



## **Holy Ghost Orthodox Church**

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### **DORMITION FAST—TRANSFIGURATION**

**ON THE MEND:** Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Metropolitan Constantine, Patriarch Pavle, Archimandrite Raphael, Father Peter Natishan, Father Gerald Olszewski, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Dragan Filipović, Father Elias Katras, Father Stevo Rocknage, Father Paul Stoll, Father Igor Soroka, Father Deacon Joseph Bulkanowa, Ollie Pendylshok, Walt & Evelyn Burlack, Joshua Agosto and his family, Harley Katarina Rahuba, Mike and Hilda Holupka, Eva Malesnick, Helen Likar, Stella Peanoske, Joe Nezolyk, Nick Behun, Terry Reinhart, Bernie O'Masta, Grace Holupka, Virginia Bryan, Joseph Sliwinsky, Maria Balo, Linda Mechtly, Mary Mochnick, Mary Pekich, Mildred Manolovich, Evelyn Misko, Amy, Nigel Daniel, & Daniel Pocura, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Sandy Gamble, Glen Lucas Burlack, Bernie Vangrin, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea, & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Stella Cherepko, Sam Wadrose, Khoruia Joanne Abdalah, Cameron [a boy in Matt's class], Faith—a 5-year-old girl with rheumatoid arthritis, Isabella Olivia Lindgren—a 2-year-old with a brain tumor, Dillon, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Jeff, Nick Malec [Maxine's brother], Bill, Erin, Jimmy Fennel [7<sup>th</sup> Grader], Jim Markovich, Jeff Walewski [thyroid cancer], Carol [Lotinski] Rose, Michael Miller, Dave May, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Claudia [Horvath] Gradicheck, Alverta, Margaret Mueller, Gary Zurasky, Michael Horvath, Tony Notaro, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Pete Special, Rita Very & family, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Mildred Walters, Michael Miller, Betsy Mallison, Mike Pelchar [Liz's brother], Jim Logue—throat cancer, Michael, Amy, Liz Stumpf, Aubrie—3-month-old with Cystic Fibrosis, Kathy Ciranni, Ester Tylavsky, Ed Jamison, Theodore Nixon [neonatal ICU], Mary Novosel, Charles Johnson, and Daria Masur. **ARNOLD:** Stefania Lucci, Kay Tomson, Ann Ostaffy, Steve Sakal, Elisabeth Arasin, Homer Paul Kline, and Steve Ostaffy. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

**THANK YOU to everyone who volunteered to help with coffee hour. It is greatly appreciated by all who share fellowship after our services!**

Please remember ALL American servicemen and women in the Middle East in your prayers. May God watch over them and all American servicemen and women—and bring them all home safely!

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR “BOXTOPS FOR EDUCATION” AND CAMPBELL’S SOUP LABELS TO CHURCH. There is a shoebox in the basement for Alex’s Fifth Grade and Matt’s Third Grade collections. THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HELP! *Alex and Matt*

**REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!**

Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. If you have a question, please call Father Bob.

**AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 279-5640.**

**Schedule of Services**

**Sunday, August 19** **Divine Liturgy** **10:30 AM**  
**12<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—THE HOLY TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST—THE SECOND “FEAST OF THE SAVIOR” IN AUGUST**  
**BLESSING OF FRUIT AFTER PARASTAS**  
*Tone 3*  
II Peter 1:10-19  
Matthew 17:1-9  
***Parastas in Blessed Memory of Steve Kuzman & Victor Burlack—Debbie & John***

**Sunday, August 26** **Divine Liturgy** **10:30 AM**  
**13<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—TRANSLATION OF RELICS OF VENERABLE MAXIMOS THE CONFESSOR, MARTYR HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME AND CONCORDIA, IRENAEUS, & ABUNDIUS, SAINT TIKHON-BISHOP OF VORONEZH & WONDERWORKER OF ZADONSK, UNCOVERING RELICS OF SAINT MAXIMOS OF MOSCOW-FOOL-FOR CHRIST, EMPRESS IRENE-TONSURED XENIA, SAINT EUDOCIA, VENERABLE SERID\**  
*Tone 4*  
I Corinthians 16:13-24  
Matthew 21:33-42  
***Litany in Blessed Memory of Agnes Rossi—Katherine Debick***  
***Parastas in Blessed Memory of Rae Ruth Batch—Harry Batch & family***

**Tuesday, August 28** **DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS**

**Sunday, September 2** **READER’S SERVICE** **10:30 AM**  
**14<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—PROPHET SAMUEL, HIEROMARTYR PHILIP-BISHOP OF HERACLEA & MARTYRS SEVERUS, MEMNON, & 37 SOLDIERS AT THRACE, MARTYR LUCIUS THE SENATOR OF CYPRUS, MARTYRS HELIODORUS & DOSA IN PERSIA**  
***Father Bob & Pani Gina in New Jersey for wedding***  
*Tone 5*  
II Corinthians 1:21-2:4  
Matthew 22:1-14

## **Feast and Saints of the Orthodox Church**

**August 6/19**

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### **The Holy Transfiguration of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ (the Second "Feast of the Savior" in August)**

Discourse on the Holy Transfiguration of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ of Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica

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.2:9-10).

