

S U M M E R 2 0 1 9

# ST. INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

“Community is a single tree, which we are all part of.”  
- Metropolitan Tikhon, *Of What Life Do We Speak?*

## SUMMER HOLIDAYS & SAINTS DAYS

MAY 11

Ss CYRIL & METHODIUS,  
APOSTLES TO THE SLAVS

MAY 21

EQUALS TO THE  
APOSTLES

St. CONSTANTINE, AND  
HIS MOTHER, HELEN

MAY 26

SAMARITAN WOMAN

JUNE 6

ASCENSION

JUNE 8

THEODORE STRATELATES

JUNE 16-18

HOLY PENTECOST

JUNE 24

NATIVITY OF JOHN THE  
BAPTIST, BEGINNING

Ss. PETER & PAUL FAST

JUNE 29

HOLY APOSTLES

PETER AND PAUL

JUNE 30

ALL SAINTS OF AMERICA  
(ALL SAINTS OF RUSSIA)



JULY

MONTH OF RUSSIAN SAINTS

JULY 20

HOLY PROPHET ELIJAH

JULY 25

DORMITION OF RIGHTEOUS ANNA,  
MOTHER OF THE THEOTOKOS

JULY 31

FOREFEAST PROCESSION OF LIFEGIVING CROSS,  
THE SAVIOR OF THE HONEY

AUGUST 6

TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

THE SAVIOR OF THE APPLE

AUGUST 15

DORMITION MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS

AUGUST 29

BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST  
THE SAVIOUR OF THE NUT

# Happy Summer Break!

**Dear St. Innocent Orthodox Church Family!**  
**Our first school year at the new parish hall is over!**  
**Thank each and every one of you for your support!**

## Year of Learning

On the second Saturday of the month from September through May, our Family Church School provided classes on Orthodox faith, its practices, holidays and lives of Saints for children and adults. Thank you, Fr. Theophan and our great teachers for all your hard work!

## Year of Communication

We all had a great opportunity to spend a day together learning about Orthodoxy and getting know each other during the breaks and after the Vespers. Thanks to everyone who cooked and served delicious meals!

## Year of Fun!

Our teachers and their helpers provided a lot of activities for the students: making arts and crafts for the Orthodox holidays, cooking, baking, reading, singing, etc.

## Stay Informed!

To help our families in strengthening the “armor of God”, we created monthly newsletters with useful materials about Orthodoxy, Church holidays, customs and traditions of Orthodox Church around the world. You can find these copies online and in the Parish Hall.

God bless our families, students, and community for their ongoing support. We wish each of you a happy, fun and healthy summer break and look forward to welcoming our families back in September!



## Apostles of the Slavs: The Story Behind The Cyrillic Alphabet (May 11)

The Cyrillic alphabet owes its name to the 9<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine missionary St. Cyril, who, along with his brother, Methodius, created the first Slavic alphabet.

Brothers who, for Christianizing the Danubian Slavs and for influencing the religious and cultural development of all Slavic peoples, received the title "the apostles of the Slavs."



In 860, Cyril (originally named Constantine), who had gone on a mission to the Arabs and been professor of philosophy at the patriarchal school in Constantinople, worked with Methodius, the abbot of a Greek monastery, for the conversion of the Khazars northeast of the Black Sea. In 862, when Prince Rostislav of Great Moravia (Modern Slovakia) asked Constantinople for missionaries, the emperor Michael III and the patriarch Photius named Cyril and Methodius.

In 863, they started their great missionary work among the Slavs, using Slavonic in the liturgy. At first, they invented the Glagolitic alphabet and translated the Bible into the first artificial language that consisted of the words from Greek, Latin and different Slavic dialects, and later known as Old Church Slavonic. The first phrase written in Old Church Slavonic was, "In the beginning was the Word." Now the people of Bulgaria, Serbia, Czechia, Moravia, and Rus' started to call themselves Slavs or Slovs (from the Slavic *slovo* - "word"). They received the written language, which united them all in Christianity.

It is on the basis of the first, Glagolitic alphabet, the new Cyrillic alphabet was developed in the First Bulgarian Empire by the followers of the brothers, who were beatified as saints.

Based on the Greek ceremonial script, the original Cyrillic alphabet included the 24 letters of the Greek alphabet and 19 letters for sounds specific to the Slavic language.

Nowadays, more than 250 million people in Eurasia use the Cyrillic alphabet as the official alphabet for their national languages. It is one of the most-used writing systems in the world. Since 2007, Cyrillic became the third official script of the European Union, following Latin and Greek.

## Equals-to-the-Apostles St. Constantine, And His Mother, Helen (May 21)

Saints Constantine and Helen are two early saints of the Orthodox Christian Church and they share a feast day on May 21st because they made their contributions to Christianity together.

Referred to as a "sovereign to the Christians" Emperor Constantine was known for his beliefs. He was the son of Constantius Chlorus, a ruler of a portion of the Roman Empire, and Helen, the Empress who was also a Christian alongside her son. Constantine was born 272 and he became Emperor when his father died in 306. In 312, he learned that his opponent, Maxentius, began marching to Italy. Shortly after that, Jesus Christ appeared to him in a dream and told Constantine about the cross and its significance. After the dream, he ordered that his victory banner be inscribed with the Holy Cross and the Name of Jesus Christ. On October 28, he officially marched and entered battle against Maxentius and won. He rode to Rome waving his victory banner proudly and was declared to rule Rome West, while his brother-in-law, Licinius, was to rule Rome East. Under Constantine's rule, Christianity really took root. In 325 he organized the First Council of Nicaea and he addressed the assembly personally.



