

THE ORTHODOX MESSENGER

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HOMILY ON PRAYER

WHY IS IT, you ask, that one can pray for so many years with a prayer book, and still not have prayer in his heart? I think the reason is that people only spend a little time lifting themselves up to God when they complete their prayer rule, and in other times, they do not remember God. For example, they finish their morning prayers, and think that their relation to God is fulfilled by them; then the whole day passes in work, and such a person does not attend to God. Then in the evening, the thought returns to him that he must quickly stand at prayer and complete his evening rule. In this case, it happens that even if the Lord grants a person spiritual feelings at the time of the morning prayer, the bustle and business of the day drowns them out. As a result, it happens that one does not often feel like praying, and cannot get control of himself even to soften his heart a little bit. In such an atmosphere, prayer develops and ripens poorly. This problem (is it not ubiquitous?) needs to be corrected, that is, one must ensure that the soul does not only make petition to God when standing in prayer, but during the whole day, as much as possible, one must unceasingly ascend to Him and remain with Him.

In order to begin this task, one must first, during the course of the day, cry out to God more often, even if only

with a few words, according to need and the work of the day. Beginning anything, for example, say 'Bless, O Lord!' When you finish something, say, 'Glory to Thee, O Lord' and not only with your lips, but with feeling in your heart. If passions arise, say, 'Save me, O Lord, I am perishing.' If the darkness of disturbing thoughts comes up, cry out: 'Lead my soul out of prison.' If dishonest deeds present themselves and sin leads you to them, pray, 'Set me, O Lord, in the way' or 'do not give up my feet to stumbling.' If sin takes hold of you and leads you to despair, cry out with the voice of the publican, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' Do this in every circumstance, or simply say often, 'Lord, have mercy' or 'Most Holy Theotokos save us' or 'Holy Angel, my guardian, protect me' or other such words. Say such prayers as often as possible, always making the effort for them come from your heart, as if squeezed out of it. When we do this, we will frequently ascend to God in our hearts, making frequent petitions and prayers. Such increased frequency will bring about the habit of mental conversation with God.

— St. Theophan the Recluse, *On prayer*, Homily 2



FOR THE NEXT MONTH or two at least, Divine Liturgy on Sundays will be served outside from the front porch of the Cathedral (unexpected exceptions may occur). All are invited to attend. Bring an umbrella for shade and a folding chair if you need to sit.

Per the instruction of Archbishop Benjamin, face-masks are required "attire." Those who do not wear a face mask are asked to stand with the "lepers and unclean" (forgive the "covid-levity") outside the perimeter—an usher will provide direction to you. My thanks for your cooperation with this.

Weekday Services (Vespers, Liturgy, etc.) will continue to be served inside the Cathedral.

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE DORMITION FAST ~ Begins August 1

IT WOULD BE a gross understatement to say that much has been written about the Feast of the Dormition (August 15) of the Theotokos. Yet very little has been written about the fast that precedes it.

Every Orthodox Christian is aware and generally knows the reason behind the fasts for Pascha and Christmas. But while they may know of the Dormition Fast, few follow it, and more than a few question why it is there, neither knowing its purpose. First, given the pervasive misunderstanding of the purpose of fasting itself, a refresher on its purpose is always a good idea. There is a perception that we should fast when we want something, as though the act of fasting some-

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how appeases God, and seeing us “suffer” gets Him to grant our request. Nothing can be further from the truth. It is not our fasting that pleases God, it is the fruits of our fast (provided we fast in the proper mind set, and do not merely diet) that please Him. We fast, not to get what we want, but to prepare ourselves to receive what God wants to give us. The purpose of fasting is to bring us more in line with another Mary, the sister of Lazarus, and away from their sister Martha, who in the famous passage was “anxious and troubled about many things.” Fasting is intended to bring us to the realization of “the one thing needful.” It is to help us put God first and our own desires second, if not last. As such it serves to prepare us to be instruments of God’s will, as with Moses in his flight from Egypt and on Mt. Sinai, as well as our Lord’s fast in the wilderness. Fasting turns us away from ourselves and toward God. In essence it helps us become like the Theotokos, an obedient servant of God, who heard His word and kept it better than anyone else has or could.

