eye illumine your way. Your eyes are curtains over the Eye of God.

Repentance is admission of the way of sin. Repentance opens up a new way. The penitent's eyes are open to two ways: to the way which he is going, and to the way he should be going.

There are more who feel repentant than there are who turn their wheels onto a new way. I tell you: the penitent must have two types of courage—he must have the courage to weep over his old way, and he must have the courage to prepare himself for a new way.

What good is it for you to feel repentant and still tread the old way? How do you describe a person who is drowning and shouts for help, but when help arrives will not grab hold of the life line? I liken such a person to you.

Repent of your yearning for this world and all that is in this world. For this world is the graveyard of your ancestors, which is gaping and waiting for you. Just a little longer and you will be ancestors and will yearn to hear the word "repentance," but you will not hear it.

Just as the wind begins blowing and carries off the mist before the sun, so will death carry you off before the face of God.

Repentance rejuvenates the heart and lengthens one's lifetime. The tears of a penitent wash darkness from his eyes, and give his eyes a childlike radiance. The eye of my lake is like the eye of a deer, always moist and radiant as a diamond. In truth, the moisture in the eyes drains the anger in the heart.

The soul in the penitent is like a new moon. A full moon must wane, a new moon must wax.

The penitent clears the weeds from the field of his soul, and the seed of goodness begins to grow.

Truly, the penitent is not one who laments over the evil deed he has committed, but one who laments over all the evil deeds that he is capable of committing. A wise landowner not only cuts the thorn bush that has pricked him, but every thorn bush on the field that is waiting to prick him.

O my Lord, make haste to show a new way to every penitent, after he scorns his old way.

O heavenly Mother, Bride of the All-Holy Spirit, bow down toward our heart, when we repent. Open the fountain of tears within us, that we may wash away the heavy clay, that saddens our eyes.

O All-Holy Spirit, blow and disperse the unclean stench from the soul of the penitent that has been choking him and lead him to repentance.

We bow down and beseech You, O Life-giving and Mighty Spirit!

300 Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, CXVIII:

III. Us and Our Neighbors

When People Curse Us

Inasmuch as you pray with all your soul for the one who has slandered you, so much will God reveal the truth to them who have believed the slander.

St. Maximus the Confessor, Chapters on Love, 4.89



The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbott Tryphon

Priests

Priests must serve as beacons of light

The cure for all the passions of the flesh is to be found within the walls of Church. As the Body of Christ, the Church is the foundation of compassion and mercy. It is therefore not Christ's Church that fails people, but sometimes her priests who can get caught up in the letter of the law, and fail to act as agents of mercy, compassion, and love. This is the very essence of the Church, and her priests must exude that love and mercy in order to authentically serve as living icons of Christ.

Since Christ is the head of His Church, we priests must mirror His image when dealing with the fallen nature of our people. They must never sense in our interaction with them, a judgmental spirit, but always see in us, therapists who truly love them, and desire to help bring about healing of both body and soul. We priests must humbly look upon our own fallen nature, and in seeking God's mercy for ourselves, serve as beacons of light for others, offering loving support, hope, and mercy, to those who come to us in their brokenness. We must offer encouragement to those whom God has placed in our pastoral care, ever seeking to keep wide open the doors to the healing grace and mercy that resides in Christ's Church.



Daily Reflection

Do Not Lose Heart

“Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart (ἐγκακεῖν, grow weary or despondent). He said, ‘In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Grant me justice (Εκδίκησόν με, avenge me) against



my opponent.’ For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, ‘Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.’ And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. But God (ὁ δὲ θεὸς), – will he not grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly (ἐν τάχει) grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?’” (Lk 18: 1-8)

I think we often miss the point of this “Parable of the Persistent Widow,” taking away from it that God is somehow “like” the unjust judge, who reluctantly helps us because he grows weary of our “persistency” in prayer. But the whole point of the parable is precisely that God is “not like” the unjust judge. God never “grows weary” of us, nor is He ever reluctant to help us. Yes, our Lord is saying, you do need “to pray always,” so as not to “lose heart” or “grow weary/despondent” (ἐγκακεῖν). Because in that prayer-less state, our hearts become closed to God’s grace, which is always on offer; which He is always ready to shower upon us, and to do so “quickly.”

So let me not project onto God what He is not, like this image of an “unjust judge.” He has not erected barriers between me and Him, which I am supposedly tasked with breaking down. No. He calls me to take down my barriers, to stop struggling pointlessly in self-reliance and self-isolation, and embrace God-reliance, “praying always.” This kind of “cry to Him day and night” can take on different forms, including a simple awareness of God’s presence, or what is traditionally called “walking before God.” Let me try that today. “Lord, I have cried unto You. Hear me!”

