

10th Sunday After Pentecost

Righteous Eudocimus of Cappadocia / Forefeast of the Procession of the Cross

31 July / 13 August

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 1: When the stone had been sealed by the Jews; / while the soldiers were guarding Thy Most Pure Body; / Thou didst rise on the third day, O Saviour, / granting life to the world. / The Powers of Heaven therefore cried to Thee O Giver of Life: / glory to Thy Resurrection O Christ! / Glory to Thy Kingdom; / Glory to Thy Dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind.

Tropar of Righteous Eudocimus, Tone 4: He who called you from earth to heaven, / keeps your body unharmed after death, holy Eudocimus; / for you lived a sober and holy life and did not defile your flesh ;// so with boldness intercede with Christ that we may be saved.

Tropar Cross tone 2: Noble Joseph took Thine immaculate Body down from the tree, / wrapped it in a clean shroud and spices, / and having embalmed It, laid It in a new sepulchre. / But on the third day Thou didst rise, O Lord, granting the world great mercy.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 1: As God, Thou didst rise from the tomb in glory, / Raising the world with Thyself. / Human nature praises Thee as God, for death has vanished. / Adam exults O Master, Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage, and cries to Thee; / Thou art the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ.

Kondak of Righteous Eudocimus, Tone 3: Today your honored memory has assembled us at the holy shrine of your sacred relics; / all then who approach and venerate them / are rescued from the evil malice of demons // and are swiftly delivered from various diseases, blessed Eudocimus

Kondak Cross tone 2: Joseph of Arimathea took Thee the Life of all, down from the Tree as one dead, / and wrapped Thee in clean linen and spices. / He yearned to embrace and kiss Thy pure Body with heart and lips / yet he restrained himself with fear. / He cried to Thee rejoicing: / Glory to Thy condescension, O Lover of mankind.



Matins Gospel X

Epistle: I Corinthians 4: 9-16

For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonoured! To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labour, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; Being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now. I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.

GOD HAS DISPLAYED US, THE APOSTLES...

WE HAVE BEEN MADE A SPECTACLE TO THE WORLD, TO ANGELS AND TO MEN

There is a great depth of meaning and severity implied in his saying, 'us', and not even with this was he satisfied. He also added his dignity, hitting them vehemently: 'us the Apostles,' who are enduring such innumerable ills, who are sowing the word of godliness, who are leading you to this severe rule of life ...But what does 'unto angels' mean? It is possible to 'become a spectacle unto men,' but not so to angels when the things done are ordinary, but our wrestlings are such as to be worthy even of angelic contemplation ...We are driven about and persecuted, but you enjoy security and are much waited upon ...He sets himself against the noble and those who plumed themselves with external advantages ...We take no account of human things nor yet of any outward pomp, but we look only to God ...In God's sight men not only commit adultery and fornication, but many have dared and still dare to do other things much more dreadful ...Things even far less than these we fear to do before men: but in God's sight we fear no longer. From this, in fact, all the world's evils have originated: because in things really bad we do not reverence God but men.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XII on I Corinthians IV, 5, 6, 7. B#56, pp. 66-67.

for the Saint: Gal. 5:22-6:2

Gospel Matthew 17: 14-23

And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him." Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me." And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, And they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up."

HEALING THE POSSESSED YOUTH

As last Sunday's Gospel told us about a storm on the Tiberian Sea, in the same way today's Gospel also tells us about a storm, only about a storm which is even more terrible. Back then, there were waves on the sea, but here. . .listen to what the father of the youth said to Christ: "Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oft times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water" (Mt. 17:15). There, Peter got out of the boat in which the other Apostles were sailing. Notice that Christ did not send him as He sent all the disciples across the sea. But Peter himself, filled with the rapture of faith at seeing Christ walking upon the waves, asked for permission to do the same. And what happened? He doubted and started to drown. And Christ said to him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Mt. 14:31).

And what about today's Gospel? In today's Gospel, the father of the possessed son brought him first to the disciples of Christ. The power to cast out devils and to heal sicknesses had been given to them; this seemed to go along with their obedience. And yet they could not heal him. And when the father in deep grief related this to the Lord, Christ in anger exclaimed: "O faithless and perverse generation. . .how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him.... Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could we not cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. How be it this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Mt. 17 17-21).

