

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox
Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*



SERVICES

Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM, Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM | Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.

August 7, 2016 – 7th Sunday After Pentecost | Martyr Dometius of Persia | Afterfeast of the Transfiguration

St Dometius lived in Persia during the fourth century. In his youth he was converted to the Faith by a Christian named Uaros. Forsaking Persia, he withdrew to the frontier city of Nisibis (in Mesopotamia), where he was baptized in one of the monasteries, and also received the monastic tonsure. Fleeing the ill-will of some of the monks, St Dometius moved to the monastery of Saints Sergius and Bacchus in the city of Theodosiopolis. The monastery was under the guidance of an archimandrite named Urbelos, a strict ascetic, of whom it was said that for sixty years he did not taste cooked food, nor did he lay down for sleep, but rather took his rest standing up, supporting himself upon his staff. In this monastery St Dometius was ordained a deacon, but when the archimandrite decided to have him made a presbyter, the saint, considering himself unworthy, hid himself on a desolate mountain in Syria, in the region of Cyrrihus. Stories about him constantly spread among the local inhabitants. They began to come to him for healing and for help. Many pagans were brought to faith in Christ by Dometius. And one time, in the locality where St Dometius struggled with his disciples, the emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363) arrived, traveling on his campaign against the Persians. By order of the emperor, soldiers found St Dometius praying with his disciples in a cave, and walled them up alive inside. *(from oca.org)*

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 15:1-7

BRETHREN, we who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please *his* neighbor for *his* good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received you, to the glory of God.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 9:27-35

At that time, two blind men followed Jesus, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See *that* no one knows *it*." But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never seen like this in Israel!" But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons." Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

For an explanation of the present Feast and understanding of its truth, it is necessary for us to turn to the very start of today's reading from the Gospel: "Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James and John his brother, and led them up onto a high mountain by themselves" (Mt.17:1). First of all we must ask, from whence does the Evangelist Matthew begin to reckon with six days? From what sort of day is it? What does the preceding turn of speech indicate, where the Savior, in teaching His disciples, said to them: "For the Son of Man shall come with his angels in the glory of His Father," and further: "Amen I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death, until they have seen the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" (Mt.16:27-28)? That is to say, it is the Light of His own forthcoming Transfiguration which He terms the Glory of His Father and of His

Kingdom. The Evangelist Luke points this out and reveals this more clearly saying: "Now it came to pass about eight days after these words, that He took Peter and John and James, and went up the mountain to pray. And as He prayed, His countenance was altered, and His raiment became a radiant white" (Luke 9:28-29). But how can the two be reconciled, when one of them speaks definitively about the interval of time as being eight days between the sayings and the manifestation, whereas the other (says): "after six days?" There were eight on the mountain, but only six were visible. Three, Peter, James and John, had come up with Jesus, and they saw Moses and Elias standing there and conversing with Him, so altogether there were six of them. However, the Father and the Holy Spirit were invisibly with the Lord: the Father, with His Voice testifying that this was His Beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit shining forth with Him in the radiant cloud. Thus, the six are actually eight, and there is no contradiction regarding the eight. Similarly, there is no contradiction with the Evangelists when one says "after six days," and the other says "eight days after these words."

But these twofold sayings as it were present us a certain format set in mystery, and together with it that of those actually present upon the Mount. It stands to reason, and everyone rationally studying in accordance with Scripture knows that the Evangelists are in agreement one with another. Luke spoke of eight days without contradicting Matthew, who declared "after six days." There is not another day added on to represent the day on which these sayings were uttered, nor is the day on which the Lord was transfigured added on (which a rational person might reasonably imagine to be added to the days of Matthew). The Evangelist Luke does not say "after eight days" (like the Evangelist Matthew says "after six days"), but rather "it came to pass eight days after these words." But where the Evangelists seem to contradict one another, they actually point out to us something great and mysterious. In actual fact, why did the one say "after six days," but the other, in ignoring the seventh day, have in mind the eighth day? It is because the great vision of the Light of the Transfiguration of the Lord is the mystery of the Eighth Day, i.e., of the future age, coming to be revealed after the passing away of the world created in six days.

