



Prophet Elias News

News in the time of self –isolation for the Orthodox Church of
the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
2nd August 2020



LORD, IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE

Metropolitan Anthony: Two Icons of the Transfiguration



There are two icons of the transfiguration which struck me very deeply when I saw them in the original in the Tretiakov Gallery in Moscow. One is by Rublev and the other by his master, Theophan the Greek. In both there are three mountain peaks, the Lord Jesus in the centre, with Moses and Elijah on the right and left-hand sides, and the three disciples on the slopes of the mountain. The difference between the two icons lies in the way in which things are seen. The Rublev icon shows Christ in the brilliancy of his dazzling white robes which cast light on everything around. This light falls on the disciples, on the mountain and the stones, on every blade of grass. Within this light, which is the divine splendour, - the divine glory, the divine light itself inseparable from God – all things acquire an intensity of being which they could not have otherwise; in it they attain to a fullness of reality which they can have only in God.

The other icon is more difficult to perceive in reproduction. The background is silvery and appears grey. The robes of Christ are silvery, with blue shades, and the rays of light falling around are also white, silvery and blue. Everything gives the impression of much less intensity. Then we discover that all these rays of light falling from the divine presence and touching the things that surround the transfigured Christ do not give relief but give transparency to things. One has the impression that these rays of divine light touch things and sink into them, penetrate them, touch something within them so that from the core of these things, of all things created, the same light reflects and shines back, as though the divine life quickens the capabilities, the potentialities of all things, and makes all reach out towards itself. At that moment the eschatological situation is realized, and in the words of St Paul, 'God is all and in all'.

Metropolitan Anthony Bloom: 'Body and Matter in Spiritual Life', in *Sacrament and Image: Essays in Christian Understanding of Man*, ed. A.M. Allchin (1967)



On the Transfiguration by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

One word dominates this feast in all its prayers, hymns and readings. This word is light. "Let your everlasting light shine also upon us sinners." The world is a dark, cold and terrifying place. And this darkness is not dispelled by the physical light of the sun. On the contrary, perhaps, the sun's light makes human life seem even more terrible and hopeless as life surges relentlessly and inexorably, bound by sufferings and loneliness, toward death and annihilation. All is condemned, all suffers, all is subject to the incomprehensible and merciless law of sin and death.

But then comes the appearance on earth, the entrance into the world, of a man, humble and homeless, who has no authority at all over anyone, who has no earthly power whatsoever. And He tells people that this kingdom of darkness, evil and death is not our true life; that this is not the world God created; that evil and suffering and finally death itself can and must be conquered; and that He is sent by God, his own Father, to save people from this terrible bondage to sin and death. Human beings have forgotten their true nature and calling, renounced them. They must turn to see that they have lost the ability to see, to hear what they are already incapable of hearing. They must come to believe all over again that good is stronger than evil, love stronger than hate, life stronger than death. Christ heals, helps and gives himself to everyone. And nevertheless the people do not understand, do not hear, do not believe.

He could have revealed his divine glory and power and forced them to believe in him. But He wants from them only freely-given faith, freely-given love, freely-given acceptance. He knows that in the hour of his ultimate sacrifice, ultimate self-giving, everyone will flee in fear and forsake him. But right now, so that afterwards, when everything is finished, the world would still have some evidence of where He is inviting people to come, what He is offering us as a gift, as life, as the fullness of meaning and joy; now, therefore, hidden from the world and from the people, He reveals to three of his own disciples that glory, that light, that victorious celebration to which man is called from eternity. The divine light, permeating the entire world. The divine light, transfiguring man. The divine light in which everything acquires its ultimate and eternal meaning. "It is good for us to be here," cried the apostle Peter seeing this light and this glory. And from that time, Christianity, the Church, faith is one continuous, joyful repetition of this "it is good for us to be here."

But faith is also a plea for the everlasting light, a thirst for this illumination and transfiguration. This light continues to shine, through the darkness and evil, through the drab grayness and dull routine of this world, like a ray of sun piercing through the clouds. It is recognized by the soul, it comforts the heart, it makes us feel alive, and it transfigures us from within. "Lord! It is good for us to be here!" If only these words might become ours, if only they might become our soul's answer to the gift of divine light, if only our prayer might become the prayer for transfiguration, for the victory of light! "Let your everlasting light shine also upon us sinners!"

Celebration of Faith: Sermons, Vol. 2: "The Church Year" (pp 157-9), St. Vladimir's Press.

Celebrating the Feast Together

I hope, God willing and if in good health, to celebrate the Divine Liturgy on the glorious feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour on Thursday 6th August.