This is what faith means! But where do we find this faith? Only in the Church. The Apostles, sailing in the boat in obedience to Christ, despite the storm, did not doubt. Their boat had sides which protected them from the pressure of the waves; it had a bottom which separated them from the water; it had a rudder which guided it. In the same way the ship of the Church has everything which is needed to sail over the sea of life, through its storms, to the other shore of Eternal Life. As in the boat the bottom is its foundation, so in the ship of the Church, the foundation is the teaching of Christ which points out the way to life through the Beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-11). Poverty of spirit, weeping for sins (that is, repentance), meekness, hunger and thirst for righteousness, mercifulness, purity of heart, peacemaking, suffering for the truth—this is the foundation of the Church ship. And its sides are the Apostolic rules. This is everything which Christ has passed on to His Apostles, which for the most part is again based on Holy Scripture, and partially is kept in the treasury of Church Tradition.

And what treasure is being carried by the ship of the Church? These are the seven Sacraments of the Church which all have their foundation in Holy Scripture. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles relates to us about the ordination of priests and deacons from which comes our Sacrament of the Priesthood (Acts 6:3, 5-7). In His first appearance after the Resurrection, Christ breathed on the Apostles and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted" (Jn.20: 22-23). Here is the foundation of the Sacrament of Confession. The words of Christ at the Last Supper, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Lk. 22:19); and all the chapters from John where it speaks about the Bread of Life—this is the establishment of the Sacrament of Communion (Jn. 6:32-58). The teaching of the Apostle Paul about the relationship between husband and wife speaks of the holiness of the Sacrament of Marriage (1 Cor.7:2-17;Eph. 5:22-33). In the Epistle of James instructions are given about the anointing of the sick one with oil and about the prayer of faith for him (James 5:14-15). And so with all the sacraments. And still more: all Church establishments come from the Lord Himself Here in today's Gospel it tells about the necessity of fasting and prayer. And this is Christ Who says it to His disciples. In the Orthodox Church there is nothing invented by man or added; but neither is there anything subtracted, abbreviated from the teaching of Christ and His Apostles.

"I believe in one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church." Another Catholic and Apostolic Church does not exist on earth. So let us treasure our Church-ship. Let us never abandon it. It has everything for us. It also has this wonderful faith which even moves mountains, and with such faith nothing will be impossible. It will lead us through the storms of life and will bring us to the shore of Life Eternal.

for the Saint: Matt. 11:27-30

Saints of the Week

July 31 / August 13 — Forefeast of the Procession of the Precious and Life-giving Cross of the Lord — Righteous Eudocimus - born in Cappadocia of devout parents, Basil and Eudocia. In the time of the Emperor Theophilus (829-842), Eudocimus was a young army officer. Even as a soldier, he endeavoured with his whole heart to live according to the precepts of the Gospel. He kept his purity unstained and avoided converse with any woman except his mother. He was liberal to the

poor, assiduous in the reading of holy books and yet more assiduous in prayer to God. He fled vain chatter and idle talk. 'Among all the chaos and vanity of the world, he was like a lily among thistles, and like gold in the furnace.' For his rare virtues, the Emperor made him military governor of Cappadocia. In this high state, Eudocimus strove to be righteous before God and man. By God's providence, he died early, at the age of thirty-three, and his relics were found to have healing power. An insane man touched his tomb and was healed, and a paralytic child stood upright and was made whole. After eighteen months, his mother opened his coffin, and found his body as though still alive, with no mark of corruption—and a wonderful fragrance arose from the saint's body. His relics were later translated to Constantinople and buried in the new church of the holy Mother of God, built by Eudocimus's parents.

Righteous Joseph of Arimathea - a rich man, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin and a secret follower of Christ (Matt. 27:57; Jn 19:38), took Christ's body down from the Cross together with Nicodemus, and laid it in his own new tomb. For this, he was fettered by the Jews and cast into prison. The risen Lord appeared to him and brought him to belief in His Resurrection. The Jews then released him from prison and drove him from his fatherland. He travelled around the world, preaching the Gospel of Christ, and took this Good News to England, where he entered into rest in the Lord. The Holy Martyr Julitta; St John the Exarch; St. Germanus, bishop of Auxerre (448).

