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The Feast of Transfiguration of Our Lord

Fr. George Pulikkottil D. Th.

As we know, the **Transfiguration of Christ** is one of the central events recorded in the gospels. Immediately after our Lord was recognized by his apostles as "the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the Living God," he told them that "he must go up to Jerusalem and suffer many things . . . and be killed and on the third day be raised"(Mt 16). The announcement of Christ's approaching passion and death was met with indignation by the disciples. And then, after rebuking them, the Lord took Peter, James, and John "up to a high mountain" -- by tradition mount Tabor -- and was "transfigured before them."

His face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as snow and behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, "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". He was still speaking when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces with awe. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead" (Mt 17:1-9, see also Mk 9:2-9; Lk 9:28-36; 2 Peter 1:16-18).

The Jewish **Festival of Tents** was a feast of the dwelling of God with men, referring to their journey from Egypt to the promised-land where they always lived in tents whenever they camped. The Tabernacle, the house of their Lord, was with them always at the centre of their camp. The transfiguration of Christ reveals how this dwelling takes place in and through the Messiah, the Son of God in human flesh. Christ's transfiguration took place at the time of the Festival of Tents, and that the celebration of the event in the Christian Church became a feast in a way similar to the feasts of Passover and Pentecost.

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... the apostles see the glory of the Kingdom of God present in Christ. They see that in him, indeed, all the fullness of God was dwelling. "In him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col 1:19, 20). The crucifixion so that in the resurrection they might know the glory of God for them, and what it is that this one, who is God, has done for him. This is what the Church celebrates in the feast of the Transfiguration. The Church prays: "Thou wast transfigured on the mount. O Christ, our Lord, by Thy glory to Thy disciples as they could bear it. Let Thine everlasting glory shine through the prayers of Thy people, O God, and Thy disciples beheld Thy glory as far as they could see it; so that when they had seen Thee crucified, they would understand that Thy suffering was necessary for the redemption of the world that Thou art truly the Radianc of the Father's love."

transfigured, O Christ God, and Thy disciples beheld Thy glory as far as they could see it; so that when they would behold Thee crucified, they would understand that Thy suffering was voluntary, and would proclaim to the world that Thou art truly the Radiance of the Father.” – Prayers from the Feast of Transfiguration.

Besides the fundamental meaning which the event of the Transfiguration has in the context of the life and mission of Christ, and in addition to the theme of the glory of God which is revealed in all of its divine splendor in the face of the Savior, the presence of **Moses** and **Elijah** is also of great significance for the understanding and celebration of the feast. Many of the hymns refer to these two leading figures of the Old Covenant as do the three scripture readings of Vespers which tell of the manifestation of the glory of God to these holy men. (*Ex 24:12-18; 33:11-34:8; 1 Kings 19:3-16*). Moses and Elijah, according to the liturgical verses, are not only the greatest figures of the Old Testament who now come to worship the Son of God in glory, they also are not merely two of the holy men to whom God has revealed himself in the pre-figurative *theophanies* of the Old Covenant of Israel. These two figures actually stand for the Old Testament itself: **Moses for the Law** and **Elijah for the Prophets**. And Christ is the fulfillment of both the Law and the Prophets (Mt 5:17). They also stand for the **living** and the **dead**, for Moses died and his burial place is known, while Elijah was taken alive into heaven in order to appear again to announce the time of God's salvation in Christ the Messiah. Thus, in appearing with Jesus on the mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah show that the Messiah, the Savior is here, and that he is the Son of God to whom the Father himself bears witness, the Lord of all creation, of the Old and New Testaments, of the living and the dead. The Transfiguration of Christ in itself is the fulfillment

(cont on page 8)