The precise timing and arrangements still need to be worked out, but if all is well, this service may well be held in the open air in the garden behind St James' parish church. This will give the opportunity for all of you who have not been able to receive communion to share in the Holy Sacrament.

Exact details and health precautions for this service will be posted both on our web page and Facebook. If you are on our mailing list, you will also receive details about this service.

Father Peter

Texts for the Feast of the Transfiguration

Troparion

Thou wast transfigured upon the mountain, O Christ our God,
showing Thy glory to Thy disciples as far as they were able to bear it.
At the intercessions of the Mother of God,
make Thine everlasting light shine forth also upon us sinners.
O Giver of Light, glory to Thee.

Kontakion

Thou wast transfigured upon the mountain,
and Thy disciples beheld Thy glory, O Christ our God, as far as they were able so to do:
that when they saw Thee crucified, they might know that Thy suffering was voluntary,
and might proclaim to the world that Thou art truly the Brightness of the Father.

Ikos

Awake, you sluggards, lie not forever on the ground; and you, thoughts that draw my soul towards the earth, arise and go up to the high slope of the divine ascent. Let us run to join Peter and the sons of Zebedee, and with them go to Mount Tabor, that with them we may see the glory of our God and hear the voice they heard from heaven; and they proclaimed that this is the Brightness of the Father.

Exapostilarion

Today on Tabor in the manifestation of Thy Light, O Word, Thou unaltered Light from the Light of the unbegotten Father, we have seen the Father as Light and the Spirit as Light, guiding with light the whole creation.

Thou, O Christ, with invisible hands hast fashioned man in Thine image; and Thou hast now displayed the original beauty in this same human body formed by Thee, revealing it, not as in an image, but as Thou art in Thine own self according to Thine essence, being both God and Man.

(Canticle Five, Second Canon)

Thou hast taken me captive with longing for Thee, O Christ, and hast transformed me with Thy divine love. Burn up my sins with the fire of the Spirit, and count me worthy to take my fill of delight in Thee, that dancing with joy I may magnify both Thy comings, O Lord who art good.

(Canticle Nine, Second Canon)

This Week we Celebrate

On Sunday 2nd August: **Saint Basil of Moscow** – Fool for Christ's Sake (d 1557)
(See elsewhere in this issue)

Saint Sidwell of Exeter (7th C)

On Thursday 6th August:

The Holy Transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

We wish **Father Christopher** and all at **Holy Transfiguration Parish in Great Walsingham**

HAPPY FEAST and MANY YEARS!

Fools for Christ's Sake

Saint Basil of Moscow – Fool for Christ's Sake (Feastday August 2nd). Like the title 'Holy Passion Bearer' (see previous issue) that of 'Fool for Christ's Sake' is more widely found in the Russian tradition.



A saint who is given the title 'Fool-for-Christ' is one who is known for his apparent, yet holy, insanity. His motivation is found in the words of Saint Paul: *'Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.'* (1 Corinthians 3:18-19)

'One form of the ascetic Christian life is called foolishness for the sake of Christ. The fool-for-Christ set for himself the task of battling within himself the root of all sin, pride. In order to accomplish this he took on an unusual style of life, appearing as someone bereft of his mental faculties, thus bringing upon himself the ridicule of others. In addition he exposed

the evil in the world through metaphorical and symbolic words and actions. He took this ascetic endeavour upon himself in order to humble himself and to also more effectively influence others, since most people respond to the usual ordinary sermon with indifference. The spiritual feat of foolishness for Christ was especially widespread in Russia.'

(Excerpt from *The Law of God*, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, NY: 1993) Source: OrthodoxWiki

Jim Forest, secretary of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship, notes that the Orthodox churches consider holy fools as "living out in a rough, literal way the 'hard sayings' of Jesus. Like the Son of Man, they have nowhere to lay their heads, and like him, they have no money in their pockets... Clearly holy fools challenge an understanding of Christianity that gives people with certain intellectual and vocational gifts a head start in economic, social and spiritual arenas. While never harming anyone, holy fools often raise their voices against those who lie and cheat and do violence to others."

Source: <http://www.thecompassnews.org/2014/08/fool-christ>



Memory Eternal!

On 4 August, which is the Anniversary of the Falling Asleep in our Lord of our beloved Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, I hope to serve a Panikhida in St Anne's at 12.00 noon. This service will be streamed.

Fr Peter

Vespers from St Anne's

This week Father Peter hopes to be serving vespers in St Anne's on Saturday 1st August at 6.00 and streaming the service. There will be no liturgy this coming Sunday 2nd August.