

SERMON ON THE TRANSFIGURATION

UPON MOUNT TABOR, Jesus revealed to his disciples a heavenly mystery. While living among them he had spoken of the kingdom and of his second coming in glory, but to banish from their hearts any possible doubt concerning the kingdom and to confirm their faith in what lay in the future by its prefiguration in the present, he gave them on Mount Tabor a wonderful vision of his glory, a foreshadowing of the kingdom of heaven. It was as if he said to them: “As time goes by you may be in danger of losing your faith. To save you from this I tell you now that some standing here listening to me will not taste death until they have seen the Son of Man coming in the glory of his Father.”

Moreover, in order to assure us that Christ could command such power when he wished, the evangelist continues: Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter, James and John, and led them up a high mountain where they were alone. There, before their eyes, he was transfigured. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light. Then the disciples saw Moses and Elijah appear, and they were talking to Jesus.

These are the divine wonders we celebrate today; this is the saving revelation given us upon the mountain; this is the festival of Christ that has drawn us here. Let us listen, then, to the sacred voice of God so compellingly calling us from on high, from the summit of the mountain, so that with the Lord’s chosen disciples we may penetrate the deep meaning of these holy mysteries, so far beyond our capacity to express. Jesus goes before us to show us the way, both up the mountain and into heaven, and—I speak

boldly—it is for us now to follow him with all speed, yearning for the heavenly vision that will give us a share in his radiance, renew our spiritual nature and transform us into his own likeness, making us for ever sharers in his Godhead and raising us to heights as yet undreamed of. Let us run with confidence and joy to enter into the cloud like Moses and Elijah, or like James and John. Let us be caught up like Peter to behold the divine vision and to be transfigured by that glorious transfiguration. Let us retire from the world, stand aloof from the earth, rise above the body, detach ourselves from creatures and turn to the creator, to whom Peter in ecstasy exclaimed: *Lord, it is good for us to be here.*

It is indeed good to be here, as you have said, Peter. It is good to be with Jesus and to remain here for ever. What greater happiness or higher honor could we have than to be with God, to be made like him and to live in his light? Therefore, since each of us possesses God in his heart and is being transformed into his divine image, we also should cry out with joy: It is good for us to be here – here where all things shine with divine radiance, where there is joy and gladness and exultation; where there is nothing in our hearts but peace, serenity and stillness; where God is seen. For here, in our hearts, Christ takes up his abode together with the Father, saying as he enters: Today salvation has come to this house. With Christ, our hearts receive all the wealth of his eternal blessings, and there where they are stored up for us in him, we see reflected as in a mirror both the first fruits and the whole of the world to come.

— *St. Anastasius the Sinaite, 7th century*

A WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN

AT THE END OF HIS LIFE, in exile on the island of Patmos, the Apostle John had a vision. “A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head” (Rev. 12:1). Most commentators take this image from the *Book of Apocalypse [Revelation]* to be referring to the Church, or the remnant Israel. Some, however, see here an image of Mary, especially as she is the daughter of Zion, and she typifies the Church. Some even see an image of her bodily assumption.

“A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun” (Rev. 12:1). In the bodily “translation” of the Virgin [her Dormition], the Church recognizes a “great sign.” A prophetic sign, that speaks to us of our destiny, of the meaning of death, of bodies, of human relations. This sign tells us: death is not the final end of the human being. We are not lastly, as the philosopher Heidegger thought, only “being-unto-death.” Finite time and death are not our ultimate horizon. The mother of Jesus was “translated unto life.” This sign tells us: a “heaven” of pure spirits is not our last estate. Christians are not Platonists! The body is not the soul’s prison, a cocoon to be sloughed off for the “true self” to emerge like a butterfly.

Parish of the Protection of the Holy Virgin
 St. Seraphim of Sarov Cathedral
 90 Mountain View Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95407
 Parish office phone: 707-584-9491
 website: www.saintseraphim.com

The Rector, Fr. Lawrence Margitich, may be reached at the Parish office phone, or at Lmargitich@sbcglobal.net. He is available Tuesday-Saturday, from noon onwards each day.

Parish Contacts

Bobbi Griovski, Parish Secretary	584-9491
Fr. Michael Margitich, Pastor Emeritus	473-0314
Fr. John Schettig, Second Priest	318-1559
Serge Anderson, Parish Council Warden	291-7452
Martin Thong, Treasurer	888-7888
Bonnie Alexander, Recording Secretary	338-4962
Kira Staykow, Sisterhood President	(415) 279-0353
Eleni Rose, Agape Meal Coordinator	480-6106
Debbie Buse, Hall Event Manager	696-4986

Plato was wrong: our true person, as God intended it, is not just soul, **but also body**. Salvation of the person means salvation of the body. This sign tells us: through the resurrection of Jesus, each one of us will rise again in our body, restored, as we were also once conceived in our mother's womb: as male or female. And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun (Rev. 12:1). Risen to glory, Mary is still Woman.