*8)(manifestations of God,



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1. **Monday**-15-Day fast begins.
- 4 to 7. **Thursday to Sunday**-MGOCSM Summer Conference at Taylor University Upland, Indiana
6. **Saturday**-The Festival of Transfiguration (Koodaara Perunnal)
7. **Sunday**-1st Sunday after Transfiguration– Reading (Holy Qurbana) Acts 28: 23-30, Romans 10: 5-21, St. Matthew 18: 1-11
13. **Saturday**-MOSCFQ one day Conference –Theme “ Holy Spirit and our personal Lives” led by Rev. Fr. T. J . Joshua
14. **Sunday**-Second Sunday after Transfiguration— Reading (Holy Qurbana) I Peter 5: 1-11, I Corinthians 10: 1 –13 St. Luke 12: 13 - 21, 35 - 44. Marthamariam Samajam Bible Study
15. **Monday**-Shoonoyo Perunnal Ascension of St. Mary-15-day fast ends-Marthamariam Samajam Day .
21. **Sunday**-First Sunday after the Festival of the Ascension of St. Mary (Shoonoyo Perunnal)-Reading (Holy Qurbana) I John 2: 22-29, Ephesians 6: 10-17, St. Luke 6 : 39 - 45.
27. **Saturday**-9.00 AM Orientation Sunday School NewTeachers -11.00 AM Sunday School Kick-off Picnic at church 3.30 PM Sunday School Teachers Meeting
27. **Saturday**-6.30 PM Prayer meeting at Joseph Varghese residence, 13020 Timber Trail, Palos Heights Tel. (708) 371-0094.
28. **Sunday** -Second Sunday after the Festival of the Ascen

PLANING AHEAD**Sep 4 Sunday**

Sunday School reopens
8.45 AM to 9.45 AM

Sep 10 Saturday

KFC Super Saturday
“Holy Qurbana- Is it in you?”



MARTHAMARIAM VANITHA SAMAJAM

lip drawing was conducted on June 26th by Thomas Achen. The winner is Mrs. Job.

August 14th – The MVS monthly Bible study will be held after Service.

September 17th – MVS one-day conference.

Please listen to the announcements after church for more details as they are available.

Malankara Orthodox Syrian Christian Family Organization of Chicago (MOSCFO):

Saturday, August 13th – MOSCFO will be hosting a one day conference at our church with the theme of “**Holy Spirit and our Personal Lives.**” **Fr. T.J. Joshua**, (Professor, Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam and Director, Sunday School) a well known speaker visiting from Kerala, will be leading this conference. Fr. T.J. Joshua will also be speaking on 08/11 7-9 PM @ St. Thomas, 08/12 7-9 PM @ Bellwood and conclude his visit to Chicago by celebrating perunnal at St. Mary’s on Sunday, 08/14.

American Diocese Family & Youth Conference 2005 (July 6-9)

This year’s F&Y conference was held at the Hudson Valley Resort, Kerhonkson, NY. This resort is set amid 400 sprawling acres surrounded by mountains with over 4,100 square feet of versatile space, including conference halls, a large state of the art amphitheater and a grand ballroom.

From our church, 45 registrants, including Thomas Achen and Paul Achen, 26 adults and 17 youth, attended the conference. Although it was an 18 hr trip through five states, the group was very energetic and kept up their spirit.

The theme for this year was “Be ye perfect as your heavenly father is perfect” (St. Mathew 5:48). The keynote speakers were Rev. Fr. T.J. Joshua and Very Rev. Fr. Michael Dahulich, Ph.D. Both speakers eloquently taught about a Christian’s journey towards perfection i.e. “Theosis”, becoming perfect like God the Father. They both pointed out that perfection is love and holiness and it should manifest in families,” “prayer is the ladder which takes us to union with God,” and by partaking in “Holy Eucharist we become one with Christ.” More about these topics from the speakers can be found in articles included in the conference souvenir.

There were some very thought provoking group discussions on this year’s theme. Besides the adult session, there were separate sessions for youth and children. These sessions were spiritually invigorating and challenging to the participants. Our group also actively participated in opening events, sports, variety entertainment, men’s forum, women’s forum, sahiyavedi, etc. Our youth was outstanding in all activities.

This year over 700 registrants attended the conference. It was an opportunity for growth and socialization with people of orthodox values and beliefs. This was a time where new friendships were formed and old ones renewed. I think the group will agree with me that we left the conference spiritually enriched, mentally energized and looking forward for the next conference.