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.14:19-23). 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 furthest 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 unto ages of ages. Amen.

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From St. Maximos the Confessor (The Philokalia Vol. 2; Faber and Faber pg. 170):

"If God suffers in the flesh when He is made man, should we not rejoice when we suffer, for we have God to share our sufferings? This shared suffering confers the kingdom on us. For he spoke truly who said, 'If we suffer with Him, then we shall also be glorified with Him' (Rom. 8:17)."

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"This is the beginning of salvation not only for us, who are besieged by bad habits and passions, but also for the saints themselves, even though the measure and depth of the repentance is more profound than our. St. Cassian says that the sins and transgressions of the commandments committed by the saints do not diminish their sanctity. Does not the righteous man sin seven times a day [Prov. 24:16]? But he rises each time and does not spend a minute without tears and repentance. Yes, we sin every day, at times consciously or out of forgetfulness, without intending to or involuntarily, or because of our weakness we sin every day willingly and unwillingly. Is this not what the apostle Paul refers to when he says, 'I do what I do not want and what I do not want is what I do' [Rom. 1:15]?"

Basil of Poiana Marului.

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From St. Symeon the New Theologian (The Discourses; Paulist Press pgs. 202-203):

"Let us acquire a contrite heart, a soul humbled in mind, and a heart that by means of tears and repentance is pure from every stain and defilement of sin. So shall we too be found worthy in due time quickly to rise to such heights that even hear and now we may see and enjoy the ineffable blessings of the divine light, if not perfectly, at least in part, and to the extent to which we are able. So shall we both unite ourselves to God, and God will be united to us. To those who come near us we shall become 'light' and 'salt' (cf. Mt. 5:13-14) to their great benefit in Christ Jesus our Lord."

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## **The Transfiguration of the Lord**

In order to strengthen the faith of His disciples when they would see His suffering, Jesus Christ took three disciples, Peter, James and John, and led them up on a high mountain to pray. According to ancient Church Tradition, it was the beautiful Mount Tabor covered with luxurious growth from the foot to the summit.



As the Saviour was praying, the disciples slept from fatigue. When they woke up, they saw Jesus Christ transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun and His garments became white as snow and glistened as light. There, two prophets, Moses and Elijah, in heavenly glory appeared with Him, and they were talking with Jesus about the suffering and death which He would have to endure in Jerusalem.

Extraordinary joy filled the hearts of the disciples during this time. Peter exclaimed, "Lord, it is well that we are here. If you wish, I will make three booths here: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah," not understanding what He was saying. Suddenly, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and they heard the voice of God the Father saying, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!"

When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces. Jesus Christ came to them, touched them, and said, "Rise, and have no fear." When the disciples lifted up their eyes, they saw Jesus Christ as He usually appeared.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus Christ commanded them to tell no one about the vision until He was raised from the dead.

The Holy Orthodox Church celebrates the glorious Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ, on August 6th (August 19 NS). This day is one of the major feast days. By His Transfiguration, the Saviour has showed us how people become in the future life, in the Kingdom of Heaven, if they follow God's Law and how the entire earthly world would be transfigured. The Lord also reminds us that we can be transfigured even now if we lead a truly Christian life.

On the Feast of Transfiguration, after the Liturgy, fruit is brought to the church to be blessed for eating: grapes and, in general, fruit from orchards such as apples, pears, and plums in order to ask the Lord's blessing on the fruits of the harvest.

**Note: See the Gospels of Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36.**

### **Troparion of the Feast.**

Thou wast transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God, showing to Thy disciples Thy glory as each one could endure; shine forth Thou on us, who are sinners all, Thy light ever-unending through the prayers of the Theotokos. O Light-giver, glory to Thee.

### **Kontakion of the Feast.**

On the mount Thou wast transfigured, and Thy disciples, as much as they could bear,

beheld Thy glory, O Christ our God; so that, when they would see Thee crucified, they would know Thy passion to be willing and would preach to the world that Thou, in truth, art the Effulgence of the Father.

