



*Congratulations to Dr. Luke Wilczek who successfully defended his Doctoral Dissertation this past week and earned the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Chemistry from Brown University. He has joined the Chemistry faculty of Connecticut College in New London, CT. We also congratulate Mikki and Bill Wilczek and all of his family who gave him much support and encouragement during the years of his studies. May God Grant Luke and his Family Many Blessed and Happy Years!*

**The Sisterhood is sponsoring a Brunch on Sunday, August 21 at 12:00 noon for anybody who works to make pierogies and Pascha breads. The brunch will take place at Potter's Restaurant in Port Byron on Route 31 next to the school. Anyone who is not usually a helper for the sisterhood activities is also welcome to come and pay their own way at a cost of \$21 per person. Please sign up by August 15<sup>th</sup>. And please consider joining the Sisterhood. God Bless all of our workers and supporters.**

**Please keep our Food Pantry Ministry in mind during these summer months. Our donations are greatly appreciated. In the future, we will plan to take these donations to the St. Alphonsis Food Pantry for distribution at the end of the third week of every month. We are told that this is the time when there is the greatest need and the least amount of food available to those in need. Thank you for your great love of others as we strive to do the work that Our Lord Jesus Christ wishes us to do! God Bless You!**

# Procession of the Honorable Wood of the Life-Giving Cross of the Lord

(First of the three “Feasts of the Savior” in August)



Commemorated on [August 1](#)

The origin of this Feast is explained in the Greek *Horologion* of 1897: “Because of the illnesses which occur during the month of August, it was customary at Constantinople to carry the Precious Wood of the Cross in procession throughout the city for its sanctification, and to deliver it from sickness.”

On the eve (July 31), the Cross was removed from the imperial treasury and placed it upon the Holy Table of the Great Church of Hagia Sophia (which is dedicated to Christ, the Wisdom of God). From August 1 until the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos, there was a procession throughout the entire the city, and then the Cross was placed where all the people could venerate it. In the Russian Church this Feast is combined with the remembrance of the Baptism of Rus on August 1, 988. In the “The order of services for the holy, catholic, and apostolic Great Church of the Dormition,” which was compiled in 1627 by order of Patriarch Philaret of Moscow and All Rus, there is a similar explanation of the Feast: “On the day of the Procession of the Precious Cross there is a Cross Procession with the Sanctification of Water, for the enlightenment of the people, in all the towns and places.”

Knowledge of the day of the actual Baptism of Rus is preserved in the Chronicles of the XVI century: “The Baptism of the Great Prince Vladimir of Kiev and of all Rus took place

on August 1.” In the current practice of the Russian Church, the service of the Lesser Sanctification of Water on August 1 takes place either before or after Liturgy. Because of the Blessing of Water, this first Feast of the Savior in August is sometimes called “the Savior of the Water.” Along with the Blessing of Water, there may also be a Blessing of Honey (thus it is also called “the Savior of the Honey),” because on this day, the newly-gathered honey is blessed and tasted.

## **Finding of the relics of Saint Gamaliel**

Commemorated on [August 2](#)

Saint Gamaliel was a Pharisee, a doctor of the Law (Acts 5:34), and the teacher of Saint Paul (Acts 22:3). In the year 415, Saint Gamaliel appeared to a priest named Lucian. He was a tall, venerable man with a long white beard. He was dressed in white clothing which was edged with gold and marked with crosses, and held a gold wand in his hand. Gamaliel called Father Lucian by name three times, then told him to go to Jerusalem and inform Bishop John to open the tomb where his relics and those of other saints were resting. The priest asked the stranger who he was.

“I am Gamaliel, who instructed the apostle Paul in the Law,” he replied. Then he told the priest where to find the relics of Saint Stephen. He also revealed that he had taken Saint Stephen’s body and laid it in his own tomb after it had been lying exposed for a day and a night. Saint Gamaliel also mentioned that Saint Nikódēmos was buried at the same spot. “I received him into my house in the country,” he said, “and maintained him there until the end of his life. After his death, I buried him honorably near Stephen.”

Saint Gamaliel informed the priest that he and his twenty-year-old son Abibas were also buried there. Father Lucian was afraid to believe this vision right away, lest it be a temptation from the Evil One. However, when Saint Gamaliel appeared again and commanded him to obey his instructions, he did so.

A monk named Migetius also had a vision of Saint Gamaliel and told Father Lucian to search for the relics in a place called Debatalia. When the relics were uncovered, an ineffable fragrance was noticed.

The relics of Saints Stephen, Gamaliel, Abibas, and Nikódēmos were transferred from Jerusalem to Constantinople in 428 and placed in the church of the holy deacon Laurence (August 10).

# The Holy Transfiguration of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ

(The Second “Feast of the Savior” in August)



Commemorated on [August 6](#)

## **Discourse on the Holy Transfiguration of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ of Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica**

**For an explanation of the present Feast and understanding of its truth, it is necessary for us to turn to the very start of today’s reading from the Gospel: “Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James and John his brother, and led them up onto a high mountain by themselves” (Mt.17:1).**

**First of all we must ask, from whence does the Evangelist Matthew begin to reckon with six days? From what sort of day is it? What does the preceding turn of speech indicate, where the Savior, in teaching His disciples, said to them: “For the Son of Man shall come with his angels in the glory of His Father,” and further: “Amen I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death, until they have seen the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom” (Mt.16:27-28)? That is to say, it is the Light of His own forthcoming Transfiguration which He terms the Glory of His Father and of His Kingdom.**

