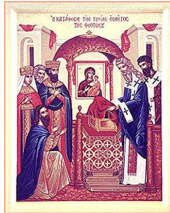


August 31: The End of the Church Year

THE PLACING OF THE PRECIOUS SASH of Our Most Holy Lady the Mother of God in a church of Constantinople's Calcoprateia district (942 A.D.) took place during the reign of the emperor Theodosius the Younger. Before this, the holy relic, entrusted to the Apostle Thomas by the Mother of God Herself, was kept by pious Christians at Jerusalem after Her Dormition. During the reign of Emperor Leo the Wise (886-911), his wife Zoe was afflicted with an unclean spirit, and he prayed that God would heal her.

The empress had a vision that she would be healed of her infirmity if the Belt of the Mother of God were placed upon her. The emperor then asked the Patriarch to open the coffin. The Patriarch removed the seal and opened the coffin in which the relic was kept, and the Belt of the Mother of God appeared completely whole and undamaged by time. The Patriarch placed the Belt on the sick empress, and immediately she was freed from her infirmity. They sang hymns of thanksgiving to the Most Holy Mother of God (*Bohorodytsya* in Ukrainian), then they placed the venerable Belt back into the coffin and resealed it.



In commemoration of the miraculous occurrence and the twofold Placing of the venerable Belt, the Feast of the Placing of the Venerable Belt of the Most Holy Mother of God was established. Parts of the holy Belt are in the Vatopedi monastery on Mt. Athos, in Trier monastery, and in Georgia.

Troparion, Tone 8

Protection of humans, ever-Virgin Mother of God as a mighty bulwark for your city you gave your pure body's robe and sash. They remained incorrupt by your giving birth without seed. For in you are nature and time made new. Therefore, we pray you, give peace to your city, and to our souls, great mercy.

Christian Living in August: Vibrant and Vital

WHEREAS the “dog days of summer” in the Northern Hemisphere begin in early July, they conclude prior to the end of the second week of August. Fishermen generally regard these days as useless for their sport, and by the latter part of August, teachers and pupils once again are slowly preparing for another school year.



As is true with every season of the year, much encouragement may be received from a knowledge of the lives of Christians who have advanced the cause of Christ in previous generations. For believers ardently seeking to translate the Christian faith into the contemporary environment, much may be learned from extended personal study of some of the lives of the saints that are celebrated during this time.

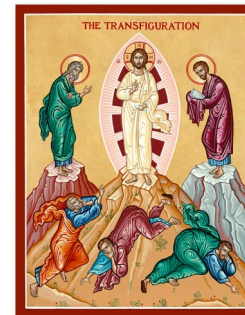
God intends that the “dog days” of summer for individual believers, families, and churches should not be lived in doldrums, but in vibrancy and vitality. May the Lord give us hearts, homes, and sanctuaries where His presence is regularly sought and enjoyed. *Glory be to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!*

Celebrating Our Deep Faith

Byzantine Catholic Worship: Our Church, Its Customs and Rich Heritage

The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ: What Does It Mean for Us Right Now?

THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ (August 6) is a very ancient one. Its meaning is profoundly important for each one of us. The early Christians viewed its implications in their own lives much differently than we contemporary Christians often do. We Christians of the Eastern Church (Catholic and Orthodox) - not only celebrate the importance of this Feast liturgically, but have held on to the ancient Christian understanding of its significance in our own lives.



This is an extraordinary Feast of hope which can help us to live differently, right now. We are invited, by reflecting on this significant event in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, to focus us on the *end* of the Christian life. *End* in the philosophical and theological sense means purpose or goal. The Transfiguration helps to explain the very meaning and purpose of life.

We will all be transfigured, as the Lord Himself was transfigured, when our redemption is complete in the Resurrection of the Body. Then, we will live in the new heaven and new earth, in a transformed cosmos.

This reality is meant to affect the way we live our lives beginning right now. However, many Christians have never even considered it. Many do not even know it is the teaching of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church.

Jesus was doing so much more than simply encouraging His disciples. He was showing them who He was - and who they would become in Him. He was revealing to them what had already begun; and giving them a vision that would forever change the way they viewed themselves, their daily lives and their mission, after He would return to the Father.

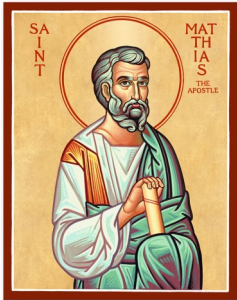
The Christian life is meant to be a real participation in the Divine Nature, every day. We are being transfigured in Christ, even now, as actively we follow Him. This transfiguration will only be complete when the entire person, including the body, is fully redeemed and transformed. In fact, the effects of the Transfiguration also will involve the entire created order; it too will finally be reconstituted in Jesus Christ and handed back to the Father. The followers of Jesus, the Transfigured One - all of us - now walk in His Way and are being transformed into His likeness.