About the power of the Divine Spirit, through Whom the Kingdom of God is to be revealed, the Lord predicted: "There are some standing here who shall not taste death, until they have seen the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" (Mt.16:28). Everywhere and in every way the King will be present, and everywhere will be His Kingdom, since the advent of His Kingdom does not signify the passing over from one place to another, but rather the revelation of its power of the Divine Spirit. That is why it is said: "come in power." And this power is not manifest to simply ordinary people, but to those standing with the Lord, that is to say, those who have

affirmed their faith in Him like Peter, James and John, and especially those who are free of our natural abasement. Therefore, and precisely because of this, God manifests Himself upon the Mount, on the one hand coming down from His heights, and on the other, raising us up from the depths of abasement, since the Transcendent One takes on mortal nature. Certainly, such a manifest appearance by far transcends the utmost limits of the mind's grasp, as effectualized by the power of the Divine Spirit.

Thus, the Light of the Transfiguration of the Lord is not something that comes to be and then vanishes, nor is it subject to the sensory faculties, although it was contemplated by corporeal eyes for a short while upon an inconsequential mountaintop. But the initiates of the Mystery, (the disciples) of the Lord at this time passed beyond mere flesh into spirit through a transformation of their senses, effectualized within them by the Spirit, and in such a way that they beheld what, and to what extent, the Divine Spirit had wrought blessedness in them to behold the Ineffable Light. Those not grasping this point have conjectured that the chosen from among the Apostles beheld the Light of the Transfiguration of the Lord by a sensual and creaturely faculty, and through this they attempt to reduce to a creaturely level (i.e., as something "created") not only this Light, the Kingdom and the Glory of God, but also the Power of the Divine Spirit, through Whom it is meet for Divine Mysteries to be revealed. In all likelihood, such persons have not heeded the words of the Apostle Paul: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love Him. But to us God has revealed them through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God" (1 Cor.2:910).

So, with the onset of the Eighth Day, the Lord, taking Peter, James and John, went up on the Mount to pray. He always prayed alone, withdrawing from everyone, even from the Apostles themselves, as for example when with five loaves and two fish He fed the five thousand men, besides women and children (Mt.14:1923). Or, taking with Him those who excelled others, as at the approach of His Saving Passion, when He said to the other disciples: "Sit here while I go over there and pray" (Mt.26:36). Then He took with Him Peter, James and John. But in our instance right here and now, having taken only these same three, the Lord led them up onto a high mountain by themselves and was transfigured before them, that is to say, before their very eyes. "What does it mean to say: He was transfigured?" asks the Golden-Mouthed Theologian (Chrysostom). He answers this by saying: "It revealed something of His Divinity to them, as much and insofar as they were able to apprehend it, and it showed the indwelling of God within Him." The Evangelist Luke says: "And as He prayed, His countenance was altered" (Luke 9:29); and from the Evangelist Matthew we read: "And His face shone as the sun" (Mt.17:2).

But the Evangelist said this, not in the context that this Light be thought of as subsistent for the senses (let us put aside the blindness of mind of those who can conceive of nothing higher than what is known through the senses). Rather, it is to show that Christ God, for those living and contemplating by the Spirit, is the same as the sun is for those living in the flesh and contemplating by the senses. Therefore, some other Light for the knowing the Divinity is not necessary for those who are enriched by Divine gifts.

That same Inscrutable Light shone and was mysteriously manifest to the Apostles and the foremost of the Prophets at that moment, when (the Lord) was praying. This shows that what brought forth this blessed sight was prayer, and that the radiance occurred and was manifest by uniting the mind with God, and that it is granted to all who, with constant exercise in efforts of virtue and prayer, strive with their mind towards God. True beauty, essentially, can be contemplated only with a purified mind. To gaze upon its luminance assumes a sort of participation in it, as though some bright ray etches itself upon the face. Even the face of Moses was illumined by his association with God. Do you not know that Moses was transfigured when he went up the mountain, and there beheld the Glory of God? But he (Moses) did not effect this, but rather he underwent a transfiguration. However, our Lord Jesus Christ possessed that Light Himself. In this regard, actually, He did not need prayer for His flesh to radiate with the Divine Light; it was but to show from whence that Light descends upon the saints of God, and how to contemplate it. For it is written that even the saints "will shine forth like the sun" (Mt.13:43), which is to say, entirely permeated by Divine Light as they gaze upon Christ, divinely and inexpressibly shining forth His Radiance, issuing from His Divine Nature. On Mount Tabor it was manifest also in His Flesh, by reason of the Hypostatic Union (i.e., the union of the two perfect natures, divine and human, within the divine Person [Hypostasis] of Christ, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity). The Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon defined this Hypostatic union of Christ's two natures, divine and human, as "without mingling, without change, without division, without separation."

