

9<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost  
Procession of the Precious Wood of the  
Life-giving Cross of the Lord,  
and the Holy Maccabean Martyrs

1 / 14 August

**Resurrection Tropar, Tone 8:** Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One! / Thou didst endure the three-day burial / to free us from our sufferings! / O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee.

**Tropar of the Precious Cross tone 1:** O Lord, save Thy people/ and bless Thine inheritance./ Grant victory over their enemies to Orthodox Christians,/ and protect Thy people with Thy Cross.

**Tropar of the Holy Maccabees tone 4:** Let us praise the seven Maccabees/ with their mother, Solomone and their teacher Eleazar;/ they were splendid in lawful contest/ as guardians of the teachings of the Law./ Now as Christ's holy martyrs they are interceding unceasingly for the world.

**Resurrection Kondak, Tone 8:** By rising from the tomb Thou didst raise the dead and resurrect Adam/ Eve exults in Thy Resurrection, / and the world celebrates Thy rising from the dead, O Greatly Merciful One.

**Kondak of the Precious Cross tone 4:** O Christ our God Who wast voluntarily lifted up on the Cross/ grant Thy mercies to Thy new people named after Thee./ Gladden with Thy power Orthodox Christians/ and give them victory over their enemies./ May they have as an ally that invincible trophy, Thy weapon of peace.

**Kondak of the Holy Maccabees tone 6:** You seven pillars of the wisdom of God,/ you seven-branched candlestick of the Divine Light,/ you were great martyrs before the time of the martyrs,/ O supremely-wise Maccabees,/ together with them pray to the God of all/ that those who venerate you may be saved.



**Matins Gospel IX**

**EPISTLE: Corinthians 3:9-17**

For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, Each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

**WE ARE GOD'S FELLOW WORKERS... YOU ARE GOD'S BUILDING**

His assertion that they are one, refers to their inability to do anything without 'God who gives the increase' ...Since this had a tendency to make men more indolent - I mean all being esteemed as one - whether they had laboured much or little, observe how he sets this right. He says, 'But each will receive his own reward according to his own labour' ...Do you see how to them he has also assigned no small task, having before laid down that the whole is of God? ...For the field is not called the husbandman's, but the householder's .. Again, the building is not the workman's but the master's ...Upon this then let us build, and as a foundation let us cleave to it as a branch to a vine; and let there be no interval between us and Christ. For the branch by its adherence draws in the sustenance, and the building stands because it is cemented together ...Let us then not merely keep hold of Christ, but let us be cemented to Him (Cf. Ps.73:27)...Let us cleave to Him ...by our works ...He is 'the Head,' we are 'the body'...He is 'a foundation', we are 'a building'; He 'a vine', we 'branches'; He 'the Bridegroom' we 'the bride'; He 'the Shepherd,' we 'the sheep,' He is 'the Way,' we 'they who walk therein.' Again, we are 'a temple,' He 'the indweller,' He the 'first begotten,' we 'the brethren': He 'the Heir,' we 'the heirs together with Him' ...He 'the Resurrection,' we 'those who rise again'; He 'the light,' we 'the enlightened.' All these indicate unity, and they allow no void interval, not even the slightest. For he who removes but to a little distance will go on till he has become very far distant.

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily VIII on I Corinthians III, 6, 7. B#56, pp. 46-47.*

Second Epistle (for the Cross) Corinthians 1:18-24

Third Epistle (for the Martyrs) Hebrews 11:33-12:2

## **The Gospel According To St. Matthew 14: 22-34**

Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God." When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret.

### **THE STORM ON THE TIBERIAN SEA**

Last Sunday's Gospel reading told us of a great miracle: the feeding of an enormous crowd of many thousands with five loaves and two fish. The disciples of Christ themselves, through whose hands this miracle was performed, were dumbfounded. And as the Gospel says, Christ at once compelled them to enter a boat and go before Him to the other shore while He dismissed the crowd. "And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea" (Mt. 14:22-25).

