

# The Gospel's Voice



## Orthodox Parish of the Holy Transfiguration

Number 1, August-September 2015

### A Word from Father Athanasios

Here is the first issue of « *The Gospel's Voice* », little bulletin for our parish, which will help us to think a little further, to share news and projects. I intend to publish it in English and French, every two months or more if needed. Please send me your comments and suggestions.

Wish you a good reading and hope to see you soon.

### Feasts in August and September 2015

*(the feast on week days will be commemorated on the next Sunday).*

**Fasting of the Mother of God:** from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> of August.

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> of August:** Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> of August at 5 p.m.:** the Dormition of the Mother of God.

**Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> of August:** the Head off of Saint John the Baptist and Deposition of the precious belt of the Theotokos.

**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> of September:** Nativity of the Holy Virgin Mary.

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> of September:** exaltation of the Cross.

Liturgy as usual on the other Sundays.

# THE TRANSFIGURATION

“And He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light” (Mat 17:2).

The Transfiguration is a *theophany*—a manifestation of God, especially of the divinity of Christ, through a display of His uncreated, divine energy. Therefore, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Transfiguration of the Lord as a major feast day.

Several elements of the Transfiguration show that Christ is Messiah and God.



1. Because God is light (1 Jn 1:5), the bright cloud, the shining of Jesus’ face like the sun, and the whiteness of His garment (Mt 17:2, 5) all demonstrate that Jesus is God. (In some icons this light is shown as *beyond* white, a blue-white, ineffable color, indicating its spiritual origin.)

2. The Father bears witness from heaven concerning His Son. He does not say, “This has become My beloved Son,” but “This is My beloved Son” (17:5), indicating that this divine glory is Christ’s by nature. From eternity past, infinitely before Jesus’ Baptism and Transfiguration, He is God’s Son, fully sharing in the essence of the Father: Jesus Christ is God of God.

3. The Transfiguration not only proclaims Christ’s divine sonship, but foreshadows His future glory when He as the Messiah will usher in the long-awaited Kingdom. The bright cloud recalls temple worship and the cloud that went before the Israelites in the wilderness, the visible sign of God being extraordinarily present. Peter sees this as a sign

that the Kingdom has come. Knowing that the Feast of Tabernacles is the feast of the coming Kingdom, he asks to build booths (17:4), as was done at that feast, to serve as symbols of God's dwelling among the just in the Kingdom.

4. Moses represents the law and all those who have died. Elijah represents the prophets and—since he did not experience death—all those who are alive in Christ. Their presence shows that the law and the prophets, the living and the dead, all bear witness to Jesus as the Messiah, the fulfilment of the whole Old Testament.

The presence of Moses and Elijah also manifests the communion of the saints (Heb 12:1). Both men are immediately recognizable and talk with the Lord. The disciples are now able to understand Jesus' words that "Elijah has come already" (17:12) referring to John the Baptist.

Their eyes have been opened to the fact that Malachi's prophecy (4:5, 6) refers to one coming "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Lk 1:17), rather than to Elijah himself.

5. Finally, the Holy Trinity is manifest here, for Christ is transfigured (Mt 17:2), the Father speaks from heaven testifying to Jesus' divine son-ship (17:5), and the Spirit is present in the form of a dazzling light surrounding Christ's person, overshadowing the whole mountain (17:5).

From the *Orthodox Study Bible*, page 1301

### **The Orthodox Church of the Holly Transfiguration**

Grande-Rivière N-O  
Mauritius  
(*behind Garage Bala*)

**Divine Liturgy  
every Sunday  
at 9h30**

Father Athanasios: 57 33 32 53  
E-mail: [p.athanasios@myt.mu](mailto:p.athanasios@myt.mu)

# The feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God

The third of the greatest summer feasts, is the commemoration of the death of the Blessed Virgin Mary, called in the liturgical expression “Dormition of Our Lady.” From the liturgical point of view, it is the most important feast of the Holy Virgin, preceded by a fasting of two weeks, “The Fasting of the Mother of God”, beginning on the 1<sup>st</sup> until the 14<sup>th</sup> of August, inclusive. The feast itself is celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August.

The feast has two meanings. It is found to be explained exactly in this sentence sung at Vespers. “*The source of life is placed into the sepulcher, and her tomb became the ladder of Heaven.*” The first part, “*The source of life is placed into the sepulcher*”, shows that we commemorate the death of the Very Sacred Virgin. If we piously celebrate every year, the anniversaries of the death of the Precursor, of the Apostles and the Martyrs we mostly celebrate the death of the Mother of God, who is also our Mother, and who exceeds in holiness and in glory all the elected. But the feast of the 15<sup>th</sup> of August is more than the commemoration of the death of Mary.

The second part of the sentence states: “... *her tomb became the ladder of Heaven.*” And the liturgical texts we sing imply other things: “*Open wide your gates and... receive the mother of Infinite Light! For on that day, Heaven opens its breast to receive Her. The angels sing your holy Dormition.*” which we celebrate with faith. So that every son of the earth thrills in Spirit... and celebrates in joy, the Venerable assumption of the mother of God. We see that it is not solely the reception of the soul of Mary in Heaven.

Assumption is the feast, not only of Mary, but of all human nature. For in Mary it is human gender which is carried off and received in Heaven.

This perfect blooming of the grace in Mary suggests to us that she could be the line of development of a soul that could apply to make fruitful in Herself the great gifts received during the liturgical year.

From *L'An de grâce du Seigneur*,  
by « Un moine de l'Église d'Orient »,  
Éditions AN-NOUR (Liban) ;  
Éditions du Cerf, 1988.