

The Arena



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NEWSLETTER CONTENTS

Pastor's Column	1
Parish & Local Events	3
Catechetical Challenges	4
Readings and Ramblings	4
Lives of the Saints	5
Wisdom of the Fathers	5
The Orthodox Faith	11
Hymnography	13
Name Days	16
Prayer Requests	16

"All who love the martyrs, raise up a divine and worthy hymn, honoring the most wise Katherine, for she preached Christ in the arena"

Kontakion to Saint Katherine

The Newsletter of
SAINT KATHERINE THE GREAT
MARTYR MISSION
ORTHODOX CHURCH OF
AMERICA

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PASTOR'S COLUMN

Standing between God and the whole human race, she alone made God a son of man, and men sons of God, rendered the earth heaven and made mankind divine.

These words, written by Saint Gregory Palamas in his homily on the feast of the Dormition, capture beautifully the significance of the Mother of God in the salvation of the human race. As Orthodox Christians we are of course familiar with the Church's glorification of Jesus Christ throughout the liturgical year at the Great Feasts. We remember his Incarnation, by which our humanity was assimilated to God, at Christmas. We remember his life-creating Passion during Holy Week and his glorious Resurrection at Pascha. And we remember other glorious events in his earthly ministry at the Meeting of the Lord (2/2), the Ascension (forty days after Pascha), Pentecost (fifty days after Pascha), and Transfiguration (8/6). We would do well also to remember, though, the role his mother played in our salvation. The Dormition of the Mother of God, which we celebrate this month, is an opportunity to do so. As the final Great Feast of the liturgical year, it summarizes the work of this most glorious of all human beings in response to God.

Very little was written about the Virgin Mary in the scriptures. As Vladimir Lossky noted,

The Mother of God was never a theme of the public preaching of the apostles. While Christ was preached on the housetops and proclaimed for all to know in a catechesis addressed to the whole universe, the mystery of the Mother of God was revealed only to those within the Church, to the faithful who had received the message and were pressing towards “the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14).

Or, as a convert to Orthodoxy once put it to his bewildered Protestant friends, “after I came to know Jesus, the first person he introduced me to was his mother.”

Despite her mysterious place in the New Testament, the Virgin Mary is indeed revealed there to have possessed a unique grace in relationship to God. Many are familiar with her response to the Archangel Gabriel—“let it be unto me according to thy word”—at the Annunciation (Luke 1:38).

A less familiar passage is Luke 11:27-28, though it is precisely this passage that the Church has us hear at the Divine Liturgy on feasts of the Mother of God. In it, a woman in a crowd cries out to Jesus that his mother is “blessed.” Jesus’s response is interesting. From outside the Church’s tradition, his words could appear as a challenge to the woman’s instinct to honor his mother, for he brings attention *rather* to those who hear the word of God and act on it. Here, however, the translation of the Greek particle “rather” (*menoun*) is important. According to the King James Version, Christ responds “yea, rather (*menoun*), blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” The emphasis is on Christ’s affirmation, not rejection, of the woman’s instinct, and redirection of it toward all who will follow her holy example. The New King James Version, which is used by the Orthodox Study Bible, has a similar rendering: “More than that, blessed are those . . .” It is worth noting that in certain other New Testament passages, the particle *menoun* is in fact also used in this affirmative sense. Romans 10:18, for instance, has Paul asking rhetorically if the Israelites have been given the Gospel: “yes, verily (*menoun ge*) . . .” is his response.

The conclusion we should reach, then, is that the New Testament accounts of the Virgin Mary point us toward her, even if she remains a mystery to those outside of the Church’s broader holy tradition. She is the one who brings to completion Israel’s long struggle to put forward, in “the fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4), one worthy of receiving the Holy Spirit in her womb (a Pentecost before Pentecost). She appears as the most faithful follower of Jesus (she is present in many of the most important moments in his ministry, including the Crucifixion). And she serves as a guide to all Christians who desire eternal blessed communion with God. And as we who have been blessed to be given the tradition about her meditate upon her life and, in the present feast, “falling asleep” (*dormition* in Latin), we can do no better than return to the sense of mystery articulated by Saint Gregory of Palamas in his homily.

What words can describe your divinely-radiant beauty, O Virgin Mother of God? We cannot circumscribe you in our words and thoughts, for everything about you surpasses our speech and understanding. But, with your loving permission, we may sing your praises. In you all graces find a place. You are the fullness of everything noble and good, a living picture and icon of all goodness and kindness, for you alone were found worthy of the gifts of the Spirit in their entirety, or rather, you alone had mysteriously dwelling in your womb Him in Whom all these gifts were

stored. In a way past understanding, you became His Tabernacle, and now through death you proceed hence to immortality, and are fittingly translated from earth to heaven, to live with Him for ever in the heavenly tabernacles. From there you care for your inheritance, and by your unsleeping intercessions you reconcile us to your Son.