A wonderful image of the Church of Christ is drawn for us here. The boat, as it were, represents the Church: its sides are the rules and canons of the Church; the disciples are all of us Christians; and the stormy sea is the sea of our life. And now too Christ has ascended a mountain, which means He is sitting at the right hand of the Father. He sees our Church boat and directs it. The Gospel says that the disciples went to the other side, not of their own will, but "straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship and go before Him unto the other side" (Mt. 14: 22). This means they were doing it out of obedience to Christ. And when they found themselves in danger, He walked to them on the water.

"And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, . . . It is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus" (Mt. 14:26-29).

Notice this moment: Christ did not call Peter, but only permitted Peter. Here obedience changed to boldness, this came from Peter himself. He felt such a surge of faith, such elation, that everything seemed possible to him. But here something happened. A wave, a high wave for a second hid Christ from Peter. He found himself alone. At once cold reason set to work. It was as if he came to himself and thought, what was he doing? Foolishness. Reason took from him the lightness of faith in which he walked, and he started to drown. A desperate cry rang out: "Lord, save me." And immediately Christ stretched forth His hand to him (Mt. 14: 30-31).

What happened to Peter? Well, what happened to him can happen to each of us: he became frightened, his faith was shaken. And this happened because he stepped over the side of the boat. What a profound lesson is hidden for us here: in Christian living there should be evenness, there should be quiet. And for this to be so, we must never step over the side of the Church boat. We must keep the statutes of the Church, must live the life of the Church. And then, even if we find ourselves amid the stormy sea of life, we will be able to cry out, "Lord, save me." And He, the Merciful One, will stretch out His saving hand to us, too, as He did to Peter, and we will find ourselves in the boat of the Church, and a great calm will come.

*The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei.*

Second Gospel (for the Cross) John 19:6-11, 13-20, 26-28, 30-35

Third Gospel (for the Martyrs) Matthew 10:32-33, 37-38, 19:27-30

### **Sermon on the Eve of the Feast of the Procession of the Honorable Wood of the Life-Giving Cross of the Lord**

Again, at the onset of fasting, preparation for communion, repentance, and ascetic feats, the Cross of Christ is erected before us; and it makes us think of ourselves, of our soul, of its Christian destiny.

Indeed, we usually go about our daily lives, our everyday pursuits, worries, anxieties, and spite; sometimes we rejoice, sometimes we are sad, sometimes we are irritated, sometimes we have fun and do not think at all about our Christian calling. Just imagine that some trouble has hit us, some grief has befallen us, especially the death of our loved one, our father or mother: doesn't it seem obvious that our mood immediately changes? We become sad, depressed, and most importantly, we begin to believe more deeply; everything that interested us a minute ago now seems empty and insignificant in the face of death.

In the same way, beloved brethren, the Exaltation of the Lord's Cross affects us: it also reminds us of the death of Christ the Savior, which He went through for our sins; it vividly reminds us of the Savior's power to fight sin. The power of this

struggle is the Cross! The cross is a symbol of self-crucifixion! Thus, we see that the cross has become a symbol of a Christian, not because Christ was crucified on it, but because when we look at the cross, we must remember that we will suffer in life and then die. In fact, all the Sacraments and rites remind us of this. What is the Sacrament of Baptism? Death for sin. The Sacrament of Repentance and Communion of the Holy Mysteries of Christ is our partaking of the painful life of Christ the Savior. The cross on the church dome and on your chest should remind a Christian of the struggle against sin.

There is a split in our souls, for sin lives in them; two persons live in us. One is kind: he loves the good; he is ready to accept the whole world; he is humble, tolerant, and loves his enemies. The other one loves the flesh; he's vain, jealous, and voluptuous... Our whole life goes in the struggle between these two persons, that is, the struggle of good with the yoke of evil. Our struggle to conquer evil is the goal of the entire life of a Christian.