St. Neot, hermit in Cornwall (c.877) - the son of King Ethelwulf of Kent and Wessex. Like Zaccheus, who had to climb up in a tree in order to see our Saviour, St Neot was very short. When he was old enough to become a soldier, he was not allowed to join the army because he was too short, so he decided to become a soldier for Christ instead, and he became a monk. At first, Saint Neot lived in the Glastonbury monastery. Here, he was made a presbyter, but because he was so short, he had to stand on a little stool when he served the Divine Liturgy. The saint was a great struggler, fasting, praying and reading the Scripture all the time. Because of his great struggles and faith, God gave him many gifts of Grace. He healed people of both bodily and spiritual illnesses, and he had great wisdom. Soon, he became famous, and people from all over Britain came to see him. St Neot did not like for all these crowds of people to come to him. He no longer had time for his prayers, and besides, he was afraid that he might fall into pride. With the blessing of his elder, the saint took one other monk, Father Barrey, and went to a wild valley in the deep forests of Cornwall. Even here, however, the saint became famous, and people walked through the dense forests to see the saint, ask for his prayers and his help. Even the great King Alfred came to the saint and asked for a blessing. The saint did not bless the king, but began to chastise him for his proud harshness and sinful way of life. Then the saint prophesied that King Alfred would be beaten in war, "but if you repent of your sins and help the poor, God will help you and you will finally have victory over your enemies." This happened just as the saint foretold. King Alfred had to flee from his enemies, the Danes, but the saint (who had reposed the year before) appeared to him one night and comforted him. "Because you have wept for your sins, God will help you. You will be given victory on the Seventh Week after Pascha." Not only did King Alfred receive his victory, but his enemy, King Guthrum of Denmark was later baptised at Cirncester, as were many of his soldiers. The rest of King Alfred's reign passed in peace, justice and mercy. When the saint reposed in Christ, a wonderful fragrance came from his body.

August 1 / 14 — Procession of the Precious and Life-giving Cross of the Lord — (First of the three "Feasts of the Saviour" in August) Beginning of the **Dormition Fast - Wine & Oil Allowed - Lesser Blessing of Water** (Epistle: 1st Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians 14: 6-19; Gospel: St. Matthew 20: 17-28) **Prayer:** O Lord our God, who art mighty in counsel, and wonderful in deeds, the Creator of all things, who keepest thy covenant and thy mercy unto those who love thee and keep thy commandments, and receivest the contrite tears of all who are in distress: (For this cause thou didst come in the similitude of a servant, scorning not our image, but giving true health to the body, and saying, thou art healed, sin no more; and with clay thou didst make the man's eyes whole, and having commanded him to wash, didst make him, by thy word, to rejoice in the light, putting to confusion the floods of passion of enemies, and drying up the bitter sea of the life of the same, and subduing the waves of sensual desires heavy to be endured): Do Thou, the same King who lovest mankind, who hast granted unto us to clothe ourselves in the garment of snowy whiteness, by water and the Spirit, send down upon us thy blessing, through partaking of this water, and through sprinkling therewith, washing away the defilement of passions. Yea, we beseech thee, visit thou our weakness, O Good One, and heal our infirmities, both spiritual and bodily; by thy mercy; Through the prayers ...

Holy Seven Maccabees, their Mother Solomonia and Eleazar the Priest - they all suffered for the purity of the Israelite faith under King Antiochus, called by some 'Epiphanes'—God manifest—and by others, 'Epimanes'—mad. For the great sins of Jerusalem, and especially for the wresting-away of the high-priestly power and the wickedness that ensued, the Lord let loose great calamity on the Holy City. Antiochus desired after that to bring the Jews to idolatry in place of their faith in the one, living God, and did all he could to this end. He was helped in his intention by several disaffected high priests and elders of Jerusalem. The king once came himself to Jerusalem and commanded that all Jews eat pork, which was against the Law of Moses and was therefore a recognisable sign of apostasy from the Jewish faith. The elder Eleazar, a priest and one of the seventy translators of the Old Testament into Greek, refused to eat pork. He was therefore tortured and burned. Returning to Antioch, the king took the seven young men, the Maccabees, and their mother Solomonia (II Macc. 6:18-7:41). The seven Maccabean brothers were called: Avim, Antonius, Eleazar, Gurius, Eusebon, Achim and Marcellus. Before their mother's eyes, the wicked king tortured her sons one after the other, flaying the skin from their faces and then throwing them into the flames. They all endured torture and death with courage, remaining steadfast in their faith. Finally their mother, when she saw her three-year-old son in the fire, threw herself into the flames and perished, giving her soul into God's hands. They all suffered with honour for their faith in the one, living God in about 167BC; The Nine Holy Martyrs: Leontius, Attus, Alexander, Cindeus, Mnesitheus, Cyriacus, Menaeus, Catunus and Euclous; St. Nicholas, enlightener of Japan;