1 PARISH AND LOCAL EVENTS

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS:

- Aug. 1-15** Dormition Fast
- Aug. 1** Catechesis, 10 am
- Aug. 2** Divine Liturgy 9:30am
Coffee Hour: Bibireata, Gilmore, Rebne, Strickland
- Aug. 5** Eve of Transfiguration: Festal Vigil, 7pm
- Aug. 6** HOLY TRANSFIGURATION
Divine Liturgy with Blessing of Fruit, 7am
Studies in Orthodoxy, 7pm
- Aug. 8** Catechesis, 10 am
- Aug. 9** Divine Liturgy 9:30am
Potluck Theme: "Fruits and Veggies, Beans and Rice"
- Aug. 13** Bible Study, 7pm
- Aug. 14** Eve of Dormition: Festal Vigil, 7:00 pm
- Aug. 15** DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS
Chrismation of Nancy Anne Desmond, 8:30 am
Divine Liturgy, 9:30 am
- Aug. 16** Divine Liturgy 9:30am
Coffee Hour: Cutshall, Knowlton, Kvansnikoff, Lekanof
- Aug.17 – Sept. 4** Fr. John away on vacation
- Aug. 20** No Studies in Orthodoxy
- Aug. 22** No Vespers @ St. Katherine
- Aug. 23** Divine Liturgy 9:30am
Coffee Hour: Hezel, Huehnergarth, (Koblov), Mount, Stchur
- Aug. 27** Bible Study (Time and Place TBA)
- Aug. 29** Beheading of John the Baptist (Fast)
No Vespers @ St. Katherine
- Aug. 30** Divine Liturgy 9:30am
Coffee Hour: Ahrens, Grambush, Hayman, Simmons, Wilson

ATTENTION ALL BOYS!

Orthodox Boy Scout Troop 67 is looking for boys ages 11 to 17 who are interested in camping, hiking, summer camp, and lots of fun. We've been to the coast, the mountains, Eastern Washington, and many other great destinations. This summer, we're going to Camp Parsons on the Olympic Peninsula, where you can sail, windsurf, swim, canoe, do shooting sports, climb the tower, and a ton more. And before we go, we'll be stopping at St. Elizabeth in Poulsbo for Divine Liturgy...we attend services as part of every weekend/weeklong outing, either at a local parish or in the field if necessary.

Our membership includes boys from churches all around the Seattle area, and there's always room for one more. You can check out a meeting, or go on a hike, just to see if you like it. And we are heading to summer camp on August 16, so anyone who joins before then will be able to go along. Even if you're not quite 11 yet, give us a call.

If you are interested in finding out more about our troop, please call Scoutmaster Steve Fallin at 206-604-3195, or email family@fallin.com.

Patty Rebne

CATECHETICAL CHALLENGES (Our Catechumens can answer them. Can you?)

- 1) What hymn from Holy Saturday does the priest say quietly ("mystically") upon completing the Great Entrance and turning to place the Gifts upon the Altar Table (while the choir takes up the second half of the Cherubic Hymn)?
- 2) At what two points during the Divine Liturgy according to the parish practice our bishop has given us is the Veil to the Altar opened, and why?
- 3) Keeping the account of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2 in mind, what is one example of the "pentecostal" character of the Orthodox Divine Liturgy in which our life in the Holy Spirit is revealed?

Answers for August on the last page.

READINGS AND RAMBLINGS

****This is a new column designed to present your contributions. As the title suggests, this column will contain everything from suggested reading and book reviews to topics of personal and communal interest. In short, this column is what we, the parishioners of St. Katherine Mission, want it to be. **Please email submissions to Emily Lorelli – ekslorelli@gmail.com******

THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

August 18: Martyr Florus of Illyria

The Martyrs Florus and Laurus were brothers by birth not only in flesh but in spirit. They lived in the second century at Byzantium, and afterwards they settled in Illyria [now Yugoslavia]. By occupation they were stone-masons (their teachers in this craft were the Christians Proclus and Maximus, from whom also the brothers learned about life pleasing to God).

The prefect of Illyria, Likaion, sent the brothers to a nearby district for work on the construction of a pagan temple. The saints toiled at the structure, distributing to the poor the money they earned, while they kept strict fast and prayed without ceasing.