**Metropolitan Trifon Turkestanov**

July 31, 1907

<https://catalog.obitel-minsk.com/blog/2020/08/sermon-on-the-eve-of-the-feast-of-the-procession-of-the-honorable-wood-of-the-life-giving-cross-of-the-lord>

## Saints of the Week

### Beginning of the Dormition Fast

**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.

**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

**7 / 20 August - The Venerable Martyr Dometius** - born in Persia as a pagan during the reign of Emperor Constantine. He became acquainted with the Faith of Christ as a young man, abandoned paganism and was baptized. So much did Dometius love the True Faith that he left everything worldly and was tonsured a monk in a monastery near the town of Nisibis. He lived for some time among the brethren and then withdrew to a life of silence to be with an a certain elder Archmandrite Urbel, about whom it is said that he did not eat anything cooked for sixty years. The elder Urbel ordained Dometius a deacon and when he wanted to compel him to receive the rank of a priest, Dometius withdrew to an isolated mountain and settled in a cave. He attained such a high degree of perfection through fasting, prayer, all night vigils and godly-thoughts that he cured the sick. When Julian the Apostate came to those regions, he heard of Dometius and sent men, who sealed him alive in the cave along with two of his disciples. Thus, this saint of God died and took up habitation in the Kingdom of God in the year 363 A.D.

**The Venerable Or, Hermit of Thebaid** - Or attained great perfection through the greatest mortification. When he firmly established himself and attained holiness in solitude, he then gradually established several monasteries and was a superb spiritual leader and teacher of many monks. Rufinus, who visited him describes Or in the following way: "In his dress [habit], he resembled an angel of God; a ninety-year old elder with a long beard, as white as snow; externally was very pleasant. His gaze shone with something super human." Often times, he saw the angels of God. He especially endeavoured never to speak an untruth. He had great temptations from the demons but overpowered them all soberly and courageously. He received Holy Communion daily. On one occasion, one of his disciples reminded him that the Feast of the Resurrection had come and that it should be celebrated. Hearing this, Or came out, raised his hands to heaven and spent three days in prayer without rest. He explained to his disciple: "For the monk, this is the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ: to elevate his mind and to unite it with God." He rested in deep old age about the year 390 A.D.

**The Holy Martyrs Marinus and Asterius** - Marinus was a soldier and Asterius was a Roman senator. At the time of Emperor Gallienus, St. Marinus served as a soldier in Caesarea in Palestine. Marinus was beheaded for the sake of the Faith of Christ. Asterius, the senator, also a Christian, was present at his martyrdom. He removed his dolman and, with it, wrapped the body of the martyr, placed it on his shoulders, took it and honourably buried it. Seeing this, the pagans beheaded him also. They both died honourably for Christ about the year 260 A.D.

## HOMILY

### About the new law from Zion

*"For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).*

The prophet speaks of a new law and of a new word. The old law was given on Sinai and the new law will come from Zion. The old law was given through Moses and the new law, the Lord Christ Himself will bring. That [the old law] was intended in the beginning only for the Jews, and this one [the new law], will be directed to all peoples and all of mankind. Even though these words of the prophet are clear, however, the Jews could not understand them nor do they understand them today. The meaning of these words is closed to them because of their stony hearts. To whom do they [the Jews] apply these words? To no one. How do they [the Jews] interpret these words? They do not. They pass by these words as a blind man passes by an open door. If they were able to comprehend these words, would they have then acted in such a manner as they acted with the prophet and the prophesied One [Christ]? Would they have sawn Isaiah and crucified Christ on the Cross?

The Jews considered the law of Moses to be the only and final law of God. That is why they were unable to comprehend the meaning of the prophecy of the new law from Zion, i.e., from the House of David, for David glorified Zion. But if the Jews did not know to comprehend the new law through the old law, we Christians know that through the new law we comprehend the old law. The Jews only had a tree without fruit but we have the tree and the fruit. They only had an image without reality, but we have both reality and the image. They adhered only to promises and that, incorrectly understood, but we have the promises and the fulfillment.

O All-rich Lord, Who has enriched us with Your spiritual law and Your life-giving words, You only do we worship and to You only do we pray; grant us wisdom and power to live according to Your law and to uphold Your holy word, so that we may not become poor before You, Who has made us rich!

**To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.**