In addition to the Feast of the Transfiguration on the 6th of August, the Church sets apart the first fifteen days of August as a fasting period to keep these days holy in reverence and love for the Mother of God, Mary. The God-bearer, known as the Theotokos (*Theo[s]* – *God, tokos* – *bearer*) in Greek, is recognized as the first among the saints as she was chosen among all women in all of history by God to be the mother of God-incarnate, Jesus Christ. The Holy Mother of our Lord lived her life in purity having been dedicated to the Temple at a young age by her parents, St. Joachim and St. Anna. When she was of age she did not wish to be married, but could no longer remain in the Temple so she was betrothed to an elderly man, St. Joseph, who was a widower and needed someone to care for his children. In this arrangement the young Mary could preserve her purity for God, which is how she lived her life, in prayer and dedication. It was this committed, faithful and loving relationship she had with God that gave her the strength to submit to the will of the Father and allow the Holy Spirit to descend upon her and for the Son of God to dwell in her. Facing the danger of stoning for bearing child out of wedlock, Mary replied to the Archangel Gabriel's greeting and annunciation of God's selection of her among all women by humbly accepting and saying, "I am the Lord's servant."

For this reason her role in the salvation and story of humankind is unsurpassed by any human being born of human father and mother. Her role as mother to Jesus Christ and intercessor on behalf of us is evident in Christ's first miracle in the Gospel of St. John 2:1-11, where Christ reveals his glory by turning water into wine, despite Christ's own response to His mother that His time had not yet come. Also, Christ's love for His mother is clear when even on the Cross at the time of His passion He takes the time to assure the safety and well-being of His mother by ordaining St. John as her son and Mary as His mother (St. John 19:25-27). In addition to the Biblical place of Mary, the Mother of God, there are countless accounts throughout the history of the Church of the Virgin Mother's intercessions and prayers to her Son and their beneficial, fortuitous and miraculous consequences.

As Christians, we cannot separate Jesus Christ from His mother since Mary became vital and necessary to the fullness of the incarnation by the grace of God. Without the flesh of His mother, the incarnation would not have been complete. With Christ as the person of our worship, we join His mother and the company of the saints in the warm, compassionate and loving worship and prayer life of the Church. Also, in imitating the love of Christ, we find ourselves loving the Mother of God with the same fervor and intensity that Christ would love His mother and more so than we even love our own mothers (as Christ's love is more perfect than ours).

So what are we celebrating on the 15th of August? The Church celebrates the Dormition, or Falling Asleep of the Theotokos. According to the tradition of the Church, the Mother of God spent her life in prayer and dedication to her Son even to the time of her passing at which time her body was taken into heaven to join Christ and his angelic hosts.

The Church prescribes fasts throughout the year to call us to rededication, remembrance and renewal of our love and recommitment to Christ's Church, in his living Apostolic and Catholic communion. Let us join the fast to remember the Theotokos and her crucial role in our salvation and partake of the perfect love that the Holy Apostles and Christ, our Lord, have for her. When we fast during this period, let us foster the perfect love that Christ had for His mother, the very love that allowed her intercession in Cana, the love that occupied Christ while on the Cross, and the love that brought His mother into heaven at her passing. Let us ask the Theotokos, the Great Intercessor, to pray for us to her Son that He may have mercy upon us and that He may continue to help us to grow in His perfection.

Saju Varghese

1. Who wrote the first five books of the Bible?

- A. Adam
- B. Moses
- C. David
- D. Abraham

2. How many books are there in the Orthodox Bible?

- A. 23
- B. 34
- C. 66
- D. 73

3. What is the longest book in the Bible (based on the number of chapters)?

- A. Genesis
- B. Psalms
- C. Proverbs
- D. Revelation

4. What is the shortest book in the Bible (based on the number of words)?

- A. Jude
- B. 1 Peter
- C. III John
- D. Jonah

Please submit your answers in the Gregorian Gazette box in the library by August 14. The entry with the most correct answers will be the prize winner. If there is a tie, one winner will be selected at random. Contest is open to Sunday School children only.