Helen's story with Christianity really begins after Constantine emerged victorious from the battle against Maxentius. During this time, she traveled to the Holy Lands in Jerusalem. During her travels, she is credited with finding the True Cross. Legend says that she was tipped off to the cross's existence because she found the aromatic herb, basil, growing in the shape of a cross. Each year on September 14th, Orthodox Christians remember the cross on September 14th on the Feast Day of the Elevation of the Cross by taking home some fresh basil.

### Kontakion of Constantine and Helen Third Tone

Today, Constantine with his mother Helen  
present the Cross,  
the most precious wood.  
It shames unbelievers.  
It is a weapon of faithful kings against their  
adversaries.



## Great Holidays in June: Ascension and Pentecost

The story of the **Ascension** of our Lord, celebrated as one of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Church, is found in the book of the Acts of the Apostles 1:3-11. It is also mentioned in the Gospels of Mark (16:19) and Luke (24:50-53). The moment of the Ascension is told in one sentence: "He was lifted up before their eyes in a cloud which took Him from their sight" (Acts 1:9).

Christ made His last appearance on earth, forty days after His Resurrection from the dead. The Acts of the Apostles state that the disciples were in Jerusalem. Jesus appeared before them and commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the "Promise of the Father". He stated, "You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5).

After Jesus gave these instructions, He led the disciples to the Mount of Olives. Here, He commissioned them to be His witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). It is also at this time that the disciples were directed by Christ to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Jesus also told them that He would be with them always, "even to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

As the disciples watched, Jesus lifted up His hands, blessed them, and then was taken up out of their sight (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9). Two angels appeared to them and asked them why they were gazing into heaven. Then one of the angels said, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him going into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

### Ways to Celebrate Pentecost with Children

The Church celebrates the Feast of Pentecost fifty days after Easter Sunday. Pentecost Sunday ends the season of Easter. Encourage the children in your home to share the story of Pentecost with friends and family, and also to talk about ways that the Trinity helps and guides the Church today.

1. **Attending Divine Liturgy on Pentecost** is far easier than for many other feasts, as Pentecost is always celebrated on a Sunday. The service is a particularly

joyful one where we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is also the first time that we kneel after the Paschal period. Many churches include the prayers known as the Kneeling Prayers in the Divine Liturgy. Other churches may have a separate Vespers service. If possible, try to participate in the Kneeling prayers and enter into the spirit of repentance, forgiveness, and strength for our journey.

2. **Wear Green to Liturgy.** The liturgical color of Pentecost is green. You can dress your family in green to help your children notice this change, and point out the new life found when the Holy Spirit comes upon us.

3. **Decorate the House with Greenery.** In keeping with the theme, you can also decorate your house with greenery. These may include potted herbs that you can later plant in an herb garden. Arrange a lovely bouquet of fresh basil, parsley, and rosemary, place it in a vase before the icons. The fragrance will fill the house and remind you of the birth of the Church all week.

4. **Learn to Say "Hello" in Different Languages.** The story of Pentecost is filled with many interesting and exciting things (tongues of fire, a rushing wind—how cool is that to a child?!). One of these is the fact that the Apostles were able to speak in languages they hadn't learned before. The Holy Spirit gave them a gift so that they could preach the Gospel to people of all languages visiting Jerusalem at the time.

5. **Fill the House with Candles and Tell the Story.** In remembrance of the tongues of fire that descended upon the apostles, fill your house with candles. Then, tell, read, or listen to the story of Pentecost.

6. **Orthodoxy Around the World Activity.** Finally, help children appreciate the diversity of the Church by learning about churches around the world. See if you can find websites for churches on all seven continents. Or, look for and print out pictures of churches from every continent. You can make a collage by pasting the pictures, church names, and locations on a poster board.

**On the Feast of Pentecost, let us rejoice because God Himself is with us in his Church!**

## Pentecost. Explanation of the Feast *from Fr. Bulgakov's Handbook*

On the tenth day after the Ascension of Jesus Christ during the Jewish feast of Pentecost, at the third hour, but according to our reckoning at nine o'clock in the morning, when people usually go to the temple both for offering up a sacrifice and prayer all the disciples were assembled in Jerusalem, in the upper room (Acts 1:13), which was "on Mount Zion", "and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind," (as though from an unusually strong wind)."

Actually, there was no wind rustling, but the noise was similar as if it were from the strength of a wind, but without the wind." This noise "filled the whole house where they were sitting", - not only of the apostles, but, according to the commentary of St. John Chrysostom, even other believers in Christ (Acts 1:16).

In that instant in the middle of the house in the air appeared many tongues as of fire, being carried above the heads of the disciples, dropped down and rested on them. They were not really fiery tongues, but were "as if As fast as the Divine Fire flared up in the souls of the believers, they were filled with holy ecstasy and in reply to the gift of Heaven have lifted up to Heaven a word of praise and thanksgiving to the Great God for the benefactions to the human race. And they all "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance": each of these gifted ones began to speak in whatever language even if the other language was unknown to him, in the language of a country where he never lived or a language which he never studied; the knowledge of this language for him was exclusively a gift of the Holy Spirit; and the power of the Holy Spirit first of all was found out by their ability in languages, because this ability first of all was necessary for the apostles, so that they could preach the Gospel message all over the world.