Certain ancient heretics, called Gnostics, believed that here was something to be overcome: in the kingdom of heaven, there would be no male and female, or perhaps women would become like men (Gospel of Thomas, logion 114). These Gnostics scorned marriage, and especially procreation. They sought liberation from the bonds of nature. We still have our Gnostics today. Our Gnostics would like us to think of man and woman, mother and father, as interchangeable, shifting identities: not the Creator's good and lasting design, but inventions of society, or plastic self-constructions.

But today the Church holds out to us a different vision. It is a sign to our age, "a sign of contradiction" (Lk. 2:34). "You were translated to life, O Mother of Life." This sign says: *risen to glory, Mary is still Mother*. In the bodily glorification of Mary, we are given an image, a pre-installment, of the glory of the Kingdom which we hope to inherit. It is fully embodied glory, wherein the beauty of created difference is preserved. A glory in which natural bonds of love will not be dissolved. A glory in which each of us will remain mother or father,

and son or daughter, to someone. And to everyone who, like the beloved disciple, has rested a head upon the Lord's bosom, or stood by his Cross in prayer, Christ will say: "Son, behold thy Mother" (Jn. 19:27). There is no human person more exalted than the Virgin Mary, the *Panagia*. And there is no greater title for her in our theological glossary than "Mother." This should tell us something. This word, mother, extends far beyond physical childbearing. It names an all-encompassing human concern, a spiritual bond, a calling from God. This spiritual maternity, beyond blood offspring, is the gift and calling of every woman: married or unmarried; bearer of many, one or none. It is a gift, of which every one of us—all humanity—is the blessed beneficiary. This is the good gift of our Creator—not our fashioning. And as today's feast reminds us, it does not end in death. —*Father Matthew Baker, reposed March 2, 2015*

LITURGICAL DANGER

ONE SUNDAY morning, the priest noticed little Alex standing in the foyer of the church staring up at a large plaque. It was covered with names with small USA flags mounted on either side of it. The seven-year-old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the priest walked up, stood beside the little boy, and said quietly, "Good morning Alex." "Good morning Father," he replied, still focused on the plaque. "Father, what is this?" he asked the priest. The priest said, "Well, son, it's a memorial to all the young men and women who died in the service." Soberly, they just stood together, staring at the large plaque. Finally, little Alex's voice, barely audible and trembling with fear, asked, "Which service, Father, Vigil or Liturgy?"

SOME PARISH NEEDS

- Generator to operate the parish water well, if and when the power goes out. See George Barsi for details.
- Pilgrimage Ministry Leader, meaning, someone who will help (does not have to do it alone) organize trips to monasteries and other holy places.
- Chairman for the Parish Men's Group. Such a person would (with others) organize activities of the Men's Group. See Fr. Lawrence if you're interested.
- Assistant Sacristan, who will monthly wash and clean all the oil lamps. See Fr. Lawrence
- Gopher Trapper. Just do it.