### **The Most Important Teaching: Love for God and Neighbor.**

More than once people did ask Jesus Christ which was His most important teaching in order to inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Some asked because they wanted to know and others did to find a reason to accuse Him.

Thus one day, a Jewish lawyer (a man who studied the Law of God) wishing to put Jesus Christ to the test asked Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

Jesus Christ said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments rest all the law and the prophets."

This means everything that the Law of God teaches about which the prophets spoke is contained entirely in these two major laws. That is, all the commandments of the law and its teachings speak to us about love. If we had within ourselves such love, then all the remaining laws could be abolished, for they are all subdivisions of the law about love. Thus, for example, if we love our neighbor, then we would not be able to offend him or cheat him, much less kill him, or envy him; and, in general, we would not wish him any kind of evil. On the contrary, we would pity him, care for him, and be ready to sacrifice everything for him. Therefore, Jesus Christ said, "There are no other commandments greater than these" (Mark 12:31).

The lawyer said to Him, "You are right, Teacher! You have truly said that to love God with all one's being and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

When Jesus Christ saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

**Note: See the Gospels of Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28.**

# **BULLETIN INSERT FOR 19 AUGUST 2007**

**12<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**THE HOLY TRANSFIGURATION**

**OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST**

**THE SECOND "FEAST OF THE SAVIOR" IN AUGUST**

**BLESSING OF FRUIT AFTER PARASTAS**

## ***ANTIPHONS AND RESPONSES—PAGE 236 IN BLACK DIVINE LITURGY BOOK***

Cleveland Browns CAT?

A guy walks into a bar wearing a Browns jersey and carrying a cat that also has a Browns jersey on with a little Browns helmet on his head, too.

The guy says to the bartender, "Can me and my cat watch the Browns game here? My TV is broke and my cat and I always watch the game together."

The bartender replies, "Normally, cats wouldn't be allowed in the bar, but it's not very busy in here right now, so you and the cat can have a seat at the end of the bar. But, if there's any trouble with you or the cat, I'll have to ask you to leave."

The guy agrees, and he and his cat start watching the game.

Pretty soon the Browns kick a field goal and the excited cat jumps up on the bar and walks down the bar and gives everyone a high five.

The bartender says, "Hey, that's pretty cool! What does he do for a touchdown?"

The guys answers, "I don't know, I've only had him for 3 years."

August 12, 2007—Sunday after the Transfiguration—***26 August 2007 for us!***

**Father Pat's Pastoral Ponderings**—*by Father Pat Reardon*

Although the Apostle Paul did not write of the Lord's Transfiguration on the mountain, one is forcefully reminded of that event by a passage in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. He wrote, "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts unto the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (4:6).

Paul's reference to the glory of God shining on the face of Christ, which perfectly expresses what the evangelists describe in the Transfiguration, is even more striking by reason of its immediate context. Just a few verses earlier Paul had written, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transfigured (*metamorphoumetha*) into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord" (3:18, my translation). That is to say, Paul's reference to the glory of God on the face of Christ is set in the context of our own transfiguration in Christ. The verb he uses here, *metamorphomai*, appears in only three other places in the New Testament, two of them descriptive of the Lord's Transfiguration on the mount (Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:2).

As in Luke's account of the Transfiguration, Paul's development lays special stress on the Christian understanding of the Old Testament. Indeed, he introduced this subject of transfiguration by treating of biblical interpretation. The Jew, Paul wrote, understands only the "letter" (*gramma*) of the Old Testament, whereas the Christian understanding penetrates more deeply to "the Spirit" (*to Pnevma*). The first kind of biblical understanding leads to death, he affirmed, the second to life (2 Corinthians 3:6-7). That is to say, Paul's preoccupation here is the orthodox understanding of the Bible.

His initial reflections on this subject next prompt the Apostle to remember the special glory that had shone from the face of Moses on the mountain. Step by step Paul then goes from the glory on the face of Moses to the glory on the face of Christ.

He begins by observing that "the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which was passing away" (3:7). Even this fleeting glory on the face of Moses had to be covered by a veil. Moses, the Apostle explains, "put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away" (3:12).

That veil over Moses' face becomes, for Paul, a symbol of the Jews' failure to grasp the significance of their own Scriptures. This terrible (but tear-able) veil is the exegetical impediment that divides Jew from Christian: "But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because it is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart" (3:14-15).

What is the advantage, then, of the Christian in this respect? It is Christ's removal of the hermeneutic veil, to reveal the Spirit's understanding of the Old Testament. This veil is lifted when a person is converted to Christ through the

Gospel. He now understands the Scriptures correctly: "Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (3:17).