Meanwhile the stormy noise of the breath from Heaven attracted many Jews to the apostolic quarters. Seeing the people gathering for them, believers with praises and hymns on their lips they went on the flat roof of a house where they were; for it is natural to assume that they were filled with holy joy, the desire and zeal to announce the glory of God revealed in them to other people. They spoke about "wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11), which now opened for them in all the fullness and light; they praised the omnipotence, mercy and wisdom of God, they magnified the Lord Jesus, they confessed that He is the Christ announced by the ancient prophets, the Redeemer of our sins, that He is risen and, ascended with glory into Heaven to the Father, who sent the Holy Spirit, who teaches all wisdom, and finally, they thanked God for everything that they have received through grace from Christ.

Hearing these words of praise and thanksgiving, all those gathered in the apostolic quarters were amazed by

the new unexpected. But the impious were also found, who began to swear at the God-inspired preachers. Then the Holy Apostle Peter raised his voice and delivered his first sermon, in which he pointed out the glorious events accomplished in this day, the fulfillment of ancient prophecies and the completion of the great work of salvation of the people, which was fulfilled on earth by the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

This first Christian sermon was simple and brief, but since the Holy Spirit spoke through the mouth of the Holy Apostle Peter, his words penetrated the hearts of the hearers and won over their obstinacy. "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' (Acts 2:37). "Repent", the Holy Apostle Peter answered them, "and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" and you will not only be forgiven; but you shall also "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". For the promise of the Holy Spirit is given" Then those who gladly received his word" that is of the Apostle Peter immediately repented, believed, and were baptized (Acts 2:41), and the new Church has grown from 120 (Acts 1:15) to 3000 men.

Thus ended the events, now celebrated, have ended in the complete celebration of the Holy Spirit over the unbelievers. In memory of this wonderful and glorious event we refer to this day as the day of the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles.

This feast is still called Trinity Day; because the appearance of the Holy Spirit has revealed to the people in a very clear light, how necessary the mystery of the Holy Trinity was for them; and therefore even for the Holy Church, teaching us "in an Orthodox way" and piously to confess the All-holy Trinity, for in its prayers and hymns for this day it honors and praises all three Persons of the Holy Trinity, who participated in the descent of the Holy Spirit: God the Father, who sent the Holy Spirit, God the Son Jesus Christ, who entreats the Father to send the Holy Spirit, and God the Holy Spirit, who descended appearing as fiery tongues.

### **Troparion, Kontakion, Magnification**

#### **The Troparion, Tone 8**

Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast revealed the fisherman as most wise By sending down upon them the Holy Spirit; Through them Thou didst draw the world into Thy net. O Lover of Man, Glory to Thee!

#### **The Kontakion, Tone 8**

When the Most High came down and confused the tongues, He divided the nations; But when He distributed the tongues of fire, He called all to unity. Therefore, with one voice, we glorify the all-holy Spirit!

#### **The Magnification**

We magnify Thee, O Life-giver Christ, And we honor Thy most Holy Spirit, Whom Thou didst send from the Father unto Thy disciples.

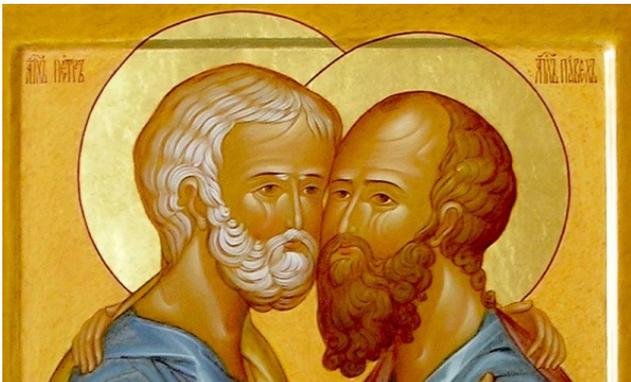
## The Fast of the Apostles (June 24-29) & The Ss. Peter & Paul Feast (June 29)

Orthodox Christians around the world observe four fasting seasons during the year. Two of these—the Great Fast for the forty days of Lent, and the Dormition Fast during the first fifteen days of August—are considered “strict” fasts. The other two are generally observed as “lesser” fasts: the so-called “Christmas Lent” or fast during the forty days before the Feast of the Nativity, and the Fast of the Apostles which occurs in June.

In America the Fast of the Apostles is probably the least well known, but is among the oldest of Christian traditions. It is mentioned by St. Athanasius in the fourth century, and there are other testimonies to its existence very early in the history of the Church. The fast begins on the day after the observance of All Saints’ Sunday, which falls one week after Pentecost.