So why do we fast before Dormition? In a close-knit family, word that its matriarch is on her deathbed brings normal life to a halt. Otherwise important things (parties, TV, luxuries, personal desires) become unimportant; life comes to revolve around the dying matriarch. It is the same with the Orthodox family; word that our matriarch is on her deathbed, could not (or at least should not) have

any different effect than the one just mentioned. The Church, through the *Paraklesis Service* [*Supplicatory Canon*], gives us the opportunity to come to that deathbed and eulogize and entreat the woman who bore God, the vessel of our salvation and our chief advocate at His divine throne. And as, in the earthly family, daily routines and the indulgence in personal wants should come to a halt. Fasting, in its full sense (abstaining from food and desires) accomplishes this. Less time in leisure or other pursuits leaves more time for prayer and reflection on she who gave us Christ, and became the first and greatest Christian. In reflecting on her and her incomparable life, we see a model Christian life, embodying Christ’s retort to the woman who stated that Mary was blessed because she bore Him: *blessed rather are those who hear His word and keep it*. Mary did this better than anyone. As Fr. Thomas Hopko has stated, she heard the word of God and kept it so well, that she of all women in history was chosen not only to hear His Word but give birth to it (Him). So while we fast in contemplation of her life, we are simultaneously preparing ourselves to live a life in imitation of her. That is the purpose of the Dormition Fast (the Fast ends after the Liturgy on Dormition). —[Daniel Manzuk](#)

HELP FROM THE LORD

ON JULY 23, we were celebrating one of the Feasts of the *Pochaev Icon of the Theotokos*, which commemorates the deliverance of the Pochaev monastery and its neighbors from invasion by Tatars and Turks. After a verse glorifying God and the Theotokos for this deliverance, this verse appears: “Therefore, even in years to come, save us, O Mistress, from deadly contagion and civil strife, from famine and fiery conflagration; for lacking strength in our souls, we, uncomprehending, are filled with despair and tribulations.”

My first thought was, “Wow! This was written for US!” That IS true, but on the other hand, this is also written for almost any people in any era. No nation has been spared great trials for any great length of time, and now is OUR time. So, what do we do? Well, the service tells us that, too: “Behold, the time is come for help from the all-holy Theotokos, as pitfalls increase in number! Lo! Now is the time for us to sigh unto her, O brethren! Let us therefore say from the depths of our heart: O Mistress, O Mistress, help thy people!”

We cannot save ourselves. We never could, you know. But our merciful Lord came to bring salvation, and we have His mother and all His saints interceding for us. So, when we have despaired of our own selves, let us all the more run to Christ, His Mother, and all His saints! —*Abbess Melania, Calistoga*

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- I INVITE YOU to join with me in praying the Akathist to the African Saints, and the Prayer for Racial Reconciliation at 12 Noon, August 1, and to abstain from eating lunch that day. If you cannot pray and fast at noon on that day, then choose another meal from which to fast, and another time to pray the Akathist. —Fr Lawrence
- THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK is held on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month—August 12 and 26. Volunteers: please arrive around 4 PM to help set up. This Food Bank is an important way in which our parish does outreach to the community.
- PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS Randy Joseph Pelfrey, Daniel Durrant and Sonya Elm preparing for Holy Illumination (baptism) on the feast of Dormition, August 15 at 9 AM. May the Lord enlighten their way. Please pray for all of the catechumens: Anthony and Gioia Merrill and their children Phoebe and Collette.
- FATHER NICHOLAS will be leading an online discussion on Wednesday evenings at 7 PM on the book “The Way of the Ascetics” by Tito Colliander. Log-on information has been posted to the GROUPS email forum.
- I AM HAPPY to bring Holy Communion to the homes of those who are sheltering in place. Please do not hesitate to ask. —Fr Lawrence
- THE MEN'S GROUP Fellowship get together (at the fire pit) are scheduled for 7 PM on August 3rd, 17th, 31st.
- CONFESSIONS are heard on Fridays from 11:30 AM–1 PM, no appointment necessary. If you'd like to schedule a different time, please call/email/text either Fr. Lawrence, Fr. John or Fr. Nicholas to make appointment.