Sunday School Learning to Live the Life

of the Sunday School were declared as Graduates of the Class of 2009. The students are Susan George, Shantra Kurian, Gibson Mammen, Sara Mathew, Remy Panicker, Robin Panicker, and Robin Stephen. Congratulations! They have completed 11 years of Sunday School studies. Leju Yohannan, along with Sunil John, coordinated this class. These graduates will continue to be associated with the Sunday School program as assistant teachers.

Saturday, September 10th – **KFC Super Saturday** – “**The Holy Qurbana: Is it in you?**” This event will be the culminating lesson in the year long studies on the sacrament of the Holy Qurbana.

Congratulations



Jeena won an essay competition at her junior high school. Through the opportunity to write about anything she wished, she chose to write about the topic "Knowing Jesus More". Additionally, she used her prize money to pay for the Family Conference. Congratulations and good work Jeena!

1. TONY V. MATHEW
4. BINU
10. JASON THOMAS
11. SUZANNA GEORGE
14. MERIN STEPHEN
16. JOEL THOMAS
18. ALVIN ANTONY



The culmination of the 2005 academic Sunday School year took place with the Orthodox Vacation Bible School, which was held on Friday, July 22nd and Saturday, July 23rd. The OVBS was a great success as almost 70 kids gathered at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Oak Park, to further their knowledge of God. The OVBS theme for this year was Ephesians 6:11 "Put on the whole armor of God". Enhancing the OVBS experiences was the presence of Thomas Achen, George Achen and Slomo Achen, who took time to share their knowledge of the theme. I would like to thank all the individuals who took time out of their schedules to help run the 2005 OVBS. I would especially like to thank the Achens for dedicating their time to OVBS. It is important that the coming generation learn about our Church and the Bible. These kids are the future of the Church and it is important that they are influenced through the Church at a young age. I would like to urge all parents to contribute to the growth of the Church by bringing your children to OVBS. It is through programs such as OVBS and Sunday School that the younger generation begins to instill the faith of the Church

Arun Varghese

The answer to the previous "Question of the Month" was that the painting of St. Mary holding Baby Jesus was painted by St. Luke and was brought to India by St. Thomas. It is now kept at St. Thomas Mount in Madras. This month's winners are Anand Poozhikunnel, Ashok Poozhikunnel, Kripa Poozhikunnel, Basil Alias and Roshen Samuel. **Congratulations!**

Our apologies to Basil Elias whose name was inadvertently left out from the June edition winners list.



(cont from page 2) of all of the *theophanies* and manifestations of God, a fulfillment made perfect and complete in the person of Christ. The Transfiguration of Christ reveals to us our ultimate destiny as Christians, the ultimate destiny of all men and all creation to be transformed and glorified by the majestic splendor of God himself.

The feast of the Transfiguration is celebrated in most of the Orthodox Churches on the **sixth of August**. In the Gospel, the event of Transfiguration happens before the Death and Resurrection of our Lord. Then why do we celebrate the feast after Pentecost at this period, and why particularly on 6th August? There are both theological and historical reasons. The theological reason is that, transfiguration is possible only through the sacramental life and witness of the Church in Christ. The Church after Pentecost specially represents the sacramental body of Christ as well as it witnesses Him from generations to generations. The transfiguration and transformation of the Church, as a community of believers, is happening through this processes of witnessing Him in sacramental life. Virgin Mary the Mother of God, the most effective symbol of the Church, has been transfigured and transformed to Divine Kingdom as the first and true model for all the Church. This is celebrated on the fifteenth of August.

The historical reason should be that the Romans as well as the Byzantines were having their great summer fest at this time. The summer celebration of the feast, however, has lent itself very well to the theme of transfiguration. Their tradition of blessing of grapes, as well as other fruits and vegetables on this day is the most beautiful and adequate sign of the final transfiguration of all things in Christ. It signifies the ultimate flowering and fruitfulness of all creation in the paradise of God's unending Kingdom of Life where all will be transformed by the glory of the Lord.

However, the importance of the Feast of Transfiguration should be acknowledged in the Church. Our parishes, monasteries and other spiritual institutions must celebrate this feast of our Lord in its full meaning and application in the life of our believers. Because, according to the Fathers, it is undoubtedly the foretaste of the kingdom of God.

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