Today the fast ends with the observance of the Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul, which is held on June 29. In earliest practice, however, the fast was probably not connected with the Feast of Peter and Paul. Rather, it was a time for fasting after the celebration of Pentecost and/or All Saints. Apparently, different traditions prescribed different lengths of the fast—whether for one week, several weeks, or even only one day. Today, the fast still has a variable length because of its connection to the date of Pentecost, and therefore of All Saints. There are different traditions regarding how strictly to follow the Fast. In most Orthodox traditions, the fast is not as severe as that during Great Lent. Fish, wine and oil are permitted on all days except Wednesday and Friday, which are strict fast-days throughout the year except immediately following the Great Feasts of the Lord. In other traditions, fish, wine and oil are permitted on Saturdays and Sundays during the Fast of the Apostles.

For faithful Orthodox today, the Fast of the Apostles can be an occasion for reflection upon the lives and example of the Holy Apostles. On the Sunday of All Saints, we remember and celebrate the lives of all those who have gone before us in the faith: our fathers, forefathers, the apostles, preachers, evangelists, teachers, hierarchs and martyrs.



## Ss. Peter And Paul: Two Distinct Worlds Intertwined Source: Notes On Arab Orthodoxy by Metropolitan Paul (Yazigi)

As is well known, the classic icon for this blessed feast portrays the two holy apostles embracing and kissing each other. This apostolic kiss has been explained by many people in various ways. For some, this kiss means the reconciliation of the two apostles after they had disagreed in Antioch. For others, this kiss represents the meeting of the East (represented by the Apostle Paul) and the West (represented by the Apostle Peter). Yet others see in it a symbol of the fate shared by the two apostles who were martyred in Rome, the first by beheading and the second by being crucified like his Teacher.

However much these theories vary in precision, some of them—especially the last—offer a sound and constructive solution. In any case, it is clear that the two apostles represent two distinct worlds, or to put it better, they present to us two very important biblical personalities. Each enjoyed particular virtues with which they especially shined.

The Apostle Paul was especially distinguished by a trio of virtues and the Apostle Peter was equally endowed with another trio of virtues.

Starting with the Apostle Paul, we easily notice through the texts of the New Testament that the Apostle Paul was distinguished by three characteristics that fundamentally helped him in the success of his mission and labors.

1. He was a Roman citizen. This meant that he possessed unique civil and political rights. He repeatedly took advantage of them whenever the need arose for this. For example, we can point to the incident of his being freed from the jail in Philippi once he announced that he was a Roman citizen.
2. The Apostle Paul was adept in Greek language and philosophy. For this reason God saw him as “a chosen vessel” and sent him to the gentiles. By means of the Greek language, the Apostle Paul was able to capture the great and civilized Greek world of that time for Christ. He put into the service of God’s Word the power of philosophy and linguistic knowledge as a means for dialogue, encounter, and communication. Here we may contemplate the role of knowledge and philosophy.
3. The Apostle Paul possessed a third characteristic, his Jewish, Hebrew religion. He was one of the Jews of the diaspora. He himself took pride in being a Pharisee who had studied with Gamaliel.

Here we turn to the question of religion.

Continued on page 7

## Ss. Peter And Paul... Continued

On the other hand, we notice a trio of virtues with the Apostle Peter.

1. Jesus named Peter as a shepherd. When Peter responded in the affirmative to Jesus' question, "Do you love me?," Jesus sent him to tend the sheep. So love is pastoral service. Here we may pause at the question of "shepherding."

2. Peter confessed to the most important truth. The most important and defining event in the life of Saint Peter was his startling confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." This is the truth that the Lord considered to be the rock upon which His Church would be built.

3. Peter was distinguished by zeal in love. We easily notice in the texts of the New Testament that Peter always wanted to demonstrate his zeal for the love of Christ more than the other apostles. This zeal caused him to promise Jesus that he would follow Him even to death, to cut off the ear of the high priest's slave, to immediately cast himself into the Sea of Tiberias in order to meet Jesus first when He had risen from the dead. So the Apostle Peter was distinguished by righteous zeal.

Indeed, these two trios complement each other when we combine each of them. Yes, authority must be pastoral, philosophy true, and religion burning zeal.

It is true that the true meaning of authority is to shepherd people. "Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all" (Mark 10:43-44).

Indeed, true philosophy is Christian truth, just as true knowledge is found in the Christian faith.

Truly, religion without the zealous flame of love loses its vitality and becomes simply dead, formal, static Phariseism.

Indeed, "the way" is shepherding in authority, "The truth" in philosophy, and "the life" in religion. This is what is symbolized in the image of the embrace of Peter and Paul. That is, authority with Paul embraces shepherding with Peter. The sciences with Paul meet the truth with Peter. Finally, religion with Paul is realized in zealous love with Peter.

The embrace of Peter's virtues and Paul's virtues, when these two worlds are intertwined and the characteristics of each saint meet, Jesus' rock is realized in practice:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Source: pravmir.ru

## Teachings of St. Seraphim of Sarov on Fasting

The holy fasters did not approach strict fasting suddenly, but little by little they became capable of being satisfied by the most meager food. Despite all this they did not know weakness, but were always hale and ready for action. Among them sickness was rare, and their life was extraordinarily lengthy.