Holy Orthodox Quotes
Orthodox Teaching of the Elders

“The ones who seek the Divine gifts and insights while being immersed in the passions are in proud and foolish delusion. First, one needs to work on cleansing oneself. Grace is sent as a gift to those who are cleansed from the passions. And they get it quietly, at the moment that they do not notice.”

- Nectarios of Aegina

Ancient Christian Wisdom

We need a continuous state of love. We must have “the need” to love. There is never someone near you by coincidence [in vain]. He is there, by God’s providence.

- Elder Arsenie

Through the Grace of God – Orthodox Christianity
St Porphyrios: This is Our Religion...

“This is our religion: for our soul to awake and love Christ and become holy, to give herself over to divine Eros. And so He, too, will love her.”

St Seraphim of Sarov: Spirit of God

“When the Spirit of God descends upon a man and overshadows him with the fullness of His outpouring, then his soul overflows with a joy not to be described, for the Holy Spirit turns to joy whatever He touches. The Kingdom of Heaven is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

Daily Readings with Early Church Fathers and Mothers
"How to Treat Others" by St. Ignatius Brianchaninov

Speak well of those who speak evil of you. Pay good for evil. Pray for those who cause you various offenses, wrongs, temptations, persecutions. Whatever you do, on no account condemn anyone; do not even try to judge whether a person is good or bad, but keep your eyes on that one evil person for whom you must give an account before God—yourself.

Fruit of the Transfiguration

by Fr. Vladimir Berzonsky

“Lord, it is good for us to be here” (Matthew 17:4)

The feast of Holy Transfiguration falls near the end of the liturgical year. Only the Dormition of the Theotokos follows, to complete and close the cycle. Why now? The time of the event comes six days following the confession of St. Peter [Matthew 17:1, Mark 9:2], or “*about eight days*” [Luke 9:28], although that doesn’t fix the date precisely. Nothing is arbitrary. It comes in the season of fruit harvest. The Orthodox Church greets the feast with the tradition of the blessing of fruit. Here is a natural expression of sacrifice to the Lord of His blessings of rain and sunshine which make it possible to reap a bountiful harvest. We who bring our fruit in plastic bags from the supermarket must use our imagination in order to be truly grateful for the harvest blessings. We have not the same appreciation as if we had brought our grapes and apples from our own vines and trees. It takes a farmer’s daily prayers to feel the reward of his petitions.

At another level, we all can comprehend spiritual fruit brought to fruition through the liturgical year now consummated at the completion. The year begins with the birth of the Holy Mother of God, the young virgin herself the glorious fruit of the promise to Abraham and his children to erase Adam’s rebellion and restore the glory of the people of Israel. Mary is the “*beginning of our salvation*” - the anticipation of a new covenant relationship and the anticipation of the Messiah, the Son of God who would be the fruit of her virgin womb.

The time is ripe to receive the divine light in Christ through the Holy Spirit for those in some ways capable of receiving it. Consider the filtration process: From the 5,000 who heard Him offer them the credentials of the blessed from the Sermon on the Mount; to the seventy selected to visit the villages of the Jews and announce His ministry among them [Luke 10:1]; further choosing twelve apostles; and from them but three blessed to experience His Transfiguration atop the mountain, that eternal moment beyond normal time when Moses and Elijah would be brought from the past to appear with the Son of God in a blinding illumination of the Kingdom of God, displaying eternity in a fraction of time. It was a joy that the three disciples did not want to end.

Is it any wonder that so many of our monastic communities have chosen this feast for their own patronal namesake? The revelation of a second Epiphany where all three Persons of the Holy Trinity are involved? Here, the highlight of spiritual progress offers a supernal incentive for all serious Christians to realize and fulfill the precious words of St. Paul: “*One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal...*” [Philippians 3:13].

When the three offer to make three booths and remain in that sublime exalted state, Christ responds that they must descend from the mountain top and return to what was left behind. Such a rare treat was for them a mere aperitif of blessings, enough for them to experience once but never to be forgotten. [II Peter 1:16] He warned them also not to share the experience with anyone until after His resurrection. We can imagine them describing the indescribable to their fellow apostles and the women during those forty days following Christ’s appearance in the Upper Room that first day of His resurrection and until the Ascension. And what of us? We conclude each Divine Liturgy with the proclamation: “*We have seen the true light!*” Have we indeed! Has that been an experience, a proleptic proclamation, or something we just do not understand?