Once, the son of the local pagan-priest Mamertin carelessly approached the structure, and a chip of stone hit him in the eye, severely injuring him. Sts Florus and Laurus assured the upset father, that his son would be healed.

They brought the youth to consciousness and told him to have faith in Christ. After this, as the youth confessed Jesus Christ as the true God, the brothers prayed for him, and the eye was healed. In view of such a miracle, even the father of the youth believed in Christ.

When the construction of the temple was completed, the brothers gathered the Christians together, and going through the temple, they smashed the idols. In the eastern part of the temple they set up the holy Cross. They spent all night in prayer, illumined with heavenly light. Having learned of this, the head of the district condemned to burning the former pagan priest Mamertin and his son and 300 Christians.

The martyrs Florus and Laurus, having been sent back to the prefect Likaion, were thrown down an empty well and covered over with earth. After many years, the relics of the holy martyrs were uncovered incorrupt, and transferred to Constantinople. In the year 1200 the Novgorod pilgrim Anthony saw them. Stephen of Novgorod saw the heads of the martyrs in the Pantokrator monastery around the year 1350.



SERMON ON THE DORMITION OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica

My present talk for your appreciation is occasioned both by love, and by necessity. I speak not only by reason of my love for you, and because I desire that the word of salvation should be brought to your God-loving hearing, and so nourish your souls; but also, it is necessary for me, in addition to praising the Church, to expound on the majesty of the ever-Virgin Mother of God. This wish, being twofold, impels and inclines me, and unwavering duty also compels me; though speech cannot comprehend that which is higher than any word, just as the eye cannot fix its gaze upon the sun.

Although we cannot speak about that which surpasses all words, we may offer hymns of praise out of love for the Mother of God, according to our ability. If "the death of His saints is precious in the sight of the Lord" (*Ps. 115/116: 15*), and "the memory of the just is praised" (*Prov. 10:7*), then how much more is the memory of the holiest of the saints, through Whom all holiness has been accorded to the saints? I refer to the Ever-Virgin Mother of God, Whose memory it now behooves us to celebrate with the most exalted praises.

We now celebrate Her holy Dormition, or Death, through which She was brought "a little lower than the angels," (*Ps. 8:5*) and yet She ascended incomparably higher than the angels and the archangels..., and is above them because of Her closeness to God, and by the wondrous deeds which were, from the beginning, written and accomplished regarding Her.

It was on Her account that the God-inspired prophets prophesied, and the miracles were performed that foreshadowed this great and universal wonder: the ever-Virgin Mother of God. The testimonies of the Spirit, in various ways, indicate beforehand types of the future truth. (Joachim and Anna, in their old age, would become parents of a child) who would without seed give birth to the One begotten of God the Father from eternity....

The King of all greatly desired the beauty of the ever-Virgin (*Ps. 44/45:11*), ...and He overshadowed Her, or rather, the... Power of the Most High dwelt within Her. He did not manifest His presence through darkness and fire as with the God-seer Moses, nor through storm and clouds as with the Prophet Elias, but the Power from on High overshadowed the all-pure and virginal womb, separated... neither by air..., nor by anything sensible.... Thus, the Word of God took up His abode in Her in an inexpressible way, and came forth incarnate in the flesh. He "showed himself on earth and conversed with men" (*Baruch 3: 38*), deifying our nature and granting us, according to the divine Apostle, that "which the angels desire to look into" (*1 Pet. 1:12*). This is... the most glorious glory... of the ever-Virgin Mary.

What words are there to explain what transpired after the inexplicable birth? In Her co-operation and suffering with the condescension of the Word of God, She is also glorified and exalted together with Him, in His great and wondrous majesty. But with the Ascension to Heaven of Him Who was incarnate of Her, She in turn rivaled those great works surpassing mind and speech, which through Him were Her own,

with manifold deeds and prayers, and also Her solicitude for the whole world, and the inspiration She gave to preachers sent to all the ends of the earth.

She was a support and consolation for all, and toiled with the rest in the proclamation of the Gospel. Thus She lived a difficult life proclaimed in mind and word. Therefore, the death of the Theotokos was also life-bearing, carrying Her over into heavenly and immortal life. The remembrance of it is a joyous feast and universal solemnity.... Into the hands of Her Son the God-bearing spirit of the Ever-Virgin Mary was given; and indeed a short while afterwards, Her body was translated by Him into the eternal heavenly habitations. This was fully just and proper.