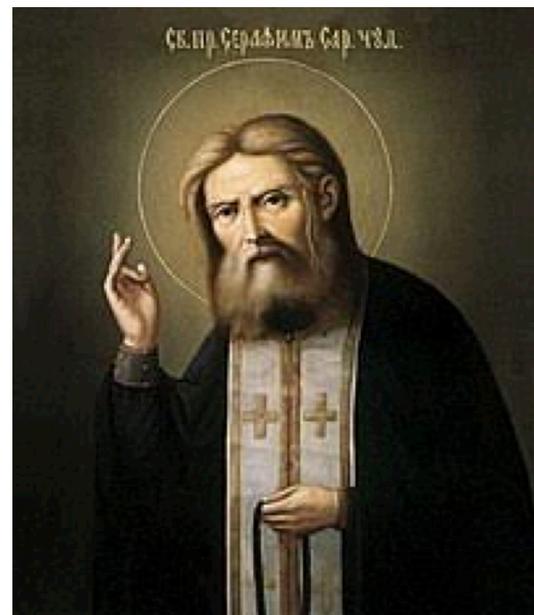
To the extent that the flesh of the faster becomes thin and light, spiritual life arrives at perfection and reveals itself through wondrous manifestations, and the spirit performs its actions as if in a bodiless body. External feelings are shut off, and the mind that renounces the earth is raised up to heaven and is wholly immersed in the contemplation of the spiritual world.

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Fasting consists not just of eating rarely, but also of eating little. And not just in eating only one meal, but in not eating much. Foolish is the faster, who waits for a specific time [to eat a meal], but then at the time of the meal is completely consumed, body and mind, with insatiable eating.

In proportion to how the body of the faster becomes thin and light, so the spiritual life attains perfection and reveals itself in wonderful ways. Then the soul acts as if in an incorporeal body. Carnal feelings are shut off, and the spirit, released from the world, ascends to heaven and completely immerses itself in contemplation of the spiritual world.

Every day one should partake of just enough food to permit the body, being fortified, to be a friend and helper to the soul in performing the virtues. Otherwise, with the body exhausted, the soul may also weaken.



## July, The Month of Russian Saints

Looking at the Church calendar for July, you will notice how many Russian names are placed this month for commemoration: Equal-to-the-Apostles Olga, princess of Russia (**July 11**), her grandson, Equal-to-the-Apostles Great Prince Vladimir, enlightener of the Russian Land (**July 15**), the first Russian saints Boris and Gleb, sons of prince Vladimir (**July 24**), and St. Andrew Rublev, the author of the most perfectly executed of all icons (**July 4**). The founder of Orthodox monastic life in Russia, St. Antony of the Kiev Caves (**July 10**), Ss. Sergius of Radonezh (**July 5**) and Seraphim of Sarov (**July 19**), who both united Russia spiritually in different dangerous times.

Martyrs Maria (Skobtsova), Dimitri (Klepenin) and those with them, who perished in the Nazi concentration camps (**July 20**), St Elizabeth Romanov and Nun Barbara (**July 18**), and Holy Royal Martyrs of Russia: Tsar Nicholas II, Tsaritsa Alexandra, Crown Prince Alexei, and Grand duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria, and Anastasia, and those martyred with them (**July 17**).

Many of them lived in the ancient times according to the Orthodox faith as **Ss. Princes Boris and Gleb**. When Prince Vladimir died, his kingdom was divided among his sons the children from several wives. But Prince Svyatopolk, not content with his share, resolved to have his brothers murdered in order to take their territories. Boris and Gleb knew of the plan, but resolved not to take up arms against their brother, to avoid civil war and to fulfill the commandment "Resist not evil. Others reposed only a hundred years ago: Rev. **Seraphim of Sarov, St. Elizabeth Romanov** and **Holy Royal Martyrs**. They prayed, talked, worked, and left their thoughts for us.

Among the Russian saints are people of all ranks and states, of different ages and sexes, monks and princes, scholars and artists. From this assembly, everyone can choose their own examples to follow.

Virtues of humility, love of God, unity with the Church, Christian attitude to the world, which must be, according to St. Maxim the Confessor, "not sensual, not insensible, but sympathetic." "Bind the spirit of peace, and thousands around you will be saved," taught Seraphim of Sarov. The spirit of peace and prayer gathered around the venerable **Anthony** and Theodosius the hosts of the Kiev-Pechersk devotees in the 1000s, who, dispersed throughout Russia, and led many dioceses.

The same spirit gathered around the **St. Sergius of Radonezh's** followers, who built new monasteries all over Russia. The modest monk gave an impulse to the

spiritual, cultural and state revival of Russia - let us recall at least **St. Andrew Rublev**, the icon painter, and the victory on the Kulikovo field over Tatars in 1380.



The same spirit warmed the weak in the Marfo-Mariinsky community of the holy pious princess-martyr **Elizabeth Feodorovna** who, after marrying Grand Duke Sergei, converted to the Orthodox faith, though this was not required by her position. After her husband was assassinated in 1905, princess Elizabeth took monastic vows and withdrew from the world, founding the Convent of Saints Mary and Martha. There she served devoting her time to prayer, fasting, and caring for the sick and the poor.

Among the Russian saints there are people of many nationalities: Greeks, Tatars, Bulgarians, Georgians, Germans, Jews – all together in Christ, in one Church. Its priests were the Greeks, Russians, Bulgarians, Mordvins because "There is neither Greek nor Jew, ... but Christ is all, and in all." (Col. 3:11).

The whole history of the Church is the history of persecution and brief periods of calm life: the martyrdom of the first centuries, the persecution of Orthodoxy by the Russian tsars and emperors, and then by the Soviet officials. Thousands Orthodox were killed during the last century but Orthodox faith through the work of catacomb priests and believers has survived. Many Russian emigrants carried it to the new lands running from the revolution and the Red terror.

