



Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church

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July 21, 2019: 5th Sunday of Matthew

Why a Fast for Dormition?

It would be a gross understatement to say that much has been written about the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos. Yet very little has been written about the fast that precedes it. Every Orthodox Christian is aware and generally knows the reason behind the fasts for Pascha and Christmas. But while they may know of the Dormition Fast, few follow it, and more than a few question why it is there, neither knowing its purpose. First, given the pervasive misunderstanding of the purpose of fasting itself, a refresher on its purpose is always a good idea. There is a perception that we should fast when we want something, as though the act of fasting somehow appeases God, and seeing us “suffer” gets Him to grant our request. Nothing can be further from the truth. It is not our fasting that pleases God, it is the fruits of our fast (provided we fast in the proper mind set, and do not merely diet) that please Him. We fast, not to get what we want, but to prepare ourselves to receive what God wants to give us. The purpose of fasting is to bring us more in line with another Mary, the sister of Lazarus, and away from their sister Martha, who in the famous passage was “anxious and troubled about many things.” Fasting is intended to bring us to the realization of “the one thing needful.” It is to help us put God first and our own desires second, if not last. As such it serves to prepare us to be instruments of God’s will, as with Moses in his flight from Egypt and on Mt. Sinai, as well as our Lord’s fast in the wilderness. Fasting turns us away from ourselves and toward God. In essence it helps us become like the Theotokos, an obedient servant of God, who heard His word and kept it better than anyone else has or could. So why do we fast before Dormition?... **(Continued on back)**

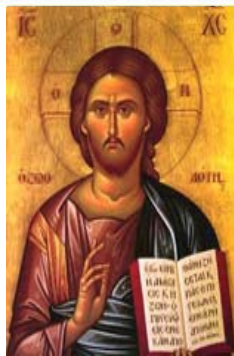


EPISTLE READING:

St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 10:1-10

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God,

and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified. Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by it. But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved.



GOSPEL READING:

Matthew 8:28-34; 9:1

At that time, when Jesus came to the country of the Gergesenes, two demoniacs met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one would pass that way. And behold, they cried out, "What

have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" Now a herd of many swine was feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged him, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of swine." And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the swine; and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and perished in the ... **(Continued on next panel)**

UPCOMING EVENTS



Sunday, August 18
After the Divine
Liturgy

Hear updates about our new property and vote on an updated Building Fund budget. To confirm your eligibility to vote, email Ron Baldinger, Stewardship Chair; ron.baldinger@gmail.com.



All parishioners and their families are invited for an afternoon of fun and fellowship! Sub sandwiches will be provided. Look for the online RSVP and sign-up in Monday's parish email.

WEEKLY LITURGICAL SCHEDULE FOR JULY

July 27 St. Panteleimon Orthros 8:15 AM.
Divine Liturgy, 9:30 AM.

(Gospel Reading Cont.) waters. The herdsmen fled,” and going into the city they told everything, and what had happened to the demoniacs. And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their neighborhood. And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city.

1st Annual Holy Apostles Charity Golf Tournament

Monday, September 16

7:00--7:45 AM Registration

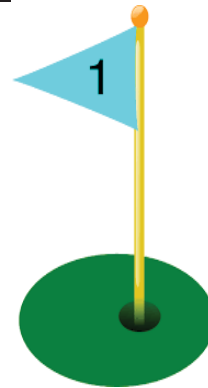
8:00 AM Shotgun Start

1757 Golf in Ashburn

**\$160 per person, four-person
scramble event**

Registration Deadline: Sept. 1

Email GOLF@HAGOG.ORG for more details and sponsorship availability.



PROPERTY TOUR AND COOKOUT!

Sunday, September 22

After church - 4pm

Address for Mapquest:

19775 Belmont Executive
Plaza; Ashburn, VA 20147

See our new property! Enjoy gyro to go!



Philoptochos made a generous gift and donated the “Future Home” sign on our new property! In total, Philoptochos has donated over \$25,000 to our Building Fund! Consider joining or supporting Philoptochos’s efforts for our Capital Campaign.

Weekly Feature: The Glorious Prophet Elias (Elijah), celebrated July 20



Elias of great fame was from Thisbe or Thesbe, a town beyond the Jordan. He was of priestly lineage, a man of a solitary and ascetical character, clothed in a mantle of sheep skin, and girded about his loins with a leathern belt. His name is interpreted as "Yah is my God." His zeal for the glory of God

was compared to fire, and his speech for teaching and rebuke was likened unto a burning lamp. From this too he received the name Zealot. Therefore, set aflame with such zeal, he sternly reprov'd the impiety and lawlessness of Ahab and his wife Jezebel. He shut up heaven by means of prayer, and it did not rain for three years and six months. Ravens brought him food for his need when, at God's command, he was hiding by the torrent of Horra. He multiplied the little flour and oil of a poor widow, who had given him hospitality in her home, and raised up her son when he died. He brought down fire from Heaven upon Mount Carmel, and it burned up the sacrifice offered to God before all the people of Israel, that they might know the truth. At the torrent of Kisson, he slew 450 false prophets and priests who worshipped idols and led the people astray. He received food wondrously at the hand of an Angel, and being strengthened he walked for forty days and forty nights. He foretold the destruction of the house of Ahab, and the death of his son Ohozias; he divided the flow of the Jordan, and he and his disciple Elisseus passed through as it were on dry land; and finally, while speaking with him, Elias was suddenly snatched away by a fiery chariot in the year 895 B.C., and he ascended as though into heaven, whither God most certainly translated him alive, as He did Enoch (Gen. 5:24; IV Kings 2: 11). After seven years, by means of an epistle he reproached Joram, the son of Josaphat, as it is written: "And there came a message in writing to him from Elias the Prophet, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the way," and so forth (II Chron. 21:12).

(Cover Message Cont.) In a close-knit family, word that its matriarch is on her deathbed brings normal life to a halt. Otherwise important things (parties, TV, luxuries, personal desires) become unimportant; life comes to revolve around the dying matriarch. It is the same with the Orthodox family; word that our matriarch is on her deathbed, could not (or at least should not) have any different effect than the one just mentioned. The Church, through the Paraklesis Service, gives us the opportunity to come to that deathbed and eulogize and entreat the woman who bore God, the vessel of our salvation and our chief advocate at His divine throne. And as, in the earthly family, daily routines and the indulgence in personal wants should come to a halt. Fasting, in its full sense (abstaining from food and desires) accomplishes this. Less time in leisure or other pursuits leaves more time for prayer and reflection on she who gave us Christ, and became the first and greatest Christian. In reflecting on her and her incomparable life, we see a model Christian life, embodying Christ's retort to the woman who stated that Mary was blessed because she bore Him: blessed rather are those who hear His word and keep it. Mary did this better than anyone. As Fr. Thomas Hopko has stated, she heard the word of God and kept it so well, that she of all women in history was chosen not only to hear His Word but give birth to it (Him). So while we fast in contemplation of her life, we are simultaneously preparing ourselves to live a life in imitation of her. That is the purpose of the Dormition Fast. *When the assumption of thine undefiled body was being prepared, the Apostles gazed on thy bed, viewing thee with trembling. Some contemplated thy body and were dazzled, but Peter cried out to thee in tears, saying, I see thee clearly, O Virgin, stretched out, O life of all, and I am astonished. O thou undefiled one, in whom the bliss of future life dwelt, beseech thy Son and God to preserve thy people unimpaired.* (Sticheron after the Gospel, Orthros) (by Daniel Manzuk, from The Word).