St. Ethelwold, bishop of Winchester (984) - born there of good parentage in the early years of the tenth century; d. 1 Aug., 984. After a youth spent at the court of King Athelstan, Ethelwold placed himself under Elphege the Bald, Bishop of Winchester, who gave him the tonsure and ordained him priest along with Dunstan. At Glastonbury, where he was dean under

Saint Dunstan, he was a mirror of perfection. In 955 he became Abbot of Abingdon; and 29 November, 963, was consecrated Bishop of Winchester by Dunstan, with whom and Oswald of Worcester he worked zealously in combating the general corruption occasioned by the Danish inroads. At Winchester, both in the old and in his new minster, he replaced the evil-living seculars with monks and refounded the ancient nunnery. His labours extended to Chertsey, Milton (Dorsetshire), Ely, Peterborough, and Thorney; expelling the unworthy, rebuilding and restoring; to the rebellious "terrible as a lion", to the meek "gentler than a dove". The epithets "father of monks" and "benevolent bishop" summarize Ethelwold's character as reformer and friend of Christ's poor. Though he suffered much from ill-health, his life as scholar, teacher, prelate, and royal counsellor was ever austere. He was buried in Winchester cathedral, his body being translated later by Elphege, his successor. Abingdon monastery in the twelfth century had relics of Ethelwold.

August 2 / 15 — Dormition Fast — The Finding and Translation of the Relics of St Stephen - when the wicked Jews stoned St Stephen to death, they left his body for the dogs to eat. But God's providence disposed otherwise. The martyr's body lay in an open place outside the town a night and two days, then, on the second night, Gamaliel, Paul's teacher and a secret follower of Christ, came and took his body to Caphargamala, and there buried it in a cave on his own land. Gamaliel buried his friend Nicodemus, who died lamenting over Stephen's grave, in the same cave. He also buried his godson Abibus there and, in accordance with his wishes, was buried there himself. Centuries passed, and no-one living knew the whereabouts of Stephen's grave. But in 415, in the time of Patriarch John of Jerusalem, Gamaliel appeared three times in a dream to a priest, Lucian, in Caphargamala, and told him in minute detail about the burial of all the above-mentioned, indicating precisely the forgotten place of their burial. Moved by this dream, Lucian informed the Patriarch and, with his blessing, went with a group of men and dug up the four graves, Gamaliel having already told him in the dream which grave was which. A strong and fragrant odour from the relics of these saints filled the cave. St Stephen's relics were solemnly translated to Sion and there buried with ceremony, and the relics of the others were taken to a hill above the cave and laid to rest in a church there. Many healings of the sick were performed in those days over the relics of St Stephen. Later, they were taken to Constantinople. Thus the Lord crowned with great glory him who first shed his blood for His name; The Hieromartyr Stephen, Pope of Rome;

Blessed Basil the Fool for Christ of Moscow - Basil's father was named Jacob and his mother Anna. At age sixteen, he dedicated himself to a life of asceticism as a "Fool for Christ" and in this difficult mortification persevered for seventy-two years. Altogether, he lived to be eighty-eight years old. He traveled barefooted, bareheaded and in rags. He did not have any permanent dwelling place. He admonished sinners, reprimanded the noblemen, prophesied the truth and had visions of distant places. Having suffered greatly from hunger, frost and from the insults of men, Blessed Basil presented his holy soul to God. Tsar Ivan, with the Metropolitan, attended his funeral. He is buried in Moscow in the Church of the Most-holy Birth-giver of God, later named after him; Fr. Alexis (Medvedkov), priest of France, whose relics are incorrupt (1934).

