

# Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church

August 6, 2023



## 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

*Transfiguration of Christ*

### Divine Liturgy Readings

*(Readings on Back)*

- ♦ 2 Peter 1:10-19
- ♦ Matthew 17:1-9

## Announcements:

### Feast of the Dormition

August 15 is the feast of the Dormition (Falling Asleep) of our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary. We will mark the feast with a Vespers Liturgy on Monday, August 14th at 6pm. It is the pious tradition to bring flowers or other fragrant plants to be blessed at the end of liturgy. We will also have a festal pot-luck meal in the hall following. If you would like to bring something to share please do!

### Mark Your Calendars

Archbishop Daniel will be at our parish on Saturday, September 9 to celebrate Divine Liturgy and present Fr Basil Stoyka the mitre.

### Festival Preparation Dates

Thurs, August 17: Noon - Hall setup / Stuffed Cabbage / Cabbage & Noodles / Beef Stroganoff

Friday, August 18: Tent / Bar Setup. Festival Begins (time TBA)

Sat, August 19: 2nd Day of Festival

*Our festival is a lot of work, but also our largest fundraiser. Please plan on helping out as much as you can! Teamwork makes the dream work!*

### This Week

Saturday, August 12  
6:00pm - Great Vespers

Sunday, August 13  
9:00am - 3rd & 6th Hours  
9:30am - Divine Liturgy

Prayer in Church is important.  
The best feelings and thoughts  
come while we are in Church,  
However the enemy  
also attacks us more  
violently while we are in Church,  
but with the sign of the Cross and  
the Jesus Prayer,  
you drive him away.



~ St. Barsanuphius of Optina

## *Meditation on Today's Readings*

Seeing is believing. It is one thing to hear an interesting story or to entertain a bright idea. It is far different, however, to encounter an event or to participate in a situation such that we know its truth and are changed as a result. That is precisely what the apostles Peter, James, and John experienced on Mount Tabor when they were enabled to behold the divine glory of Jesus Christ, Who shone brightly with light as the voice of the Father identified Him as His beloved Son.

St. Peter writes in today's epistle reading that he did not proclaim "cleverly devised myths" about Christ, for those who beheld the Transfiguration "were eyewitnesses of His majesty." The gospels make clear that the disciples were not looking for a Messiah Who was truly divine, but for a righteous national leader like King David. Peter famously rejected the Lord's prediction of His crucifixion and denied Him three times. He was restored as the chief apostle and went to his death as a martyr, not because he had made up stories about a crucified and risen Lord, but because the Savior had revealed Himself to Peter as truly the Son of God. And he surely did not understand the full meaning of the Transfiguration when it occurred, as it was not until after the resurrection that Christ "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." (Lk 24:27) Indeed, the Lord said to Peter, James, and John, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is risen from the dead." It was only from the perspective of the resurrection, which no one anticipated, that the disciples could understand what it meant for Christ to be the Son of God.

The truth revealed at the Transfiguration may not be conveyed simply in words or ideas. It had to be seen, heard, and experienced in a way that made Peter, James, and John participants as whole persons in the divine glory. The Lord graciously opened the eyes of their souls, filling them with the divine energies such that they could catch a glimpse of His holy majesty. He enabled them to hear the voice of the Father, and like Moses before the Burning Bush, they fell on their faces "and were filled with awe." As is shown by the disappearance of Moses and Elijah, He enabled them to see His superiority to the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament. They did not simply have thoughts or feelings about Christ; no, they truly experienced Him from the depths of their souls as the Son of God.

The change that occurred that day was not in the Lord Himself, Who is eternally radiant with the divine glory in a way beyond our comprehension. The change was in the disciples, for Christ opened the eyes of their souls to behold His infinite holiness, to the extent that they were able as human beings. If we observe this feast simply by celebrating the doctrinal teaching of Christ's divinity or the great mystical experience of the apostles, we will have excluded ourselves from the full meaning of this event. For as in all feasts of the Church, the point is not simply to look back at what happened long ago. It is, instead, to enter into the eternal truth that is revealed. And on this great day of the Transfiguration, the only appropriate way to celebrate is to cooperate with the gracious divine energies of our Lord so that we also will behold His divine glory. That means that we too must become transfigured through personal union with the Son of God such that His eternal majesty permeates our existence, making us shine brightly like an iron left in the fire.