In actual fact, through the ages many were granted the divine condescension, glory and might, as David also says: "Thy friends, O God, have been greatly honored by me; and their rule has been greatly strengthened. I will number them, and more than the sands shall they be multiplied" (*Ps. 138/139:17-18*). "Many daughters," according to Solomon, "have obtained riches, and many have wrought valiantly" (*Prov. 31: 29-30*). And here is the All-Pure Virgin Mary, and She is most exceedingly exalted over all and for all. While she alone stood between God and the human race, God became the Son of Man, and made men sons of God. She made Heaven of earth and deified the human race. She alone of all women is shown to be a mother by nature and the Mother of God transcending every law of nature. Through ineffably giving birth, She has become the Queen of everything in both the earthly and heavenly creation. Through Herself, She exalted those subject to Her, and while on earth showed obedience to heavenly rather than earthly things, and She shared in greater rewards and greater power. Through the ordination She received from Heaven through the Divine Spirit, She became the most exalted and most-blessed Queen of a blessed lineage.

Now She has Her proper habitation in Heaven, into which today She is translated from earth, for Heaven is a most fitting place for Her. She stands at the right side of the Almighty "adorned in golden robes, arrayed in diverse colors" (*Ps. 44 [45]: 9-10*), as the Prophet-King David said of Her. Beneath the golden robes, Her divinely radiant body is arrayed with the diverse colors of all virtues. She alone, in her body glorified by God, enjoys the celestial habitations with Her Son. The earth, the grave and death could not hold forever her life-originating and God-receiving body - a dwelling place more radiant than Heaven and the habitation of the heavens.

Actually, if Her soul, which was a habitation of God's grace, is borne up to heaven, forsaking the mundane, as becomes clear from many examples, and as we believe, how could that body which received within itself the Only-Begotten and Pre-eternal Son of God, the inexhaustible source of grace, and also showed forth His Body by giving birth to Him, not be carried up from earth to Heaven? If, when only three years of age, and not yet having in Herself the super-celestial Indwelling, nor yet having begotten the Incarnate One, She took up habitation in the Holy of Holies... [November 21], then how could that body decay and turn to dust?

Therefore, the body which gave birth, is glorified together with the One Who is born, with glory befitting God, and it is raised together. The "Ark of Holiness" (*Ps. 131 [132]: 8*) is resurrected together with Christ, Who arose on the third day, as expressed in prophetic song. There was, moreover, the evidence for the Apostles of Her resurrection from the dead: the shroud and burial cloths, which remained in

the grave, and which alone were found there by those who came to look things over: just as it had been with Her Son and Lord.

It was unnecessary that She should tarry a certain while upon the earth, as had Her Son and God; and therefore, She was taken directly from the grave into a celestial habitation, from whence She shines with a resplendant radiance, illuminating all the earth. For the faithful, this is something worthy of veneration, worthy of praise and of song.... In this way, She was at the start, "a little lower than the angels" (Ps. 8:6) in Her mortality, but this only served to the increase the majesty of the Mother of God. Therefore, it is entirely proper that everyone gather today and commune for the present Feast.

It is fitting that She who contained the One Who fills all things, and is above all, should Herself should surpass all and become foremost of all by Her virtues and utmost worthiness. After death, she has found immortality, and in Her body dwells in Heaven together with Her Son and God. Therefore, She pours forth abundant grace on those honoring Her. She even bestows on us the boldness to hasten unto Her, for She is the vessel of so many graces. She distributes blessings generously on us, and never ceases this profitable bestowal and gracious help.

Seeing in Her the source and dispenser of every blessing, one could say that the Virgin is, for virtue and for virtuous people, what the sun is for visible light and for the creatures living in it. But if he transfers his mental gaze to the Sun which arose for mankind in a marvelous way, eternally shining forth from the Virgin, the Sun, Which by nature has everything that is granted Her by grace, then he shall call the Virgin Heaven. And this is so because of the will of God. The inheritance of all blessedness that She has received surpasses in holiness any beneficence beneath or above the heavens, just as the heavens are more vast than the sun, but the sun shines brighter than the heavens.

What words can describe your divinely radiant beauty, O Virgin Mother of God? It is indeed impossible to represent your attributes in thoughts and words, for they so exceed both thoughts and words. However, it is fitting to sing your praises, if you will permit this out of love for mankind. You are the fount of all gracious gifts, and the fullness of all righteousness, the chosen and living image of every blessing and every good, for you alone are worthy of the gifts of the Spirit. You alone carried in your womb the One in Whom is the treasury of all these gifts, and you became a miraculous habitation for Him. Now, having passed from mortality into immortality,

Those things that through all the ages helped all the best individuals who ever lived to reach such virtue, and that which all those have individually by the grace of God, whether angels or men, She combines within Herself, and She alone brings them to fulfillment.

and rightfully gone forth from earth to Heaven, into the Pre-eternal habitation to dwell with Him eternally. From that place you care for your inheritance, and with incessant supplications to Him, you move Him to mercy for all.