The Russian Orthodox theology has met with the West through the works of **St. Jacob Netsvetov of Alaska (July 26)**, or **St. John Maximovich of Shanghai and San Francisco (July 2)**. Anglo, Franco, Hispanic and other Orthodox parishes arose all over the world.

So, let's learn from the Russian saints the love of God, the Church, people, and homeland. Let's strengthen our prayers to the Lord so that He will help us preserve the purity of the Orthodox faith and, like hieromonk Parthenius of Kiev, we will say: "Teach me, O Lord, to arrange my work so that it will glorify Your Holy Name."

## Feasts & Fasts in August: Transfiguration of Our Lord, Dormition of Theotokos, Beheading of St. John The Baptist

There are two Great Feasts in August and a prominent holiday that are joined together by the blessings of nature: from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, for eight consecutive days, the Church celebrates the **Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ**. The sacred Feast of the **Dormition of the Theotokos** marks her repose (August 15<sup>th</sup>), which was followed by the translation of her sacred body three days later into heaven. **The death of St. John the Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist** is remembered on 29<sup>th</sup> August, and the Church keeps a strict fast on this day.

We offer you an extract from the book of **Ivan Schmelev** *Leto Gospodne (Year of the Lord)* (1933–48), an autobiographical novel full of lovingly drawn characters and beautifully observed details of author's childhood in pre-revolutionary Russia.



*"Shmelev is perhaps the deepest Russian writer of the post-revolutionary emigration, and not only of the emigration... He is a writer of great strength, Christian purity, and brightness of soul. His works, Year of the Lord, Pilgrimage, Inexhaustible Cup, among others, are not only classics of Russian literature; they are marked and illuminated by the Spirit of God."*

-Valentin Rasputin

### "SAVIOR OF THE APPLES"

From *Year of the Lord* by Ivan Shmelev

Translated by Nun Cornelia

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Tomorrow is the Transfiguration, and the day after tomorrow they'll take me somewhere to the Church of Christ the Savior, to the huge, pink house in the park, behind the iron grate, to take the exam for gymnasium, and I am studying and studying the "Sacred History" of Athens. "Tomorrow" – that is only what they say – but they will take me in two or three years, but they say "tomorrow" because the exam is always on the day after the Savior's Transfiguration. Everyone says that the main thing is to know the Law of God well. I know it well, I even know what is on what page; nevertheless it is very frightening, so frightening that you lose your breath thinking about it. Gorkin knows that I'm scared. Not long ago he carved me a scary nutcracker using only a hatchet. It calms me down. He lures me into the cool shadows under the board, upon a pile of wood shavings, and starts asking me questions out of a book. I might say that he reads worse than I do, but somehow he knows things that even I don't know. "Well now," he says, "tell me something from the divine..." I tell him, and he praises me.

"You know it well," he draws out the "o" like all of our carpenters, and maybe that is what calms me, "surely they'll take you into the school, you know it all. Now, tomorrow is Savior of the Apples... What do you know about that? So-o. Why do they sprinkle the apples? Well, you don't know it right. They'll ask you, and you won't say it. And how many Savior feasts do we have? Again you don't know. They'll teach you to ask, and you... How's it if you've not been told? Take a better look, it should be there."

"There isn't anything there..." I say all frustrated, "it only says that they bless the apples!"

"And sprinkle them. And why do they sprinkle them? A-a! They will ask you, well, and how many Savior feasts do we have? And you don't know. Three Saviors. The first Savior," he bends his finger, yellowed with varnish and horribly squashed, "Savior of the honey; they bring out the Cross. That means summer's over, you can break out the honey, the bee won't mind... he's done with his work. The second Savior, the one that's tomorrow, is the Savior of the Apples, the Transfiguration of the Savior; they sprinkle the apples. Why? Here's why. Adam-Eve sinned, the snake deceived them with an apple, they weren't supposed to; from sin! But Christ went up the mountain and blessed it. That is why they began to be careful. Whoever eats the apple before the sprinkling will get worms in his stomach, and there can be cholera. But after it's sprinkled there's no danger. The third Savior is called the Savior of the nuts, the nuts are ripe, after Dormition. We have a procession in our village; they carry the icon of the Savior, and everyone chews nuts. Sometimes we gather a bag of nuts for Batiushka\* and he gives us milk needles to break the fast with. Why, you tell 'em, and

they'll take you at the school."

The Transfiguration of the Savior.... There's a tender, gentle light in my soul from it to this day. It should be, from the morning garden, from the bright blue sky, from the heaps of hay, from the apples and pears preserved in the greenery, a few leaves of which are already withering—greenish-gold, and soft. A bright, light-bluish day, not hot; August. The sunflowers have already grown over the fences and peer at the street—is the procession going yet? Soon they will cut off the caps and take them while singing, under the golden banners. The first "grushovka" apple in our orchard is ripe and red. We will shake the tree—for tomorrow...

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Even now, far from your native country, when you meet an ordinary apple that smells like a grushovka\*, you squeeze it in the palm of your hand and wrinkle your nose; and in the sweetish, juicy fragrance you remember vividly the little orchard that once seemed enormous, better than all other orchards in the world, now lost without a trace... with the birch and the rowan trees, the apple trees, the raspberry bushes and the black, white, and red current bushes, the purple gooseberries, with lush burdock and nettles; the distant orchard....