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. So also she who miraculously conceived and gave birth recognized that the One born of her is God Incarnate. So it was also for Simeon, who only received this Infant into his arms, and the aged Anna, coming out [from the Jerusalem Temple] for the Meeting, since the Divine Power illumined, as through a glass windowpane, giving light for those having pure eyes of heart.

And why did the Lord, before the beginning of the Transfiguration, choose the foremost of the Apostles and lead them up onto the Mount with Him? Certainly, it was to show them something great and mysterious. What is particularly great or mysterious in showing a sensory light, which not only the foremost, but all the other Apostles already abundantly possessed? Why would they need a transforming of their eyes by the power of the Holy Spirit for a contemplation of this Light, if it were merely sensory and created? How could the Glory and the Kingdom of the Father and the Holy Spirit project forth in some sort of sensory light? Indeed, in what sort of Glory and Kingdom would Christ the Lord come at the end of the ages, when there would not be necessary anything in the air, nor in expanse, nor anything similar, but when, in the words of the Apostle, "God will be all in all" (1 Cor.15: 28)? That is to say, will He alter everything for all? If so, then it follows that light is included. Hence it is clear that the Light of Tabor was a Divine Light. And the Evangelist John, inspired by Divine Revelation, says clearly that the future eternal and enduring city "has no need of the sun or moon to shine upon it. For the Glory of God lights it up, and the Lamb will be its lamp" (Rev 21:23). Is it not clear, that he points out here that this [Lamb] is Jesus, Who is divinely transfigured now upon Tabor, and the flesh of Whom shines, is the lamp manifesting the Glory of divinity for those ascending the mountain with Him? John the Theologian also says about the inhabitants of this city: "they will not need light from lamps, nor the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shed light upon them, and night shall be no more" (Rev 22:5). But how, we might ask, is there this other light, in which "there is no change, nor shadow of alteration" (Jas 1:17)? What light is there that is constant and unsetting, unless it be the Light of God? Moreover, could Moses and Elias (and particularly the former, who clearly was present only in spirit, and not in flesh [Elias having ascended bodily to Heaven on the fiery chariot]) be shining with any sort of sensory light, and be seen and known? Especially since it was written of them: "they appeared in glory, and spoke of his death, which he was about to fulfill at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:30-31). And how otherwise could the Apostles recognize those whom they had never seen before,

unless through the mysterious power of the Divine Light, opening their mental eyes?

But let us not tire our attention with the furthestmost interpretations of the words of the Gospel. We shall believe thus, as those same ones have taught us, who themselves were enlightened by the Lord Himself, insofar as they alone know this well: the Mysteries of God, in the words of a prophet, are known to God alone and His perpetual proximity. Let us, considering the Mystery of the Transfiguration of the Lord in accord with their teaching, strive to be illumined by this Light ourselves and encourage in ourselves love and striving towards the Unfading Glory and Beauty, purifying our spiritual eyes of worldly thoughts and refraining from perishable and quickly passing delights and beauty which darken the garb of the soul and lead to the fire of Gehenna and everlasting darkness. Let us be freed from these by the illumination and knowledge of the incorporeal and ever-existing Light of our Savior transfigured on Tabor, in His Glory, and of His Father from all eternity, and His Life-Creating Spirit, Whom are One Radiance, One Godhead, and Glory, and Kingdom, and Power now and ever and forever. Amen.

– St. Gregory Palamas

JULY TREASURER'S REPORT

Glory to Jesus Christ! For the month of July our income/expenses were:

Operating Income \$11,577.00 | Operating Expenses \$7,918.42

Income Over/Under \$3,658.58

As we reported last month, the second mortgage was paid off with County First Bank. July was the first month that we realized a reduction in our mortgage payments; we also had five Sunday collections in the month. On July 29 our first mortgage came up for renewal (every five years). Thanks be to God, we renewed our loan at an interest rate 0.4% lower than the previous five years. In order to pay off our mortgages faster, so that in about five or six years we could start planning our next expansion phase (social hall and class rooms), all the money donated to the Building Fund and money earned in Yard Sales and other specific fund raisers will be paid into the mortgage with County First Bank as additional principle payments. Donations for church furnishing and icons are held in the Designated Fund account.

Only about 78% of the parishioners have paid their assessments, if you have not paid your Diocesan Assessment please do so as soon as possible. If you can't remember, please contact Dana Dewey. Thank you for being good Stewards of God's House.

