

August 2, 2015: The 9th Sunday after Pentecost (Jesus walks on the water)

Epistle: I Cor. 3:9-17:

For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames. Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

Gospel: Matthew 14:22-34:



Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God." When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret.

Having fed more than 5000 people in the wilderness with only five loaves and two fish, the Lord sent the disciples to the other side of the sea and He went up into the mountain to pray. His prayer was intense and long, until the fourth watch of the night. While their Master was praying, the disciples were trying to survive, being caught in a terrible storm: *But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.* As if this wasn't a bad enough predicament, the disciples see a ghost-like appearance coming toward them, which magnified their fear: *And they cried out for fear.*

To their surprise and joy, they hear the calming voice of their Master: *"Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."* Peter wanted to verify the reality of Christ's presence and said: *"Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."* Shortly thereafter, Peter himself was part of this miraculous walking on the sea, at the invitation of Christ: *"Come."*

As long as his faith was unwavering, Peter had no problem defying the "natural" laws. However, when he began to doubt, he started to sink into the sea and he reacted like any one of us in time of peril, crying out for help: *"Lord, save me!"* Not only was he saved by the mighty hand of Christ,

but the other disciples were also spared a certain death when He calmed the sea: *And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.*

The gospel reading of this Sunday teaches us a valuable life lesson: stay steadfast in your faith when the tide of the sea of life and the winds are threatening our life, believing wholeheartedly in Christ our Savior who is inviting us to Him ("*Come!*") and is only one prayer away from extending His saving arm to pull us from sinking into despair and doubt.

Fr. George Bazgan

Back to the normal schedule

As of Saturday, August the 2nd, our Church Services will resume their normal schedule.

Please see the posting bellow of the special services during the Holy Virgin's Domition Fast.

Holy Virgin's Dormition Fast

Between August 1-15, the Orthodox Church observes the Dormition Fast.

During the two-week fast, besides the regular Sunday Liturgy, the following services will be held in our church:

- Thursday, August 6: Divine Liturgy at 10:00 AM.**
- Friday, August 7: Akathist to the Holy Virgin at 7:00 PM.**
- Saturday, Aug. 8: Vespers at 6:00 PM.**
- Friday, August 14: Vespers at 6:00 PM.**
- Saturday, August 15: Divine Liturgy at 10:00 AM.**

Those who want to have their confession heard, can do so after any of these services.

Archbishop Nicolae's Meditation at the Dormition Fast, 2014

Most Reverend Fathers,
Beloved Faithful,

Between August 1st and 14th the Orthodox Church has the Dormition of the Mother of God fasting period. This fast precedes the great Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God and was established by the Church as a special period for remembering the precious virtues of Virgin Mary and the fasting period with which, according to the Tradition, the Mother of our Lord prepared herself for her falling asleep. This fast was strictly kept by the athonite monks honoring both the Transfiguration and the Dormition, because, as we know, the Mother of our Lord is the Protectress of the Holy Mount Athos.

This is the newest fast of our Church. Its origin is founded in the 5th century, when the veneration of the Mother of God was growing and the Christians begun to keep a fasting period before the Dormition Feast. The date and length of this fast (two weeks) were established for the whole Orthodox world in 1166 in Constantinople at a local Synod convened by the Ecumenical Patriarch Loukas Chrysovergis. The St. Savva's Typicon and Teaching about Fasts from the Great Horologion establish a strict fast, with total fasting on Monday, Wednesday and Friday until the IXth Hour (3.00 pm) when we eat dry food. On Tuesday and Thursday we eat boiled vegetables, without oil and Saturday and Sunday we are allowed oil and wine. Fish is allowed only on August 6th on the Transfiguration Feast.

In this fasting period there is a special prayer rule: we read daily the two Paraklesis of the Most Holy Theotokos. In this office we ask the help and protection of the Mother of our Lord in all our sorrows and weaknesses. We call her "protection, treasure of healings, fervent intercessor and firm rampart, defender of Christians". We confess our faith in her supplications towards her Son, supplications that will help all those in distress.

The Dormition Fast is the proper time for us to read the Service of the Small and Great Paraklesis to the Most Holy Theotokos and to ask fervently her help and support. Our world is troubled by war and many Christians are persecuted for their faith. The Syrian conflict has led to the destruction of many churches and monasteries as well as to the killing of many Christians. Two bishops, Metropolitan Paul and Archbishop John of Aleppo have been held hostage for more than one year. In Iraq Christians suffer great persecutions and banishment to the point that in the city of Mosul the whole Christian population has disappeared. The conflict in the Holy Land has restarted and the first victims are the Christian communities. The same state of conflict exists also in the Orthodox world at the border of Ukraine.

My paternal advice is that we use this fasting period for prayer to the Most Holy Mother of God asking for peace in the world, understanding between the different religious communities, and good thoughts for all those responsible, leaders of this world. With her motherly love and her great mercy She will help and protect us.

Archbishop NICOLAE