To the bent nails in the fence, to the crack in the cherry tree seeping like glimmering mica, with droplets of amber and raspberry-colored gum—everything, to the last apple on the top, behind a golden leaf, beaming like golden glass!... And you see the yard with the great puddle, now less watery, with dried ruts, with sunken bricks, with boards that had clung there before the rain, with the ragged boot, claimed forever by the mud ... and the gray barn with the silvery glimmer of time, with the smell of pitch and tar, and the mountain of bulging sacks piled up to the storehouse ceiling, with oats, and salt packed into rock, leaning fast to the hooks, with ears of golden oats... and tall stacks of board weeping resin in the sun, and crinkling piles of shingles, and wood billets and chips...

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The feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord. A gold and azure morning, cool. We can't get through the church for the crowd. I stand behind the counter where they sell candles. Father jingles silver and copper, passing out candle after candle. They flow endlessly from the boxes in an unbroken white ribbon, knock thin and dry against each other, jump from shoulder to shoulder, over heads, arriving at the icons—they are being passed "to the Feast!" Swimming over people's heads in bundles are all the apples, prosphora\*, and more apples. Our baskets on the ambo are being "censed around," as Gorkin tells me. He runs to and fro in the church, I can see his beard here and there. In the close, hot air there is now especially the smell of fresh apples. They are everywhere, even in the choir, even stuffed into the banners. It is extraordinarily light and joyful—as if we are guests, and the church is not church at all. It all seems to me that everyone is only thinking about apples. The Lord is also here with all of us, and He is also thinking about apples; after all, we've brought them to Him—look, Lord, how good they are! And He looks at them and says to all, "Well, good, and eat them to your health, children!" And they will be eating completely different apples—not store-bought, but church apples, holy ones. This is the very Transfiguration.

Gorkin walks over and says, "Let's go, the sprinkling is about to begin." He has a red bundle in his hand—"his own." Father is still counting money, and we go. They place the table for the reposed in the center. The golden-blue acolyte brings out a huge silver platter with a mountain of red apples on it—the ones that came from Kursk. Baskets and bundles are on the floor all around it. Gorkin and the guard drag the familiar baskets from the ambo, moving them "under the sprinkling, a little closer." Everyone is rushing around, cheerful; not church at all. The priests and deacons are in extraordinary vestments that they call "apple vestments"—that's what Gorkin tells me. Of course, apple vestments! If you look sideways at the green and blue brocade, large apples, pears, and grapes shine golden in the leaves—green, gold, light blue, shimmering. When a ray of sun falls on the vestments from the cupola, the apples and pears come alive and plump, as if hanging. The priests bless the water. Then, the senior priest in a lilac kamilavka\*, reads a prayer over our apples from Kursk for the fruits and vineyards—an amazing, happy prayer—and begins sprinkling the apples. He so friskily flicks the brush that the droplets fly like silver, flashing here and there. He sprinkles first the baskets for the parish, and then the other bundles and baskets.... The people go to kiss the cross. The acolytes and Gorkin push an apple or two into everyone's hand, however it happens. Batiushka gives me a beautiful one from the plate, and a deacon I know slaps me three times on the head with the wet brush on purpose, and cold streams of water fall under my collar. Everyone is eating apples—such crunching. It's like we're all guests. Even the choir is munching in the cliros\*. Our carpenters come up, then the familiar boys, and Gorkin pushes them forward—"lively, now, don't stand in the way!" They whine, "Give us another apple, Gorkin... You gave Mishka three!..." They give some to the beggars on the steps. The crowd thins. In the church apple cores are strewn, crushed underfoot: "the hearts." Gorkin stands by the empty baskets and wipes his neck with his kerchief. He crosses himself over a blushing apple, takes a bite with a crunch, and knits his brow:

"A bit tingly..." he says, knitting his brow and lowering his eyes, his beard trembling. "But pleasant when it's

sprinkled....”

In the evening he finds me by the boards, on the wood shavings. I am reading “Sacred History.”

“You, to be sure, now know everything. They will ask you about the Savior, or maybe why they sprinkle the apples, and you’ll shave it off to them... they’ll let you into the school. Take a look at this!...”

He looks so peacefully into my eyes, and it is so evening-like bright and golden-pink in the yard from shavings, bast, and boards. I feel so happy for some reason that I grab a fistful of shavings and throw them up in the air – and a golden, curly rain showers down. Suddenly I begin to feel a sharp pain – from the inexplicable joy, or from the numberless apples I had eaten that day – I feel a sharp, tickling pain. The shivers run over me, and I burst into uncontrollable laughter and jump up and down; along with this laughter springs up my wish – they’ll let me into school; surely, they will!

Source: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/38842.html>

\*

**Batiushka** – Russian Orthodox priest or clergyman.

**Camilavka** - kamilavka (Russian: камилавка), is an item of clerical clothing worn by Orthodox Christian and Eastern Catholic monks (in which case it is black) or awarded to clergy (in which case it may be red or purple).