August 3 / 16 — Dormition Fast — Holy Salome the Myrrh-Bearer - the mother of the holy Apostles James and John, the wife of Zebedee and daughter of Joseph, the betrothed of the most holy Mother of God, she served the Lord during His earthly life, and was made worthy to be among the first bearers of the tidings of His Resurrection; Our Holy Fathers Isaac, Dalmatus and Faustus - - Isaac is commemorated separately on May 30th. St Dalmatus was first an officer under the Emperor Theodosius the Great, who held him in great honour, but, when his spirit awakened within him, he scorned all that is of this world, abandoning his rank, and took his only son Faustus off to the outskirts of Constantinople, to St Isaac's community, where they were both tonsured as monks. Dalmatus consecrated himself utterly to please God in his life, which was a joy to the elder, Isaac. When Isaac came to the hour of death, he installed Dalmatus as abbot in his place, and the community later came to be called after Dalmatus. He sometimes fasted for forty days at a time, conquering by his fasting the invisible power of the demons. He took part in the Third Ecumenical Council in 431, and battled against the Nestorian heresy. Being pleasing to God, he entered peacefully into rest in the 5th century. His son Faustus supported his father in everything and, after a godly life, died peacefully in that community; Our Holy Father Cosmas the Eunuch; Our Holy Father Antony the Roman.

4 / 17 August - Dormition Fast — The Seven Holy Youths of Ephesus - the "Seven Sleepers"-Maximilian, Jamblicus, Martinian, John, Dionysius, Exacustodian (Constantine), and Antoninus - There was a great persecution of Christians under the Emperor Decius. The Emperor himself went to Ephesus, and there prepared a riotous festival in honour of dead idols and also a vicious slaughter of Christians. Seven youths, all of them soldiers, held themselves apart from the foul offering of sacrifice, and wholeheartedly begged the one God to save the Christian people. They were the sons of the most eminent administrator in Ephesus, and their names were: Maximilian, Jamblichus, Martinian, John, Dionysius, Exacustodianus and Antoninus. When they were accused before the Emperor, they hid on a hill called Ochlon outside Ephesus, concealing themselves in a cave. When the Emperor discovered this, he commanded that the cave be walled-in. God then, in His far-seeing providence, let a miraculous and long-lasting sleep fall on the young men. The imperial courtiers Theodore and Rufinus, secret Christians, caused a copper catafalque with leaden plaques to be made, on which were written the names of these young men and their death by martyrdom under the Emperor Decius. More than two hundred years then passed. In the time of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger (408-450), there arose a great dispute about the resurrection of the dead, for there were some who doubted the resurrection. Emperor Theodosius was greatly grieved at this dispute among the faithful, and prayed God that He would in some way reveal the truth to the people. At that time of altercation in the Church, some shepherds of a certain Adolius, who owned Ochlon, began building pens for their sheep and took stone after stone from this cave. Then the youths awoke from their sleep, young and in full health as they had fallen asleep. This marvel was noised abroad on all sides, and Theodosius himself came with a great retinue and spoke apart with the young men. After a week, they again entered into sleep, the sleep of death, to await the General Resurrection. The Emperor wanted to place their bodies in golden coffins, but they appeared to him in a dream and told him to leave them in the earth, as they had been; St. Cosmas of Aitolia, Equal-to-the-Apostles.

5 / 18 August - Forefeast of the Transfiguration - Dormition Fast — The Holy Martyr Eusignius - he was a soldier under the Emperor Maximian, the Emperor Constantine the Great and Constantine's sons, and was present at the martyrdom of the holy martyr Basiliscus. He saw many angels, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as He received the soul of this holy martyr from the angel's hands. He was a general under Constantine, and saw the Cross that appeared to the Emperor. Spending a full sixty years in military service, he withdrew from it in the time of Constantine's sons and went to Antioch, his home town. There he lived a godly life of fasting, prayer and good works. In the time of Julian the Apostate, two men at variance in the street called him to judge between them. He adjudged right to the righteous, at which the one at fault became enraged, went to the Emperor and denounced Eusignius as a Christian. The Emperor summoned him to trial, at which he fiercely denounced the Emperor for his apostasy from the Faith and rebuked him by citing the shining example of the great Constantine. The proud Julian ordered that he be beheaded. Eusignius suffered in great old age, in the year 362, and went to the Kingdom of heaven; The Hieromartyr Fabian, Pope of Rome; The Holy Martyr Pontius;