How much closer to God than all those who draw near to Him is the Mother of God? To that degree She has been deemed worthy to be heard. I speak not only of the earth-born, but even of the holy ranks of angels.

It was of the leaders of the angelic hosts that Isaiah once wrote: "and the Seraphim stood round about Him" (*Is. 6: 2*). But David said concerning Her: "the Queen stood at Thy right side" (*Ps. 44 [45]: 9-10*). Do you not see the difference of standing? And from this difference it is possible to discern also the difference of rank according to worthiness. The Seraphim are around God, while right beside Him is the only Queen, Who is praised and glorified by God Himself, saying of Her, as it were, to His (Angelic) Powers that are round about, what was said in the Song of Songs: "Thou art fair, my companion" (*Song 4: 1*). She is brighter than any light, sweeter than the divine gardens, more beautiful than the whole world, both the visible and invisible.

She in all due justice stands not only near, but at the right hand of God, since where Christ is enthroned in the Heavens, She also stands there, having gone up from earth to Heaven. Not only does She love, She is also loved in return more than anyone else, according to the laws of nature, and because She is His true Throne. Isaiah also saw this Throne amidst the choir of the Seraphim and he called it high and exalted (*Is. 6:1*), thus indicating that the Mother of God is exalted above the Heavenly Powers.

Therefore, the prophet also showed these angels as glorifying the God Who came forth from Her, proclaiming: "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place (*Ezek. 3:12*). The Patriarch Jacob, seeing this throne through types, cried out: "How fearful is this place. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the heavenly gate" (*Gen. 28: 17*). David again, joining with the multitude of the saved, who are like the strings of an instrument, or like varied voices of different generations harmonious in one Faith through the Ever-Virgin, praises Her in psalmody, saying: "They shall mention Thy name from generation to generation: therefore the nations shall give thanks to Thee forever" (*Ps. 44/45: 17-18*).

Do you not see, that all of creation glorifies the Virgin Mother, and not only for some prescribed interval, but rather forever, unto ages of ages?

It is obvious, moreover, that She will never cease to benefit all creatures through all the ages to come. I speak not only about the creatures we see around us, but also of the chief commanders of the heavenly hosts, the bodiless and celestial hierarchies, It is only through Her that they, and we, are united to God, and touch the Intangible. Isaiah shows this clearly: he saw that the Seraphim did not take the coal from the altar directly, but held it with tongs, by which he touched the coal to the lips of the prophet to purify them (*Is. 6: 6*).

Moses saw the tongs of Isaiah's great vision when he beheld the bush burning with fire, yet not consumed (*Ex. 3: 2*). Who does not know that this bush and these tongs are the Virgin Mother? She conceived the fire of Divinity (Him Who takes away the sins of the world) without being burned, although the Archangel was present at the Conception. Through Her He was joined to the human race, cleansing us through this inexplicable union. Therefore, She is the only boundary between created and uncreated nature; and no one can come to God unless they are illumined through Her, the Lamp truly radiant with divinity. As the Prophet-King says, "God is in the midst of Her, she shall not be moved" (*Ps. 45/46:5-6*).

If recompense is given according to the measure of one's love towards God, and if one who loves the Son is loved by Him and by His Father, and becomes the abode of Both, and if They mysteriously abide and dwell in those who conform to

the promise of the Lord (*Jn. 14: 21*), then who would love Him more than His Mother? He is Her Only-Begotten Son, and She also conceived Him virginally, so that the love of Him Who took flesh from Her might be shared with Her twofold.

And who will the Only-Begotten love more than His Mother? He was Begotten of Her inexplicably in the fullness of time without a father, just as He was Begotten of the Father in eternity without a mother. How could He Who came to fulfill the Law not increase the honor due to His Mother even beyond the requirements of the Law?

Thus, since through Her alone did He Who "appeared upon earth and lived among mankind" (*Baruch 3: 38*), come unto us, being invisible to all before this time, so in the age to come, without Her intercession... every form of spiritual gift would be beyond the capacity of created beings. She alone has received the fulness of Him Who fills all things, and now through Her, all may receive it, for She dispenses it according to the capacity of each, and in proportion to the purity of each, since She is both the treasury and the overseer of the riches of God.