**Cliros** – is the section of an Eastern Orthodox church dedicated to the choir.

**Grushovka** – an apple-tree variety bred in Moscow.

**Prospophora** – a small loaf of leavened bread used in Orthodox Christian liturgies.

## Orthodoxy For Kids: The Story of Beheading of St. John The Baptist

Today, August 29<sup>th</sup>, is a little Great Thursday. For today the greatest man among those born of women, John, the Holy Forerunner and Baptiser of the Lord, was murdered. On Great Friday, people murdered God, crucified God. On today’s holy great feast, people murdered the greatest of all men. It is not I who chose to use the expression “the greatest.” For the Lord declared of him: Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist...(Matthew 11: 11). In all Creation, there exists no greater praise.

Following the Baptism of the Lord, St John the Baptist was locked up in prison by Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch (ruler of 1/4 of the Holy Land) and governor of Galilee.

The prophet of God John openly denounced Herod for having left his lawful wife, the daughter of the Arabian king Aretas, and then instead cohabiting with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip (Luke 3:19-20). On his birthday, Herod made a feast for dignitaries, the elders and a thousand chief citizens. Salome, the daughter of Herod, danced before the guests and charmed Herod. In gratitude to the girl, he swore to give her whatever she would ask, up to half his kingdom.

The vile girl, on the advice of her wicked mother Herodias, asked that she be given the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Herod became apprehensive,

for he feared the wrath of God for the murder of a prophet, whom earlier he had heeded. He also feared the people, who loved the holy Forerunner. But because of the guests and his careless oath, he gave orders to cut off the head of St John and to give it to Salome.

According to Tradition, the mouth of the dead preacher of repentance once more opened and proclaimed: “Herod, you should not have the wife of your brother Philip.” Salome took the platter with the head of St John and gave it to her mother. The frenzied Herodias repeatedly stabbed the tongue of the prophet with a needle and buried his holy head in a unclean place. But the pious Joanna, wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, buried the head of John the Baptist in an earthen vessel on the Mount of Olives, where Herod had a parcel of land. (The Uncovering of the Venerable Head is celebrated (February 24). The holy body of John the Baptist was taken that night by his disciples and buried at Sebastia, there where the wicked deed had been done.

The Beheading of St John the Baptist is also a strict fast day because of the grief of Christians at the violent death of the saint.

Today Orthodox faithful will not eat food from a plate or platter, use a knife, or eat food that is round in shape (apples, pears, peaches, grapes, onions, cabbage ect.) in honor of St. John. Avoiding red wine (symbol or blood) and dancing (since Salome danced before Harold) is also recommended. Soup is a very popular meal on this day.

Source: <http://orthodoxyforkids.blogspot.com/2015/08/beheading-of-st-john-baptist.html>



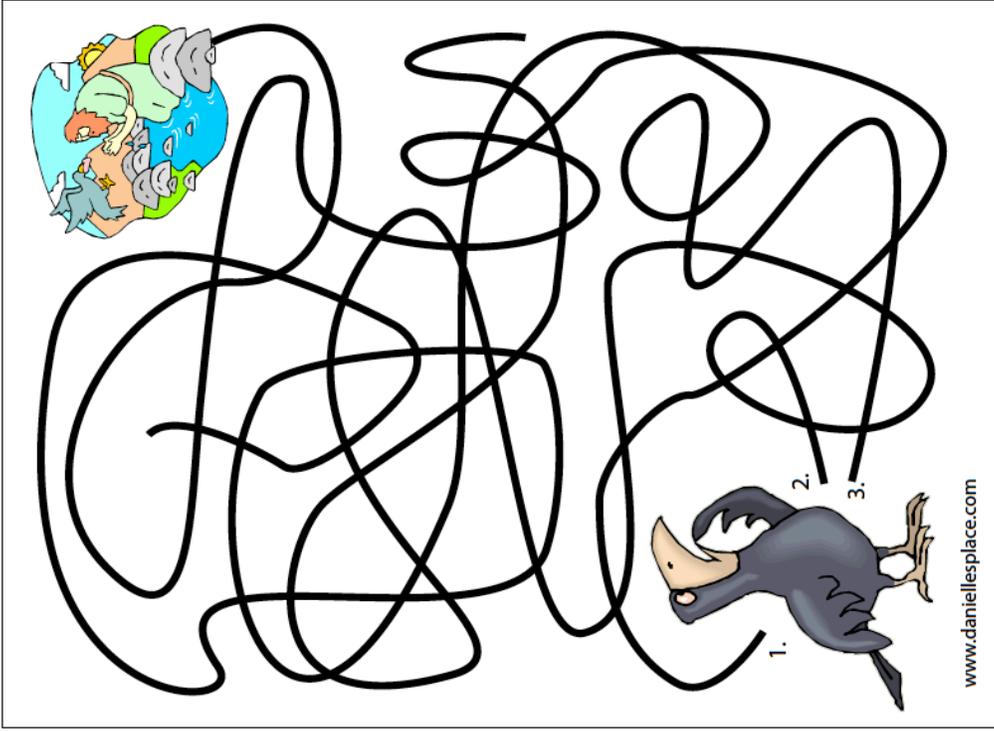
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| KISHON VALLEY | ELIJAH       | FIRE       |
| PROPHET       | STONES       | JARS       |
| KING AHAB     | BAAL         | ISRAELITES |
| ASHERAH       | BULL         | RAIN       |
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