St. Oswald, king and martyr (642) - In the year 617 the king of Northumbria was killed by King Redwald of the East Angles. His three sons, including Oswald, fled to Scotland, and there they became Christians. They were baptised at Iona. Two brothers soon lost their faith, Oswald's persisted. And when his brothers were killed by the British King Cadwalla, Oswald gathered an army and marched against him. The day before the battle he made his soldiers construct a wooden cross. Oswald, himself knelt down, holding the cross in position until enough earth had been thrown in the hole to make it stand firm. Then he prayed, summoning his army to join him with the words, "Let us all kneel together and ask the true, living and almighty God in his mercy to protect us from the arrogant savagery of our enemies, for He knows that we fight in a just cause to save our nation." Oswald defeated Cadwalla, recovered his father's throne, and asked the monks of Iona to send missionaries to his kingdom. St Aidan was sent, and King Oswald gave him the island of Lindisfarne as his episcopal see. "The king always listened humbly and readily to Aidan's advice," says venerable Bede, "And while the Bishop, who was not yet fluent in English, preached the Gospel, it was delightful to hear the King himself interpreting the word of God to his nobles and leaders." Oswald invited other Scots to missionise his kingdom. He gave money and lands to establish monasteries and churches. The pagan king of Mercia killed him at the battle of Maserfield, when he had reigned no more than seven years. His last prayer, as his enemies pressed around him, was "O God, be merciful to their souls." His head was placed in St. Cuthbert's coffin, and found there centuries later in 1827.



6 / 19 August - Dormition Fast - The Holy Transfiguration Of Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ - the second "Feast of the Saviour" in August - Blessing of Grapes & Other Fruits — Epistle: The Second Letter of Peter : 1:10-19 & The Gospel According to St. Matthew 17:1-9

In the Orthodox tradition today is reckoned as one of the Twelve Great Feasts. The Transfiguration is par excellence the feast of Christ's divine glory. Like Theophany, it is a feast of light: 'Today on Tabor in the manifestation of Thy Light, O Word, Thou unaltered Light from the Light of the unbegotten Father, we have seen the Father as Light and the Spirit as Light, guiding with light the whole creation' (exapostilarion). Nor is this the only parallel between the two feasts. Like Theophany, although less explicitly, the Transfiguration is a revelation of the Holy Trinity. On Tabor, as at the baptism in Jordan, the Father speaks from heaven, testifying to the divine Sonship of Christ: and the Spirit is also present on this occasion not in the likeness of a dove, but under the form of dazzling light, surrounding Christ's person and overshadowing the

whole mountain. This dazzling light is the light of the Spirit.

The Transfiguration, then, is a feast of divine glory - more specifically, of the glory of the Resurrection. The ascent of Mount Tabor came at a critical point in Our Lord's ministry, just as he was setting out upon His last journey to Jerusalem, which He knew was to end in humiliation and death. To strengthen His disciples for the trials that lay ahead, He chose this particular moment to reveal to them something of His external splendour, 'as far as they were able to hear it' (Troparion of the feast). He encouraged them - and all of us - to look beyond the suffering of the Cross to the glory of the Resurrection. The light of the Transfiguration, however, foreshadows not only Christ's own Resurrection on the third day, but equally the Resurrection glory of the righteous at His Second Coming. The glory which shone from Jesus on Tabor is a glory in which all mankind is called to share. On Mount Tabor we see Christ's human nature - the human substance which He took from us - filled with splendour, 'made godlike' or 'deified'. What has happened to human nature in Christ can happen also to the humanity of Christ's followers. The Transfiguration, then, reveals to us the full potentiality of our human nature: it shows us the glory which our manhood once possessed and the glory which, by God's grace, it will again recover at the Last Day.