This Spirit-given understanding of the Holy Scriptures in Christ is the context in which Paul proceeds to write of Christian transfiguration: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transfigured (*metamorphoumetha*) into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

From the face of Christ, this ever increasing glory shines into the heart and transfigures the Christian's mind. It delivers believers from those darkening forces that blind those "who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (4:4).

Similar in this respect to Luke's account of the Transfiguration, Paul considers the glory on the face of Christ as throwing light on the Bible, penetrating beneath the grammar. This is orthodoxology, the study of the correct glory, removing the veil of exegetical blindness. This Spirit-given glory sheds its light on the writings of Moses and the other biblical writers. It is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

#### Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost--Matthew 18:23-35

How many individuals consider what is owed to God? How many individuals take time to thank God for forgiveness? How many thank God for the gift of life? How many are thankful for Christ's sacrifice upon the Cross?

How many of the current generation are thankful to the saints and martyrs through the centuries? The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was spread at a great cost of lives.

The churches in earlier centuries and in the present were built at great expense. Expense and cost are calculated not only in financial costs but in human costs as well.

The present Gospel speaks of the tolerance and forgiveness of the master with his servant. The forgiven servant was not as forgiving as his master. How many of us show the patience and forgiveness of God in our relationships at home, at work and in the community?

God is very forgiving of men and women coming to Holy Confession and Communion. Is this forgiveness made part of the lives of the communicants and reflected in home life, in community life and at work?

Forgiving others requires a willingness to begin the relationship anew. Being forgiving of others entails giving the other person the benefit of the doubt and an opportunity for him or her to prove a new start has taken place.

The Holy Apostle Paul told the Colossians: "Put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him."(Col.3:10)

The present Gospel provides knowledge of how God works. The present Gospel reflects the far reaching goodness of God. Christians are expected to act in ways pleasing to God. Christians are expected to learn from God and put the learning into practice.

When we get the opportunity to begin anew after having received forgiveness, we have the responsibility to use the opportunity wisely. We do not want to fall victim as the proverb states: "As a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool repeats his folly."(Prov.26:11)

The Lord Jesus Christ gives us a new opportunity at each Holy Confession and Communion. We do well to build on this new opportunity and draw closer to the life pleasing to God. We do well to do our best to live in ways pleasing to God.

Let us take the steps to strengthen ourselves against the temptations and diversions that lead us from God. Let us nourish our hearts and minds with the food of the soul. Let us battle against inclinations leading to our downfall.

The forgiven servant in the present Gospel could have moved forward with a life that enabled him to pay what he owed and to be free from debt to his master. We can never repay God for all the blessings received. We can never be thankful enough for Christ's suffering on the Cross. We can never thank the saints and martyrs who spread the Gospel, confessed belief in Christ and built churches through the centuries.

Too many unknown individuals have contributed to the Church and to whom we have reason to be grateful. Let us be thankful. Let us work and live with great appreciation to all given by and to the glory of God.

Every moment of life, every breath of life is a gift from God. We cannot create our own breath. We cannot create our own vision. We cannot create our own hearts. Such creations are of God. We need to have the sense to realize all God has given us and all that God has forgiven us.

Beginning anew includes having a desire to walk the path to the Kingdom of God. Beginning anew includes being disciplined, saying no to incurring debts that will rob us of eternal life.

Each person chooses the path for the remaining days of his or her life. A forgiving God enables the person to divert from paths leading to dead ends and destruction. A forgiving God enables believers to seek the authentic Kingdom of God.

We never know when each opportunity will be the last opportunity. Opportunities for forgiveness are not endless. Sooner or later life will end. Sooner or later Christ will come again.

Life is finite in the present form. We need to treat each day and each opportunity with care. We need to be thankful to God and rejoice in God's forgiveness.

*Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 30/August 12, 2007. Venerable Mother Angelina of Serbia. Father Rodney Torbic*

## **Feast and Saints of the Orthodox Church**

**August 6/19**

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### **The Holy Transfiguration of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ (the Second "Feast of the Savior" in August)**

Discourse on the Holy Transfiguration of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ of Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica

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.2:9-10).

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.14:19-23). 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 furthest 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 unto ages of ages. Amen.

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From St. Maximos the Confessor (The Philokalia Vol. 2; Faber and Faber pg. 170):

"If God suffers in the flesh when He is made man, should we not rejoice when we suffer, for we have God to share our sufferings? This shared suffering confers the kingdom on us. For he spoke truly who said, 'If we suffer with Him, then we shall also be glorified with Him' (Rom. 8:17)."