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **THE DORMITION FAST** began on August 1, and continues until the Feast of the Dormition on August 15. We fast from dairy, meat, eggs, as well as wine and olive oil on particular days (consult the St. Tikhon's Calendar). The fast is a time to focus on prayer, alms and spiritual reading in preparation for Dormition.
- **ON TRANSFIGURATION**, August 6, we bless fruit because it is getting ripe and it should be blessed before we eat it. But there's a spiritual reason as well. Fr. Seraphim (Rose) wrote: "Just as fruits ripen and are transformed under the action of the summer sun, so is man called to a spiritual transfiguration through the light of God's word by means of the Sacraments. Some saints, (for example—Saint Seraphim of Sarov), under the action of this life-giving grace, have shone bodily before men even in life with this same uncreated Light of God's glory; and that is another sign to us of the heights to which we, as Christians, are called and the state that awaits us—to be transformed in the image of Him Who was transfigured on Mount Tabor." Bring a basket of fruit to the Divine Liturgy on Sunday to be blessed.
- **THE FEAST DORMITION** will be celebrated here with Vigil at 6:15 PM, on August 14, and the Divine Liturgy—in Calistoga at the Monastery (it being their feast day)—on August 15 at 9 AM. His Grace Bishop Daniel will preside.
- **A SPIRITUAL TESTAMENT:** Thanks to the work of Ambrose Inlow and the generosity of Abbess Susanna, our parish has published a small book called "A Spiritual Testament." This book contains the reflections of the new martyr Archpriest Sergei of Kasimov, to his children. While being held in forced labor in a rock quarry, in 1944 he wrote a spiritual testament addressed to them. In it he speaks of what is most essential and dear: The life in Christ, of life in the Church, in her Mysteries. Available now in our bookstore.
- **UPCOMING POTLUCK and TALKS:**
 - Sister Margarete from Holy Assumption Monastery will give a talk, Thursday, August 17 at 6 PM, on the history, theology and activity of the female diaconate. Her talk will help us understand that women deacons had their own unique ministry, unlike that of men. The talk will be preceded by a potluck. Small Compline will follow the talk.
 - Fred Krueger will give a talk, Thursday, August 31, 6 PM, on the Orthodox approach to environmental issues. He will also speak about a recent international conference he organized on the pollution of the oceans. The talk will be preceded by a potluck. The akathist "Glory to God For All Things" will follow the talk.
- **SAVE THE STORKS**, Saturday, August 12 at 6 PM, Parish Hall: Save the Storks is an organization which helps pregnant women find resources other than abortion. I learned about "Save the Storks" at the Walk for Life in January, when I was introduced online to one of their ambassadors named Trista Eazell. Since our parish does social work best when it partners with groups like Catholic Charities, Redwood Gospel Mission, Redwood Empire Food Bank, and others, it seemed reasonable for us to accept Trista's offer to come speak to us about the work of Save the Storks. It's my belief that the Church expects and empowers us to engage with those in need in our community in order to give tangible love in action. Our best avenue for doing such work is to continue to partner with other—mostly young, millennial Christians—not aligned with political parties. I invite all of you to listen to what this young woman has to say, and determine if this is a fit for us. —Fr. Lawrence
- **HOLY MYSTERIES:** Marriage of Rebecca Cash and Hanne Aftim, Sunday, September 3 at 2:30 PM. Marriage of Emmelia Lewis and Joseph Anderson, Sunday, October 8 at 3 PM.
- **OCTOBER RETREAT:** Father Timothy Pavlatos from St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Portland, OR, has been invited to give a retreat here on Friday, October 13 and Saturday, October 14. Fr. Timothy is a licensed marriage and family therapist and is the Family Wellness Ministry Director for the SF Diocese of the Greek Orthodox Church. He also serves as an adjunct professor at George Fox University's Graduate School of Counseling. Fr. Timothy holds a bachelor's degree in psychology, a master's degree in divinity from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (1992) and a master's degree in pastoral counseling from Loyola University in Maryland. A Fellow in the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, Fr. Timothy is also a national certified counselor, a Clinical Fellow in the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, a certified Prepare/Enrich facilitator, a certified Gottman facilitator, and a certified clinical trauma professional. Over the past several years, Fr. Timothy has focused on marriage and parenting enrichment, interpersonal neurobiology and trauma. Fr. Timothy's talks here will focus on marriage and parenting enrichment. Married or single, you will benefit from his teaching. More info on the retreat will be forthcoming.

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

AUGUST 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Friday	Saturday	
July 30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 2 PM, Panikhida for Nina Antipov, one year anniv. • 4 PM, Parish Glendi and Birthday BBQ 	31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers for <i>Procession of the Cross</i> 	1 - Dormition Fast Begins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Water Blessing • 6 PM, Supplicatory Canon • 7 PM, Master Planning Meeting 	2 <i>[Fr. Lawrence in Calistoga all day for confessions]</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Supplicatory Canon 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Supplicatory Canon 	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Supplicatory Canon 	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4:30 Panikhida • 5 PM, Vigil for Transfiguration
6 - Transfiguration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Fruit, Vineyard • Noon, Agape Meal 	7	8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Supplicatory Canon 	9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank • 6 PM, Vespers for Feast of St. Lawrence of Rome 	10 - St. Lawrence of Rome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Senior Lunch for <i>St. Lawrence feast day at Eugenia Dada's</i> 	11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Supplicatory Canon 	12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vespers • 6 PM, Presentation by "Saving the Storks"
13 - St. Tikhon of Zadonsk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal 	14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:15 PM, Vigil for Dormition 	15 - Dormition <i>In Calistoga at the Monastery: 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for their feast</i>	16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Potluck and Talk by Sister Margarete, Small Compline to follow 	18	19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vespers
20 - Prophet Samuel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal 	21	22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Teacher Training, in Library 	23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Teacher Training, in Library 	24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Teacher Training, in Church • 7 PM, Parish Council, Library 	25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Memorial Divine Liturgy (one year anniversary of repose of Gabriel G.) 	26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 PP, Children's Choir • 5 PM, Vespers
27 - St. Phanourios <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy, Lity for St. Phanourios • Noon, Agape Meal 	28 <i>Rose Ave Feast Day Liturgy, Time TBA</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	29 - Beheading of St John Strict Fast Day <i>Feast Day of Christ the Saviour Parish, Anza St. San Francisco</i> <i>9 AM, Divine Liturgy</i>	30	31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Potluck and Talk by Fred Krueger, Akathist to follow 	SEPTEMBER 1 Liturgical New Year	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vespers