This is a cardinal aspect of the present feast, to which the liturgical texts frequently revert. At His Transfiguration, it is said, the Lord 'in His own person showed them the nature of man, arrayed in the original beauty of the Image' (Great Vespers, postiche). 'Today Christ on Mount Tabor has changed the darkened nature of Adam, and filling it with brightness He has made it godlike' (Small Vespers, aposticha). 'Thou wast transfigured upon Mount Tabor, showing the exchange mortal men will make with Thy glory at Thy second and fearful coming, O Saviour' (Matins, sessional hymn).

The feast of the Transfiguration, therefore, is not simply the commemoration of a past event in the life of Christ. Possessing also an 'eschatological' dimension, it is turned towards the future - towards the 'splendour of the Resurrection' at the Last Day, towards the 'beauty of the Divine Kingdom' which all Christians hope eventually to enjoy. It is the custom to bring grapes and fruit to the church on this day. They are placed on a table in the centre of the church and blessed by the priest at the end of the Liturgy.

Troparion tone 7: When Thou wast transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God,/ Thou didst show Thy glory to Thy disciples as far as they could bear it./ Let Thy everlasting light illumine also us sinners/ through the intercessions of the Mother of God./ Giver of Light, glory to Thee.

Kontakion tone 7: Thou wast transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God,/ and Thy disciples beheld Thy glory as far as they were capable,/ that when they should see Thee crucified,/ they might know that Thy suffering was voluntary/ and might proclaim to the world/ that Thou art indeed the reflection of the Father.

Priest: O God our Saviour who wast pleased to call Thine Only-begotten Son, our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Vine, and in Him hast granted us the fruit of immortality: do Thou now bless this fruit of the vine lying here, and make us Thy servants, who eat of it, partakers of the True Vine. Keep our lives from harm and ever give us peace, and adorn us with the eternal gifts of grace that none can take away: at the intercessions of our most pure Lady, the Theotokos and ever Virgin Mary, and all of Thy saints who have pleased Thee down the ages. For Thou art a good God who lovest mankind, and unto The Father without beginning, together with Thine Only-begotten Son and Thy most holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, do we ascribe glory, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE HONORABLE CROSS OF CHRIST

The Honorable Cross of Christ Before it, all honorably prostrate, By the power of the Cross of Christ From temptation, we are redeemed. The Holy Cross is mightier than the demons And from every earthly king, From sickness, the Cross saves And from the assaults of barbarians. Prince Andrew, by the power of the Cross Enslaved lands, saved, King Manuel, by the power of the Cross The Saracens, gloriously destroyed. From the armies of pagans, From the tyrannical conquerors, From all evils demonstrated that The power of the Cross is mightier.

HOMILY

About prophetic visions

"The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amos" (Isaiah 1:1).

He who has understanding can know the one and true God. He, who is without understanding, let him listen to the one who understands and the one who understands and the other [who listens] will be saved. It is possible to clearly know God from created nature and still more clearly, from the inspired men of God and most clearly from the Lord Christ. The inspired men of God before Christ were the prophets. Among the first was Isaiah, the son of Amos. The Spirit of God opened his sight and he saw that which other men did not see. That is why he called his message to his people "a vision" [or apparition]. How the prophets saw the heavenly mysteries and the mysteries of future events cannot be described: that can only be experienced by those to whom God gives that gift.

The visions of the holy prophets are true, for those words and those heavenly appearances from these visions, have actually been confirmed later on. They are true because they served for the good of men, turning them from evil to good. Furthermore, they are true because the prophets fearlessly declared them without regard of the suffering which befell them and even without regard for the bitter death which many of them suffered.

What did Isaiah receive from the world and from men for his visions? Riches or honor or an exalted calling? The Jews sawed him in half! This is the riches, this is the honor and this is the glory of the prophet to suffer for the truth of God!

Therefore, let us listen to the prophets of God for they are the paths that lead to the city of the Great King; they are the rays of the Sun of Righteousness Christ which on a distant sphere illumines men with the heavenly light, pointing out the Sun to them.

O Lord Christ, Who revealed Yourself through the prophets and prepared the way for Your descent into our valley, help us. Help us to recognize Your light and Your providence in Your holy prophets.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.