It is an eternal law in the heavens, that the inferior enter into communion with what is beyond being through the superior. Certainly, the Virgin Mother is incomparably superior to all. It is through Her that all partake of God, who otherwise would not partake. Those who know God understand Her to be the container of Him Who contains all. All who praise God praise Her together with Him. She Herself is the pardoner of all that went before Her, and intercessor for all that came after Her, and agent of eternal blessings. She is the subject of the prophecies of the prophets, the principle of the Apostles, the foundation of the martyrs, the premise of the Church's teachers. She is the glory of the earth-born, the joy of heavenly beings, and the adornment of all creatures. She is the beginning, the source and root of inexpressible blessings. She is the supreme perfection of all that is holy.

O divine, and now heavenly, Virgin! How can I relate everything concerning you? How can I glorify you, the Treasury of Glory? ... mere movement towards you illumines the mind, ...through you the spirit of a man is enlightened by... the Holy Spirit. You have become the treasury of divine gifts, and their repository; though not to keep them for yourself, but so that you might fill all of created nature with the gifts of grace. For the Master of those inexhaustible treasures entrusted them to you so that they might be bestowed. Why else would He have granted blessings, which would otherwise remain hidden and unbestowed?

Therefore, O Lady, grant your mercy and your grace abundantly to all your people, your inheritance. Deliver us from the misfortunes afflicting us. Behold how much and how greatly we are oppressed... by those both without and within. By your might transform all for the best.... bestow your help and healing commensurate with our passions, ...granting to our souls and our bodies abundant grace for every need. Though we may be incapable of containing your riches, increase our capacity and so grant them to us that we, saved and strengthened by your grace, may glorify the Pre-eternal Word Who was Incarnate of you for our sakes, together with His Unoriginate Father and Life-Creating Spirit, both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

[The author of July's "Wisdom of the Fathers" selection was unintentionally omitted. It was "Sermon on the Transfiguration" by Saint Gregory of Palamas.]

An excerpt from Fr. Hopko's *The Orthodox Faith: Doctrine, Volume II*

The Symbol of Faith: Sin

The word **sin** means literally "missing the mark." It means the failure to be what one should be and to do what one should do.

Originally man was made to be the created image of God, to live in union with God's divine life, and to rule over all creation. Man's failure in this task is his sin which has also been called his **fall**.

The "fall" of man means that man failed in his God-given vocation. This is the meaning of *Gen 3*. Man was seduced by evil (the serpent) into believing that he could be "like God" by his own will and effort.

In the Orthodox tradition the eating of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" is generally interpreted as man's actual taste of evil, his literal experience of evil as such. Sometimes, this eating is also interpreted (as by St. Gregory the Theologian) as man's attempt to go beyond what was possible for him; his attempt to do that which was not yet within his power to realize.

Whatever the details of the various interpretations of the **Genesis** story, it is the clear doctrine of Orthodoxy that man has failed in his original vocation. He disobeyed God's command through pride, jealousy and the lack of humble gratitude to God by yielding to the temptation of Satan. Thus man sinned. He "missed the mark" of his calling. He transgressed the Law of God (see *1 Jn 3:4*). And so he ruined both himself and the creation which he was given to care for and to cultivate. By his sin-and his sins -- man brings himself and all creation under the rule of evil and death.

In the Bible and in Orthodox theology these elements always go together: sin, evil, the devil, suffering and death. There is never one without the other, and all are the common result of man's rebellion against God and his loss of communion with Him. This is the primary meaning of *Gen 3* and the chapters which follow until the calling of Abraham. Sin begets still more sin and even greater evil. It brings cosmic disharmony, the ultimate corruption and death of everyone and everything. Man still remains the created image of God -- this cannot be changed -- but he fails to keep his image pure and to retain the divine likeness. He defiles his humanity with evil, perverts it and deforms it so that it cannot be the pure reflection of God that it was meant to be. The world also remains good, indeed "very good," but it shares the sorry consequences of its created master's sin and suffers with him in mortal agony and corruption. Thus, through man's sin the whole world falls under the rule of Satan and "lies in wickedness" (*1 Jn 5:19*; see

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also Rom 5:12).

The Genesis story is the divinely-inspired description in symbolic terms of man's primordial and original possibilities and failures. It reveals that man's potency for eternal growth and development in God was turned instead into man's multiplication and cultivation of wickedness and his transformation of creation into the devil's pryncedom, a cosmic cemetery "groaning in travail" until saved once more by God (Rom 8:19-23). All the children of Adam, i.e. all who belong to the human race, share in this tragic fate. Even those born this very minute as images of God into a world essentially good are thrown immediately into a deathbound universe, ruled by the devil and filled with the wicked fruit of generations of his evil servants.