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"This is the beginning of salvation not only for us, who are besieged by bad habits and passions, but also for the saints themselves, even though the measure and depth of the repentance is more profound than our. St. Cassian says that the sins and transgressions of the commandments committed by the saints do not diminish their sanctity. Does not the righteous man sin seven times a day [Prov. 24:16]? But he rises each time and does not spend a minute without tears and repentance. Yes, we sin every day, at times consciously or out of forgetfulness, without intending to or involuntarily, or because of our weakness we sin every day willingly and unwillingly. Is this not what the apostle Paul refers to when he says, 'I do what I do not want and what I do not want is what I do' [Rom. 1:15]?"

Basil of Poiana Marului.

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From St. Symeon the New Theologian (The Discourses; Paulist Press pgs. 202-203):

"Let us acquire a contrite heart, a soul humbled in mind, and a heart that by means of tears and repentance is pure from every stain and defilement of sin. So shall we too be found worthy in due time quickly to rise to such heights that even hear and now we may see and enjoy the ineffable blessings of the divine light, if not perfectly, at least in part, and to the extent to which we are able. So shall we both unite ourselves to God, and God will be united to us. To those who come near us we shall become 'light' and 'salt' (cf. Mt. 5:13-14) to their great benefit in Christ Jesus our Lord."

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## **The Transfiguration of the Lord**

In order to strengthen the faith of His disciples when they would see His suffering, Jesus Christ took three disciples, Peter, James and John, and led them up on a high mountain to pray. According to ancient Church Tradition, it was the beautiful Mount Tabor covered with luxurious growth from the foot to the summit.

As the Saviour was praying, the disciples slept from fatigue. When they woke up, they saw Jesus Christ transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun and His garments became white as snow and glistened as light. There, two prophets, Moses and Elijah, in heavenly glory appeared with Him, and they were talking with Jesus about the suffering and death which He would have to endure in Jerusalem.

Extraordinary joy filled the hearts of the disciples during this time. Peter exclaimed, "Lord, it is well that we are here. If you wish, I will make three booths here: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah," not understanding what He was saying. Suddenly, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and they heard the voice of God the Father saying, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!"

When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces. Jesus Christ came to them, touched them, and said, "Rise, and have no fear." When the disciples lifted up their eyes, they saw Jesus Christ as He usually appeared.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus Christ commanded them to tell no one about the vision until He was raised from the dead.

The Holy Orthodox Church celebrates the glorious Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ, on August 6th (August 19 NS). This day is one of the major feast days. By His Transfiguration, the Saviour has showed us how people become in the future life, in the Kingdom of Heaven, if they follow God's Law and how the entire earthly world would be transfigured. The Lord also reminds us that we can be transfigured even now if we lead a truly Christian life.

On the Feast of Transfiguration, after the Liturgy, fruit is brought to the church to be blessed for eating: grapes and, in general, fruit from orchards such as apples, pears, and plums in order to ask the Lord's blessing on the fruits of the harvest.

**Note: See the Gospels of Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36.**

### **Troparion of the Feast.**

Thou wast transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God, showing to Thy disciples Thy glory as each one could endure; shine forth Thou on us, who are sinners all, Thy light ever-unending through the prayers of the Theotokos. O Light-giver, glory to Thee.

### **Kontakion of the Feast.**

On the mount Thou wast transfigured, and Thy disciples, as much as they could bear,

beheld Thy glory, O Christ our God; so that, when they would see Thee crucified, they would know Thy passion to be willing and would preach to the world that Thou, in truth, art the Effulgence of the Father.

### **The Most Important Teaching: Love for God and Neighbor.**

More than once people did ask Jesus Christ which was His most important teaching in order to inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Some asked because they wanted to know and others did to find a reason to accuse Him.

Thus one day, a Jewish lawyer (a man who studied the Law of God) wishing to put Jesus Christ to the test asked Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

Jesus Christ said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments rest all the law and the prophets."

This means everything that the Law of God teaches about which the prophets spoke is contained entirely in these two major laws. That is, all the commandments of the law and its teachings speak to us about love. If we had within ourselves such love, then all the remaining laws could be abolished, for they are all subdivisions of the law about love. Thus, for example, if we love our neighbor, then we would not be able to offend him or cheat him, much less kill him, or envy him; and, in general, we would not wish him any kind of evil. On the contrary, we would pity him, care for him, and be ready to sacrifice everything for him. Therefore, Jesus Christ said, "There are no other commandments greater than these" (Mark 12:31).

The lawyer said to Him, "You are right, Teacher! You have truly said that to love God with all one's being and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

When Jesus Christ saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

**Note: See the Gospels of Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28.**