



# “Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No 33 August 2011



## FESTIVALS OF AUGUST

Whilst the Church Calendar is packed full with saints-days and commemorations of significant events of past centuries, the two main festivals in August are the Transfiguration of Christ and the Dormition of the Mother of God. Although at first sight they might not seem to be linked, in fact the underlying theme is that Christ is God Incarnate.

### **The Transfiguration of Christ**

This festival is the commemoration of the biblical event recorded in the Gospels. St Luke's account (9: 28-36) is read at Matins. St Matthew's account (17: 1-9) is read in the Liturgy. The story records that Christ took the apostles Peter, James and John to a high place on Mount Tabor. In the troparion we sing: *When Thou wast transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God, thou didst show Thy glory to Thy disciples as far as they could bear it. Let Thy everlasting light illumine also us sinners through the intercession of the Mother of God. Giver of Light, glory to Thee.*

Writing about the meaning of the great feasts in the introductory pages of the Festal Menaion, Metropolitan Kallistos tells us that there is a connection between Transfiguration and Theophany (Christ's baptism in the Jordan) because in both events the divinity of Christ is made manifest. He goes on to say: "The Transfiguration, then, is a feast of divine

glory - more specifically, the glory of the Resurrection. The ascent of Mount Tabor came at a critical point in Our Lord's ministry, just as He was setting out on His last journey to Jerusalem, which he knew was to end in humiliation and death. To strengthen His disciples for the trials that lay ahead, He chose this particular moment to reveal to them something of His eternal splendour, "*as far as they were able to bear it*" (troparion of the feast). He encouraged them, and all of us, to look beyond the suffering of the Cross to the glory of the Resurrection."

In August we are at the beginning of the harvest season when crops are beginning to be gathered in and fruits are ripening. So in church on this day there is the blessing of the first fruits of the summer. Traditionally in Mediterranean countries these would have been grapes from the vines. In more northerly lands, where vines do not flourish, apples and other local fruits would be blessed instead. These fruits, symbols of God's bounty, are distributed to worshippers.

### **Dormition of the Mother of God**

On this day we remember the repose (earthly death) of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In some of the services we find various poetic expressions used to describe the Holy Virgin. Some references speak of her as the *bridge between Heaven and earth*. This means that it was through her that God took flesh and became incarnate in order to walk upon the earth and win the victory over death, that is our salvation. Jesus Christ is both truly God and fully man. Since Christ is God the Son, it follows that the Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God. The divinity of Christ makes his human birth unique. Being truly man, Christ necessarily had to experience human death, although, as God, he did not suffer the corruption of death as we see from His Resurrection on the third day. Thus it was with the Holy Virgin. She gave birth to God Incarnate and therefore, although she died in the flesh, she was spared the corruption of death, thereby anticipating the General Resurrection.

---

## **THE JESUS PRAYER**

A nun was asked about the meaning and use of the Jesus Prayer. These notes, which were written in reply, are printed here with permission.

Here you are asking me how to use the "prayer rope" (chotki in Russian and komboskini in Greek). In fact it is very simple: we pray what is called the Jesus Prayer with it. At each knot we say *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner*.

As you see, these words are addressed to our Lord and Saviour, and we ask Him to have mercy on us. We repeat the prayer at each knot, with all the attention we can muster. It is one of the oldest prayers and based on Holy Scripture. In it are resonances of the prayer of blind Bartimaeus for example: *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!* (Mark 10:47); also the contrite tax-collector, who stood in the temple, and did not lift up his eyes to heaven, but said: *God be merciful to me a sinner*. (Luke 18:13). We can also hear the resonance of Peter's confession of faith: *You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God*. (Matthew 16:16). And then, of course, in the Name of Christ, called upon with faith, is much power! See Acts 3 & 4: the story of the paralytic healed by the Apostles Peter and John.

The prayer is also Trinitarian in nature. It is easy to see that Jesus and God are mentioned but apparently not the Holy Spirit. Here we should remember what St Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians: *Therefore I make known to you.....and no-one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit* (1 Cor 12:3). Also we can call to mind Jesus and how he was "revealed" by the Holy Spirit at His Baptism. Look at St Mark's Gospel, chapter 1, verses 8 - 11.