This is the fundamental message: man and the world need to be saved. God gives the promise of salvation from the very beginning, the promise which begins to be fulfilled in history in the person of Abraham, the father of Israel, the forefather of Christ.

And the Lord said ... to Abram [later named Abraham] "I will make you a great nation ... and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed (Gen 12:3; also 22:15).

Abraham believed God; and from him came the people of Israel from whom, according to the flesh, came Jesus Christ the Saviour and Lord of Creation (see Lk 1:55, 73; Rom 4; Gal 3).

The entire history of the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Jesus. All that happened to the chosen children of Abraham happened in view of the eventual and final destruction of sin and death by Christ. The covenants of God with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel which means "the one who struggles with God"); the twelve tribes of Israel; the story of Joseph; the passover, exodus and reception of God's Law by Moses; the entrance into the promised land by Joshua; the founding of Jerusalem and the building of the temple by David and Solomon; the judges, kings, prophets and priests; everything in the Old Testament history of God's chosen people finds its final purpose and meaning in the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and glorification of God's only Son Jesus the Messiah. He is the one who comes from the Father to save the people from their sins, to open their tombs and to grant eternal life to all creation.

HYMNOGRAPHY: AUGUST

August 1: Procession of the Honorable Wood of the Life-Giving Cross of the Lord

Troparion - Tone 1

O Lord, save Your people,
And bless Your inheritance!
Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians
Over their adversaries.
And by virtue of the Cross,
Preserve Your habitation!

Kontakion - Tone 4

As You were voluntarily crucified for our sake,
Grant mercy to those who are called by Your name;
Make all Orthodox Christians glad by Your power,
Granting them victories over their adversaries,
By bestowing on them the invincible trophy, Your weapon of peace!

August 2: Translation of the relics of the Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen
from Jerusalem to Constantinople

Troparion - Tone 4

Your relics have risen from the depths of the earth,
like a treasury for the immortal life of all of creation.
The Church, rejoicing in the grace that she receives from them,
duteously honors you, Protomartyr Stephen.
Preserve us from error and heresy by your intercession!

Kontakion - Tone 6

You were the first to be sown on the earth by the Heavenly Husbandman, O all-praised one.
You were the first to shed your blood on the earth for Christ, O blessed one.
You were the first to receive the crown of victory from Him in heaven,
Stephen, first of the suffering God-crowned martyrs.

August 6: The Holy Transfiguration of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ

Troparion - Tone 7

You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ God,
revealing Your glory to Your disciples as far as they could bear it.
Let Your everlasting Light also shine upon us sinners,
through the prayers of the Theotokos.
O Giver of Light, glory to You!

Kontakion - Tone 7

On the Mountain You were Transfigured, O Christ God,
And Your disciples beheld Your glory as far as they could see it;
So that when they would behold You crucified,
They would understand that Your suffering was voluntary,
And would proclaim to the world,
That You are truly the Radiance of the Father!

August 9: Glorification of the Venerable Herman of Alaska, Wonderworker of All
America

Troparion - Tone 7

Joyful North Star of the Church of Christ,

Guiding all people to the Heavenly Kingdom;
Teacher and apostle of the True Faith;
Intercessor and defender of the oppressed;
Adornment of the Orthodox adornment of the Orthodox Church in America:
Blessed Father Herman of Alaska,
Pray to our Lord Jesus Christ
For the salvation of our souls!

Troparion - Tone 4

O blessed Father Herman of Alaska,
North star of Christ's holy Church,
The light of your holy life and great deeds
Guides those who follow the Orthodox way.
Together we lift high the Holy Cross
You planted firmly in America.
Let all behold and glorify Jesus Christ,
Singing his holy Resurrection.

Kontakion - Tone 3

The eternal light of Christ our Savior
guided you, blessed Father Herman,
on your evangelical your evangelical journey to America
to proclaim the Gospel of peace.
Now you stand before the throne of glory;
intercede for your land and its people:
Peace for the world and salvation for our souls!

August 15: The Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Mother of God and Ever-
Virgin Mary

Troparion - Tone 1

In giving birth you preserved your virginity,
In falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Theotokos.
You were translated to life, O Mother of Life,
And by your prayers, you deliver our souls from death.

Kontakion - Tone 2

Neither the tomb, nor death could hold the Theotokos,
Who is constant in prayer and our firm hope in her intercessions.
For being the Mother of Life,
She was translated to life by the One who dwelt in her virginal womb.

