

Holy Communion and Confession: Our practice in the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) is to prepare ourselves for receiving Holy Communion each week by making a frequent confession—once a month being the norm. We are also instructed to do the Prayers of Preparation, found in any common Orthodox Prayer book, before coming to Liturgy. I would encourage all of you to remember that Saturday evening Great Vespers is also part of our preparation. If you haven't been attending Vespers on Saturday, at least start with coming once or twice a month, and see. You'll be glad you did.

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 the Feast.

We welcome to the neighborhood—now next door at the *Home of Mercy*—His Eminence, our Archbishop Benjamin, his father Bob, and Subdeacon Leo. The movers were scheduled for Friday and Saturday to bring their household from SF. Let's offer a warm welcome. We will have the great blessing and joy of seeing Vladyka Benjamin on those weekends when he is not traveling on pastoral visits.

Let us depart in peace, we hear at the end of the Divine Liturgy. Fr. Stephen DeYoung commented "that every one of us, at the end of the Liturgy, is sent out into the world...when we find that there's strife, we act as peace-makers. Where there's despair, we come with love and with hope. Where there's loneliness, we come with companionship and compassion. Where there's joy and God's blessings, we rejoice with them...the same way the apostles did after they saw Christ and went out into the world in the Acts of the Apostles...the place where we experience salvation is not in the beautiful experience; it's not in the fulfilling spiritual experience. It's in faithfully answering the call that comes with that experience."

ST. SERAPHIM CATHEDRAL

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ORTHODOX CHURCH



August 4, 2024

Seven Holy Youths of Ephesus



• TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION, Tone Five:

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

• TROPARION OF THE SEVEN HOLY YOUTHS, Tone Four:

Thy Martyrs, O Lord, in their courageous contest for Thee received as the prize the crowns of incorruption and life from Thee, our immortal God. For since they possessed Thy strength, they cast down the tyrants and wholly destroyed the demons' strengthless presumption. O Christ God, by their prayers, save our souls, since Thou art merciful.

• KONTAKION OF THE SEVEN HOLY YOUTHS, Tone Four:

The Seven Holy Youths renounced the perishing comforts of this world, preferring the eternal things of Heaven. They were incorrupt after death and rose from the dead and buried the snares of the devils. O Faithful, let us then honor them, singing a hymn of praise to Christ!

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ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Friday, August 2: *No Confessions*
6:30 PM, Presentation on the Orthodox
Natural Church Development Program
- Saturday, August 3: 10 AM, Workshop for the *Church Health Team*
5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions
- Sunday, August 4: 9:15 AM, Lesser Blessing of Water
10 AM, Divine Liturgy
Noon, Agape Meal—**Potluck**
- Monday, August 5: 6 PM, Vigil for Transfiguration
- Tuesday, August 6: 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for the Feast, blessing of
fruit and vineyard
- Wednesday, August 7: 5:30 PM,, Akathist to Matushka Olga
6 PM, Daily Vespers
- Thursday, August 8: 7 PM, Bible Study online with Fr James
- Friday, August 9: 11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions

Romans 12:6-14 (Epistle): Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 🙏

Matthew 9:1-8 (Gospel): At that time, Jesus got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, “This Man blasphemes!” But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk?’ But that you may

know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins” – then He said to the paralytic, “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men. 🙏

The Theotokos heard the word of God and kept it so well, that of all women in history she 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. —*Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko*

Fasting and love. Fasting involves abstaining from something good in order to acquire something better: self-control, obedience to the life and rhythm of the Church, and among other things, spiritual health. It involves not eating meat, dairy, eggs, etc. (exceptions for age, nursing or expecting mothers or a medical condition, of course). Instead, we have the wonderful harvest of vegetables at this time of year to enjoy. Fasting, also involves disengaging from social media, TV and movies and light reading—in order to focus on more meatier (if you will allow the word) reading and time for prayer. It’s also appropriate, considering the 2024 election cycle, that we fast from discussing politics (opinions about candidates and policies) here at Church and especially during the Agape Meals. Such discussions often inflame the passions and will steal any “agape” you might have, and in the end, matter not a bit. Remember what St. Paul writes in *Romans 12:16* that we strive to “...live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.” Remember also what you only just confessed at the Divine Liturgy: “I believe, O Lord, and I confess that Thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Who camest into the world to save sinners, of whom I am first.” —*Fr Lawrence*

We don’t know how much longer the Lord will allow us to live in this life, but I think that what we should all beg Him for is to find us worthy to experience His love and die in His love. And when we live, let us live the love of Christ; and when we die, let us die for the love of Christ; and then I think there is no problem. Because “whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s” (Rom. 14:8), and therefore we are with Christ together, and life is blessed, and death is resurrection, and thus all problems are solved. It is enough to be with Christ, in the love of Christ, both the living and the dead. —*Archimandrite George (Kapsanis) of Mount Athos*