We are all invited to join with Peter, James and John and cry out: "*Lord, it is good for us to be here with You.*"

Feast of the Holy Apostle Matthias

THE HOLY APOSTLE MATTHIAS was born at Bethlehem of the Tribe of Judah. From his early childhood he studied the Law of God under the guidance of Saint Simeon the God-Receiver.

When the Lord Jesus Christ revealed Himself to the world, Saint Matthias believed in Him as the Messiah, followed constantly after Him and was numbered among the Seventy Apostles, whom the Lord “sent them two by two before His face” (Luke 10:1).



After the Ascension of the Saviour, Saint Matthias was chosen by lot to replace Judas Iscariot as one of the Twelve Apostles (Acts 1:15-26). After the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Matthias preached the Gospel at Jerusalem and in Judea together with the other Apostles (Acts 6:2, 8:14). From Jerusalem he went with the Apostles Peter and Andrew to Syrian Antioch, and was in the Cappadocian city of Tium and Sinope. Here the Apostle Matthias was locked into prison, from which he was miraculously freed by Saint Andrew the First-Called.

The Apostle Matthias journeyed after this to Amasea, a city on the shore of the sea. During a three-year journey of the Apostle Andrew, Saint Matthias was with him at Edessa and Sebaste. According to Church Tradition, he was preaching at Pontine Ethiopia (presently Western Georgia) and Macedonia. He was frequently subjected to deadly peril, but the Lord preserved him to preach the Gospel. His feastday on the Gregorian calendar is August 9.

THE MONTH OF AUGUST IN OUR RITE

FOR US, as Byzantine Rite Catholics, August holds a special place in our hearts, for it is the month when we celebrate two important events: The **Holy Transfiguration of Our Lord**, on August 6 and the **Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady, the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary** on August 15.

The Feast of the Transfiguration was introduced into the Church in the 3rd or 4th century, for St. Ephrem the Syrian (310-378) composed a sermon about it as an ancient feast. On this day, fruits are blessed. It is a pious custom whereby we express our gratitude to God for the crops of the fields.

The Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God commemorates the happy passing into eternal life of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was introduced sometime during the 2nd or 3rd century and in the 5th century spread to the whole Church. Following the Divine Liturgy, the priest blesses flowers and herbs which are brought to the church by the faithful, who then take them home, using them in various ways as a blessed item.

Why Does Catechism Matter?

by Lyrissa Sheptak

“Know that the great service that man can offer to God is to help convert souls.”

~ St. Rose of Lima

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH has had a rich history of faith information. The Byzantine Rite has a strong tradition of providing support, programmes, and other forms of faith learning that has served the needs of its community and led its flock through life’s strenuous paths. One way that it has attempted to help parents with the task of faith information is through catechism classes. The Catholic Catechism says that “it should be available to all” because it is the basis for understanding scripture and the Bible. When children learn Catechism, they should be able to come out with tools to read scripture, and understand their faith deeper. In turn, this understanding should give them a more enlightened and convicted perspective towards their world. If they are better equipped with this knowledge, then they can better defend their faith, make God-led decisions, and trust God in difficult times.

Don’t underestimate your influence on a child. Catechism classes matter at all stages of life. For instance, when my oldest daughter was in Grade 3, she had to go to a friend’s house to do a class project. This friend, I learned later, was Sikh, but attended the Catholic school so that she would learn respect for all religions. However, when my daughter entered the house, her friend stopped her, pointed to a picture of one of their gods and said, “Before you can come in, you need to bow to my god.”



In all fairness, this was probably what her family did when they entered their house and the child probably didn’t know better than to not say it to a friend. But to my surprise, my daughter told me that she boldly announced, “My God is the true God and I will not bow to yours.” That was one proud moment for me, for so many reasons. To tell you the truth, at her age I probably wouldn’t have had the guts to say that. So, I must commend the religious people in her life for her courageous moment. She attended Children of Mary followed by bi-monthly Catechism classes. And those confident words she used, despite our Catholic instruction at home, can only be credit to Sister Petronella and the Catechism team at St. Basil’s (Edmonton, Alberta) at that time.

In a world that thrives on the culture of death, we need to give our children tools. Catechism is just one of the things that will take the guessing out of understanding their faith, and hopefully the courage to do the right thing, even when it is difficult.

“Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.”

Proverbs 22: 6