



This past Friday marked the start of the two-week fast that the Church keeps to help us prepare to celebrate the Feast of the Dormition, or falling asleep, of the Holy Theotokos on 15 August.

The fast begins with the procession of the Precious Cross of the Lord, which originates from the twelfth century Constantinople when the Precious Cross was brought out in procession as protection against disease.

On the weekdays during the fast the Paraklesis service is often held in many churches.

The Dormition fast is a relatively strict fast, with abstinence from all animal products, although fish may be eaten on the Feast of the Transfiguration (6 August) and oil and wine are allowed on Saturdays and Sundays.



Sunday 3 August 2014 is the Eighth Sunday of Matthew

Matins Gospel: John 20:11-18

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

Gospel: Matthew 14:14-22

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

You abolished death by your Cross, you opened Paradise to the thief, you transformed the Myrrhbearers' lament, and ordered your Apostles to proclaim that you had risen, O Christ God, granting the world your great mercy.

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Romans 11:25-36; Matthew 12:1-8
Holy 7 Youths of Ephesus

Tuesday: Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2; Matthew 11:27-30
Forefeast of the Transfiguration; Martyr Eusignius

Wednesday: Luke 24:1-12; Romans 6:18-23; Matthew 8:5-13
Holy Transfiguration

Thursday: Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5; Mark 5:24-34
Afterfeast of the Transfiguration; Martyr Dometius

Friday: 1 Timothy 4:9-15; Luke 6:17-19, 9:1-2, 10:16-22
Emilian the Confessor; Myronus, Bp. Of Crete

Saturday: Romans 15:7-16; Matthew 12:38-45
Matthias; Anthony of Alexandria



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

3 August 2014

Give Them Something to Eat

Today we hear Saint Matthew's account of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes and see how Jesus Christ satisfies the deepest hunger of those who seek Him.

The crowds had followed Jesus into the wilderness where He had taken pity on them and healed the sick. However, when evening fell He was aware that they needed to be fed. When the disciples protested that they had no food, He instructed them to feed the crowd themselves, and the five loaves and two fish were miraculously multiplied to feed the crowd of five thousand men, not counting the women and children.

This incident shows Christ's compassionate concern for those in His care. And it also shows Him challenging His disciples to collaborate with Him in caring for those in need. Their first response was that they did not have anything with which to feed the people, but Jesus shows us that even the little things that we often overlook can be transformed and put to a great use when they are offered to Him for the service of His Kingdom.

However, the multiplication of the loaves and fish is about more than simply satisfying people's physical hunger, but is also about a spiritual reality. Jesus Christ is Himself the Living Bread who feeds us both with His Word and with His own Body and Blood. This Gospel therefore challenges us to reflect on what it is that we really hunger for, and what sort of food will truly satisfy our souls.



The feeding of the multitudes in the desert by Christ is worthy of all admiration. But it is also profitable in another way. We can plainly see that these new miracles are in harmony with those of ancient times. They are the acts of one and the same power. He rained manna in the desert upon the Israelites. He gave them bread from heaven. "Man did eat angels' food," according to the words of praise in the Psalms. But look! He has again abundantly supplied food to those who needed food in the desert. He brought it down, as it were, from heaven.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria

A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

After the final blessing, and as we are preparing to leave the Church, the priest distributes the Antidoron, saying to each person as he does so,



The peace and mercy of the Lord of the Lord come upon you.

The word Antidoron means literally “in place of the gifts” since it was originally given to those who had not received Holy Communion. However, today it is usually given to all those present at the Liturgy.

The bread for the Antidoron is the remaining bread from the Prosphora, after the Lamb was removed to be

consecrated into the Body and Blood of Christ during the Holy Eucharist. It is blessed during the hymn to the Theotokos immediately after the epiclesis in the Divine Liturgy and is given by the priest to the faithful after the service.

The Antidoron is not consecrated and should not be confused with receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion. However, it has been sanctified because it has been offered to God. Saint Nicholas Cabasilas tells us that we should receive it:

...with all reverence and kiss the right had of the priest, which only shortly before had touched the all-holy Body of Christ the Saviour, and which, thus sanctified, now passes on that sanctification to those who touch it with faith.

The Antidoron is also seen as a “type” of the virginal body of the Holy Theotokos because it is the bread from which the Lamb was cut that would become the Body of Christ. Saint Germanus tells us that, just as Christ, the Bread of Life, was born from His All-holy Mother, so in the Divine Liturgy,

...through participation in the immaculate Body of Christ our God, who was born of her, ... sanctification and adoption come to the faithful. But spiritual blessing and other good things are undoubtedly given to the race of Christians by the distribution of the bread of the body of the Theotokos, that is to say, the Antidoron.



When God revealed Himself, He united Himself with our mortal nature in order to deify humanity through this close relation with deity. Since this is so, through His flesh, constituted by bread and wine, He implants Himself in all believers.

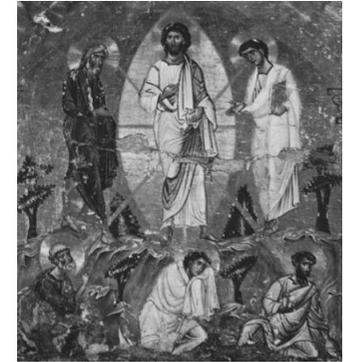
Saint Gregory of Nyssa

The Transfiguration of Our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ

On Wednesday, we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration, one of the twelve Great Feasts of the Church. The Gospel for the Feast (Matthew 17:1-9) tells us how Jesus took the Apostles Peter, James and John with Him up a mountain, where He was transfigured before them, radiating light. The prophets Moses and Elijah also appeared, but a voice from heaven made clear to them that it is Jesus Christ who is the Son of God, echoing the voice that had sounded at His baptism in the Jordan: “This is my Son, the Beloved; He enjoys my favour. Listen to Him.”

At the Transfiguration, the Apostles encounter Jesus Christ in a new way, and this experience is given to them to prepare and strengthen them for His Passion. It is also given to the Church to reveal to us our own human destiny. Just as Christ’s face and clothes were radiant with Light, so we are called to be cleansed of sin and to gradually learn to see and to participate in His Light. Moreover, Christ’s Transfiguration illumines the whole universe with His Light.

For all of us who struggle in the darkness and brokenness of our lives and world, this feast reminds us that Christ is also present in our world, and it challenges us to develop the spiritual eyes so that we may learn to see Him. For, as the Apolytikion for the feast reminds us, we can only see Him as much as our own sight allows us to.



You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ God, showing your disciples your glory, as far as they could bear it. At the prayers of the Theotokos make your everlasting light shine also on us sinners. Giver of light, glory to You.

Apolytikion for the Feast

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.

Saint Gregory Palamas