These are only a few examples. One can find many more but these may illustrate how old the prayer is and the practice of it; calling on our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The prayer can be said in slightly different forms: e.g. when one would like to pray it aloud in a group of people, the words could be, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God have mercy upon us" (and sometimes the words "and upon Thy whole world" are added). Sometimes the prayer can be reduced to the words, "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy" or "Lord Jesus Christ". There are endless varieties, but on the whole one sticks with the full version as quoted above, especially at the beginning, so that it can become one's own prayer, and that it can take root like a newly planted tree.

The Apostle Paul gave this injunction: *Pray without ceasing* (in his first letter to the Thessalonians), but how is one to pray without ceasing? Holy Mother Church teaches us to repeat the name of Jesus often, by saying/praying the Jesus Prayer. When one becomes used to this appeal, great consolation and the need to make this petition all the time will be felt within, and it will be carried on, as of itself, within one.

The enemy of the human race will offer hindrance to this practice by causing great weariness, indolence, boredom and over-powering sleep. With perseverance, and having withstood all these by the help of God, one will receive peace of soul, spiritual joy, a benevolent disposition towards people, tranquillity of thought and gratitude towards God.

Saint Seraphim of Sarov gave the following counsel: “*Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me a sinner.* Let all your attention and training be in this; walking, sitting, doing, standing in church before divine service, coming in and going out, keep this unceasingly on your lips and in your heart. In calling in this manner on the name of God, you will find peace, you will attain to purity of spirit and body and the Holy Spirit, the origin of all good things, will dwell in you unto holiness, unto all piety and purity.”

The Jesus Prayer can be compared to a little seed that will eventually blossom. It is very powerful, and if we continue to think of a little seed that can grow into a tree, we see the force of nature. So it is with the Prayer of Jesus.

---

## CHURCH NOTES & JOTTINGS

### MEMORIAL GIFT

Our friend Valerie Snelling has kindly donated an antique ikon of the Mother of God, with a silver riza, to our church in memory of Mary, our foundress. We express our thanks to Val for her thoughtfulness and generosity.

### SAINT WANDREGESILIUS

The booklet about the saint's life *The Vita Prima of St Wandregesilius* has now been printed. As you may know, the condition attached to the permission to translate the text was that we do not charge for the booklets. If you would like a copy please let us know. Also the text of the Canon and ikon cards are now available.



Wednesday 3 August 5pm Blessing of the Ikon of St Wandregesilius in church followed by Afternoon Tea in the house.  
7.30pm Vespers and Compline.

Thursday 4 August 9.40am Hours - 10am Divine Liturgy

### PROGRESS REPORT

The restored office is now in use and the old school room is transformed into the book room where stock can be viewed. We are grateful to Jake Doyle and Brandan Doyle for all their help moving furniture, office equipment and numerous boxes of books and other stock.

### NAMEDAYS

We send congratulations to the following and wish them Many Years

1 August - St Seraphim of Sarov (uncovering his relics) - Serafima Hopper

2 August - Holy Prophet Elijah (Elias) - Priest Elias Jones

4 August - St Mary Magdalene, Equal to the Apostles - Mary Tattum-Smith

6 August - Holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb - Boris Jermy, Gleb Jermy

7 August - St Anna, mother of the Theotokos - Anya Moss, Anna Pustinyk

23 August - St Lawrence, Archdeacon and Martyr - Lawrence Davis

*(New style dates given for convenience)*

### ARCHIMANDRITE ATHANASIOS

Of your charity, pray for the repose of the soul of Archimandrite Athanasios, who died on Wednesday 20 July after a long battle with cancer. Memory Eternal.

---

Orthodox Church of the Mother of God *Joy of All Who Sorrow*

The White House, Low Rd, Mettingham, Suffolk NR35 1TP

Telephone - 01986 896708

e-mail [churchmettingham@aol.com](mailto:churchmettingham@aol.com) Website [www.joyofallwhosorrow.org.uk](http://www.joyofallwhosorrow.org.uk)

Cheques for the church fund should be made payable to “*Joy of All Who Sorrow*” Church.

The account is in HSBC Bank, 3 New Market, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 9HQ

Account No 71395912 Sort Code 40-09-24