Kari



On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life –Part 81: Giving Without Love

“...one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another...” (Mark 12:28 RSV)

A reading of the Gospel according to St. Mark reveals the appearance of scribes on several occasions. Scribes in ancient Israel were learned men whose business was to study the Law, transcribe it, and write commentaries on it.

In Mark’s Gospel the scribes who show up do so as opponents of Jesus. For example, Mark tells us that the scribes ask questions of Jesus, and make comments that throw an negative light on what Jesus was doing (see Mark 2:16; 3:22; 7:5).

However, in one instance, Jesus, in discussion with a scribe, says, “*You are not far from the kingdom of God*” (Mark 12:34 RSV). This should make any reader of Mark’s Gospel take notice. What did that scribe, that opponent of Jesus, say that would evoke this response from Jesus? The scribe responded to Jesus’ assertion that the whole law revolved around love for God and neighbor: “...*you have truly said that (God) is one, ... to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices*” (Mark 12:32-33 RSV).

Why did Jesus say that this scribe was not far from the kingdom of God? The scribe understood that everything we do, including what we consider very important, is not as important as love for God and neighbor. What was considered among the people of God as very important were “*burnt offerings and sacrifices.*” In our words today, this means that loving God and neighbor is more important even than our sacrifice of the Divine Liturgy and prayer.

For Christian stewards, we often talk in our parishes about tithing or pledge cards or proportionate giving. These things, as well, can be considered our own “*burnt offerings and sacrifices.*” It is easy to get caught up with stewardship as a program that prescribes how and how much we contribute to the life of the Church.

There is an old stewardship saying: “People can give without loving; but no one can love without giving.” Let us not make stewardship just another church program. Speaking for true stewards everywhere, hear the Holy Prophet Isaiah: “*What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD;...when you come to appear before me...bring no more vain offerings; ... wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow*” (Isaiah 1:11, 16-17 RSV). People can give without loving; but no one can love without giving.

Also Commemorated Today: St. Theodosios the New



St. Theodosios the New (*lower right on the icon; the Martyr Dometius is on the upper left – Ed.*), the healer, was born in Athens in 862 to pious Christian parents. From an early age he showed fervent faith and was characterized by great love for his fellow men. When he decided to withdraw to the monastic life, he divided his property to those in need and went a short distance outside Athens. But many were those who went to see him and seek his counsel, which hindered his contemplation. For this reason and to live alone, he fled to Argos in 880. There he founded a church in the name of St. John the Forerunner after St. John appeared to him, where many went to seek his counsel. This angered certain priests, however, who denounced him to the Archbishop of Argos, St.

Peter. St. Theodosios, the patron of Theodosios the New, appeared in a dream of St. Peter, who was at that time in Constantinople to see the Ecumenical Patriarch. St. Theodosios asked him to end these conflicts. The Patriarch also asked St. Peter if he had a monk named Theodosios in his region, and after recalling his dream St. Peter was asked by the Patriarch to extend his blessing and reverence to him. St. Peter went to visit St. Theodosios the New to assess the accusations against him. While he stopped to rest, St. Theodosios, who foresaw that he was coming to visit him, went out ahead to greet St. Peter, offering him burning incense on charcoal which he held in his monastic hat. St. Peter, amazed that St. Theodosios was miraculously not burnt nor was his monastic hat burned, and impressed by his virtue, greeted him with love, and ordained him a deacon and a priest. Eventually a monastery was built around this church and many monks became his disciples. The fame of St. Theodosios spread throughout the region, and before his death he was granted the gift of foreknowing his death three days before. This allowed him final preparations and he gave his final counsels to his spiritual children. St. Theodosios died peacefully in old age around 922 and St. Peter officiated at his funeral amidst a multitude of clergy and faithful. His monastery, one of the oldest in Peloponnesos, today has become a famous shrine and his relics work many miracles to this day. Paralytics have been healed, the blind have received their sight, the barren have been granted children, and the sick have had their health restored. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Grace Bishop GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Alicia Barosio and family, Millie Borys, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Cary Cooper, Curtis Cooper, Tina Crull, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, Alex Holthus, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Deanna Jarrett, Tucker Karl and family, Robert Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Alex & Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Daria Virvan, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Rdr. Nectaros and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, for the newly departed handmaiden of God Hope Stephanadis, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)