August 16: Translation of the Image "Not-Made-By-Hands" of our Lord Jesus Christ
from Edessa to Constantinople

Troparion - Tone 2

We venerate Your most pure image, O Good One,
and ask forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ God.
Of Your own will You were pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh
to deliver Your creatures from bondage to the Enemy.
Therefore with thanksgiving we cry aloud to You:
"You have filled all with joy, O our Savior,
by coming to save the world."

Kontakion - Tone 2

Uncircumscribed Word of the Father
as we behold the victorious image of Your true incarnation,

not made by hands, but divinely wrought
in Your ineffable and divine dispensation towards us,
we honor it with veneration!

August 23: Martyr Lupus the Slave of St Demetrius of Thessalonica

Troparion - Tone 4

Your holy martyr Lupus, O Lord, through his suffering has received an incorruptible crown from You, our God. For having Your strength, he laid low low his adversaries, and shattered the powerless boldness of demons. Through his intercessions, save our souls!

Kontakion - Tone 2

As a steadfast warrior of the Lord,
you vanquished the enemy array, O Lupus.
Strengthened by divine love,
with strength surpassing that of man you prevailed in your contest.
Now you unceasingly intercede with Christ our God for us all.

August 29: The Beheading of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist
John

Troparion - Tone 2

The memory of the righteous is celebrated with hymns of praise,
but the Lord's testimony is sufficient for you, O Forerunner.
You were shown in truth to be the most honorable of the prophets,
for you were deemed worthy to baptize in the streams of the Jordan Him whom
they foretold.

Therefore, having suffered for the truth with joy,
you proclaimed to those in hell God who appeared in the flesh,
who takes away the sin of the world, and grants us great mercy.

Kontakion - Tone 5

The glorious beheading of the Forerunner,
became an act of divine dispensation,
for he preached to those in hell the coming of the Savior.
Let Herodias lament, for she entreated lawless murder,
loving not the law of God, nor eternal life,
but that which is false and temporal.

August 30: St Alexander the Patriarch of Constantinople

Troparion - Tone 4

O God of our Fathers,
always act with kindness towards us;
take not Your mercy from us,
but guide our lives in peace
through the prayers of the Patriarchs Alexander, John, and Paul.

Kontakion - Tone 8

Set aflame by the love of Christ, O glorious ones,
you took up the yoke of His precious Cross revealing yourselves as followers in His
footsteps by your way of life,
and you became partakers of His divine glory,
divinely-wise Alexander, with wonderful John and glorious Paul.
As you stand before His throne, earnestly pray for our souls.

PARISHIONERS' NAME DAYS – AUGUST

August 15th – Marie Pylypzczuk (Most Holy and Ever-virgin Mary)

August 18th – Flore Lekanof (Holy Martyr Florus)

August 20th – Ransom Samuel Cutshall (Prophet Samuel)

August 30th – Alik Knowlton and Arthur Gilani (Saint Alexander Nevsky)

PRAYER REQUESTS

Note: If you wish to have someone included on our parish prayer list for remembrance during the divine services, please notify Fr. John before the end of the month. This list will in most cases be cleared at the beginning of each month.

Please include the following people, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox, in whatever prayers you can offer. Each of them is in special need this month for our common intercessions before God.

Living

Patricia

Flore

Allan Simeon

Deborah Maria

Robert Gregory

Jim

Bistra

Sarah

Allan

Antonio

Departed

Catechetical Challenge Answers:

- 1) The Noble Joseph (because the Altar Table symbolizes our Lord's Tomb, from which the Resurrection springs)
- 2) The Altar Veil is opened, or "torn in two" (cf. Mark 15:38), prior to the Anaphora and to the bringing out of the Chalice for Holy Communion because both manifest the restoration of man's Communion with God.
- 3) There are several examples. They include:
 - The priest's recitation of O Heavenly King prior to the opening blessing
 - The allusion to Acts 2:1 in the priest's call to love one another "with one accord" prior to the Anaphora
 - The priest's plea to God at the Anaphora to "send down thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts set forth"
 - The priest's allusion, also during the Anaphora and with arms upraised, to Acts 2:15 in the prayer of the Third Hour ("O Lord, who at the third hour didst send down thine All-Holy Spirit upon thine Apostles . . .")
 - The people's singing of the hymn for Pentecost (from Lord I Call at the Vigil for the feast), "We have seen the true light, we have received the Heavenly Spirit," after receiving Holy Communion