As with Peter, who rejected the Lord's prediction of His death and then denied Him three times, we might well prefer another kind of religion with expectations not quite so high. Shining with the uncreated light may be more than we want to pursue. It may be more appealing to follow an imaginary King David in waging war against those we consider our enemies and to set up a social order that rewards those we think are righteous like ourselves. Maybe we would prefer someone pretending to be Moses or Elijah who would provide instructions that we think good people like us can easily follow on how to live differently from those we like to condemn. Such sentiments are terrible misinterpretations, of course. These Old Testament saints never pointed to some easy kind of self-serving religion, but were misinterpreted in first-century Palestine by those who worshiped an earthly kingdom or their own self-righteousness. If we go down that path, we will end up repudiating Christ as surely as did those idolaters.

The only fitting way to celebrate the Transfiguration is by embracing as fully as possible the countless opportunities that we have to grow in holiness as we open the eyes of our souls to participate in the glory of God by grace. For though we do not yet have the eyes to see it, that is how our gracious Lord will make us shine with holy light for our salvation and that of the entire world. Let us join St. Peter, then, in living as "eyewitnesses of His majesty." For seeing is believing.



## Icon of Transfiguration

In the icon of the Feast of the Transfiguration, Christ is the central figure, appearing in a dominant position within a circular mandorla. He is clearly at the visual and theological center of the icon. His right hand is raised in blessing, and his left hand contains a scroll. The mandorla with its brilliant colors of white, gold, and blue represent the divine glory and light. The halo around the head of Christ is inscribed with the Greek words O ON, meaning "The One Who is".

Elijah and Moses stand at the top of separate mountain peaks to the left and right of Christ (Elijah stands on the left side in the icon and Moses, holding the Ten Commandments, stands on the right side). They are bowing toward Christ with their right hands raised in a gesture of intercession towards Him. Saint John Chrysostom explains the presence of these two fathers of the faith from the Old Testament in three ways. He states that they represent the Law and the Prophets (Moses received the Law from God, and Elijah was a great prophet); they both experienced visions of God (Moses on Mount Sinai and Elijah on Mount Carmel); and they represent the living and the dead (Elijah, the living, because he was taken up into heaven by a chariot of fire, and Moses, the dead, because he did experience death).

Below Christ are the three Apostles, who by their posture in the icon show their response to the transfiguration of Christ. James (right) has fallen over backward with his hands over his eyes. John in the center has fallen prostrate. Peter (left) is kneeling and raises his right hand toward Christ in a gesture expressing his desire to build the three booths. The garments of the Apostles are in a state of disarray to indicate the dramatic impact the vision has had on them.

The icon of the feast directs our attention toward the event of the Transfiguration and specifically to the glory of God as revealed in Christ. This event came at a critical point in the ministry of our Lord, just as He was setting out on His journey to Jerusalem. He would soon experience the humiliation, suffering, and death of the Cross. However, the glorious light of the Resurrection was revealed to strengthen His disciples for the trials that they would soon experience.

### Prayers Appreciated for:

#### Living:

Mat. Priscilla, Priest Ian  
Dn. Doug, Mat. Kathy  
Dawn, Katherine,  
Sam, Paula,  
Marianne,  
Suleiman, Steve  
Christopher

#### Departed:

Marianne

#### Tall Candles

*Tall candles are currently out of stock, but should be shipping to us soon. See Fr Joseph to sponsor.*

### WEEKLY READINGS

#### **Monday, Aug. 7**

*Ven. Pimen the Faster*  
1 Cor. 15:12-19  
Matthew 21:18-22

#### **Tuesday, Aug. 8**

*St. Emilian the Confessor*  
1 Cor. 15:29-38  
Matthew 21:23-27

#### **Wed, Aug. 9**

*St. Herman of Alaska*  
1 Cor. 16:4-12  
Matthew 21:28-32

#### **Thurs, Aug. 10**

*Archdeacon Lawrence of Rome*  
2 Cor. 1:1-7  
Matthew 21:43-46

#### **Friday, Aug. 11**

*Archdeacon Euplus of Catania*  
2 Cor. 1:12-20  
Matt. 22:23-33

#### **Saturday, Aug. 12**

*Hieromartyr Alexander,  
Bishop of Comana*  
Romans 14:6-9



## *Today's Scripture Readings*

### **Epistle: 2 Peter 1:10-19**

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease. For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

### **Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9**

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead."

*Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!*

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