BLESSING OF FRUIT

IT IS THE TRADITION of the Day of Transfiguration to consecrate grapes, apples and other fruit after the Divine Liturgy. The custom of bringing fruit to the temple for consecration originates in the Old Testament time (Gen 4:2-4; Ex 13:12-13; Num 15:19-21; Deut 8:10-14). The Apostles brought this tradition to the Church of the New Testament (1 Cor 16:1-2). Instruction regarding bringing fruit to temple is found in the *Third Rule of the Apostolic Canon*, the earliest collection of ecclesiastic laws (canons), known since the second century. In Greece, August is the month of ripeness of fruit, mostly grapes and new ears of corn. Since old time, the faithful have been bringing them to temple for consecration and as Thanksgiving to God. St. John Chrysostom wrote, “The farmer receives fruit from the earth not so much for his labor and diligence, as out of goodness of God Who

grows this fruit, because neither is *he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*”

Grapes are brought to temple because they are directly related to the Eucharistic sacrament; that is why in the prayer for consecration of grapes the priest says, “Bless, Lord, this new fruit of vine which reached ripeness ... Let eating this fruit of vine make us joyful. And give us the honor of offering this fruit to Thee, as the gift of purging of sins, altogether with the Holy Body of Thy Christ.” In the first centuries of Christianity, the faithful brought forth to the temple the fruit and crops of the new harvest: bread, wine, oil, incense, wax, honey etc. Of all these offerings, only bread, wine, incense, oil and wax were taken to the altar, while the rest was used for the needs of the clergy and the poor whom the church was caring for. —*the late Bp. Alexander Mileant*

**On Transfiguration and the Saturday following, a table will be set up outside the church for baskets of fruit.
Immediately after the Divine Liturgy we will bless the fruit and the vineyard.**

THIS IS A DESERT place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. And they say unto Him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to Me. Let us reflect on the words of Christ, “They need not depart from My presence in order to eat; you can give them what they need.” If we looked around us...at the needs of people who are hungry, who are homeless, who are deprived of rights, or simply our neighbors who are at times so lonely and need a word of comfort, friendship and solidarity, we would begin to fulfil this commandment of Christ. —[*Metropolitan Anthony of London*](#)

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

AUGUST 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions • 5 PM, Matins for the Procession of the Cross 	AUGUST 1 – Begin Fast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy for the Feast • Noon, Akathist to the African Saints • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM, Great Vespers
2 – Protomartyr Stephen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy, <i>on the porch</i> • 1:30 PM, Supplicatory Canon to the Theotokos 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Men's Group 	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Supplicatory Canon to the Theotokos 	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vigil for Transfiguration 	6 – TRANSFIGURATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy and blessing of fruit and vineyard 	7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1PM, Confessions 	8 – Postfeast of Transfig. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM, Great Vespers
9 – St. Herman of Alaska <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy, <i>on the porch</i> • 1:30 PM, Vespers for St. Lawrence 	10 – St. Lawrence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy 	11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Supplicatory Canon to the Theotokos 	12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank Distribution • 5 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, Online study of the book <i>Way of the Ascetics</i> 	13 St. Benjamin of Petrograd <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Supplicatory Canon to the Theotokos 	14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1PM, Confessions • 5 PM, Vigil for Dormition 	15 – DORMITION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Baptisms • 10 AM Divine Liturgy • 5 PM, Great Vespers
16 – Icon “Made-without Hands” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy, <i>on the porch</i> 	17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Men's Group 	18	19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, Online study of the book <i>Way of the Ascetics</i> 	20 <i>St. Alexander Hotovitzky</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting 	21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1PM, Confessions 	22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Great Vespers
23 – St. Irenaeus of Lyon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy, <i>on the porch</i> 	24	25	26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank Distribution • 5 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, Online study of the book <i>Way of the Ascetics</i> 	27	28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1PM, Confessions • 5 PM, Vespers 	29 – Beheading/Fast Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy / Beheading of St. John the Baptist • 5 PM, Great Vespers
30 – St. Alexander Nevsky <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy, <i>on the porch</i> 	31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Men's Group 	September 1 Church New Year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Akathist “Glory to God for all Things” 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, Online study of the book <i>Way of the Ascetics</i> 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vespers for the feast of the Prophet Moses 	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1PM, Confessions 	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noon, Akathist to the African Saints • 5 PM, Great Vespers