**The Evangelist Luke points this out and reveals this more clearly saying: “Now it came to pass about eight days after these words, that He took Peter and John and James, and went up the mountain to pray. And as He prayed, His countenance was altered, and His raiment became a radiant white” (Luke 9:28-**

**29). But how can the two be reconciled, when one of them speaks definitively about the interval of time as being eight days between the sayings and the manifestation, whereas the other (says): “after six days?”**

**There were eight on the mountain, but only six were visible. Three, Peter, James and John, had come up with Jesus, and they saw Moses and Elias standing there and conversing with Him, so altogether there were six of them. However, the Father and the Holy Spirit were invisibly with the Lord: the Father, with His Voice testifying that this was His Beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit shining forth with Him in the radiant cloud. Thus, the six are actually eight, and there is no contradiction regarding the eight. Similarly, there is no contradiction with the Evangelists when one says “after six days,” and the other says “eight days after these words.”**

**But these twofold sayings as it were present is a certain format set in mystery, and together with it that of those actually present upon the Mount. It stands to reason, and everyone rationally studying in accordance with Scripture knows that the Evangelists are in agreement one with another. Luke spoke of eight days without contradicting Matthew, who declared “after six days.” There is not another day added on to represent the day on which these sayings were uttered, nor is the day on which the Lord was transfigured added on (which a rational person might reasonably imagine to be added to the days of Matthew).**

**The Evangelist Luke does not say “after eight days” (like the Evangelist Matthew says “after six days”), but rather “it came to pass eight days after these words.” But where the Evangelists seem to contradict one another, they actually point out to us something great and mysterious. In actual fact, why did the one say “after six days,” but the other, in ignoring the seventh day, have in mind the eighth day? It is because the great vision of the Light of the Transfiguration of the Lord is the mystery of the Eighth Day, i.e., of the future age, coming to be revealed after the passing away of the world created in six days.**

**About the power of the Divine Spirit, through Whom the Kingdom of God is to be revealed, the Lord predicted: “There are some standing here who shall not taste death, until they have seen the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom” (Mt.16:28). Everywhere and in every way the King will be present, and everywhere will be His Kingdom, since the advent of His Kingdom does not signify the passing over from one place to another, but rather the revelation of its power of the Divine Spirit.**

**That is why it is said: “come in power.” And this power is not manifest to simply ordinary people, but to those standing with the Lord, that is to say, those who have affirmed their faith in Him like Peter, James and John, and especially those who are free of our natural abasement. Therefore, and precisely because of this, God manifests Himself upon the Mount, on the one hand coming down from His heights, and on the other, raising us up from the depths of abasement, since the Transcendent One takes on mortal nature. Certainly, such a manifest appearance by far transcends the utmost limits of the mind’s grasp, as effectualized by the power of the Divine Spirit.**

**Thus, the Light of the Transfiguration of the Lord is not something that comes to be and then vanishes, nor is it subject to the sensory faculties, although it was contemplated by corporeal eyes for a short while upon an inconsequential mountaintop. But the initiates of the Mystery, (the disciples) of the Lord at this time passed beyond mere flesh into spirit through a transformation of their senses, effectualized within them by the Spirit, and in such a way that they beheld what, and to what extent, the Divine Spirit had wrought blessedness in them to behold the Ineffable Light.**

**Those not grasping this point have conjectured that the chosen from among the Apostles beheld the Light of the Transfiguration of the Lord by a sensual and creaturely faculty, and through this they attempt to reduce to a creaturely level (i.e., as something “created”) not only this Light, the Kingdom and the Glory of God, but also the Power of the Divine Spirit, through Whom it is meet for Divine Mysteries to be revealed. In all likelihood, such persons have not heeded the words of the Apostle Paul: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love Him. But to us God has revealed them through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God” (1 Cor.2:9-10).**

**So, with the onset of the Eighth Day, the Lord, taking Peter, James and John, went up on the Mount to pray. He always prayed alone, withdrawing from everyone, even from the Apostles themselves, as for example when with five loaves and two fish He fed the five thousand men, besides women and children (Mt.14:19-23). Or, taking with Him those who excelled others, as at the approach of His Saving Passion, when He said to the other disciples: “Sit here while I go over there and pray” (Mt.26:36). Then He took with Him Peter, James and John. But in our instance right here and now, having taken only these same three, the**

**Lord led them up onto a high mountain by themselves and was transfigured before them, that is to say, before their very eyes.**

**“What does it mean to say: He was transfigured?” asks the Golden-Mouthed Theologian (Chrysostom). He answers this by saying: “It revealed something of His Divinity to them, as much and insofar as they were able to apprehend it, and it showed the indwelling of God within Him.” The Evangelist Luke says: “And as He prayed, His countenance was altered” (Luke 9:29); and from the Evangelist Matthew we read: “And His face shone as the sun” (Mt.17:2). But the Evangelist said this, not in the context that this Light be thought of as subsistent for the senses (let us put aside the blindness of mind of those who can conceive of nothing higher than what is known through the senses). Rather, it is to show that Christ God, for those living and contemplating by the Spirit, is the same as the sun is for those living in the flesh and contemplating by the senses. Therefore, some other Light for the knowing the Divinity is not necessary for those who are enriched by Divine gifts. That same Inscrutable Light shone and was mysteriously manifest to the Apostles and the foremost of the Prophets at that moment, when (the Lord) was praying. This shows that what brought forth this blessed sight was prayer, and that the radiance occurred and was manifest by uniting the mind with God, and that it is granted to all who, with constant exercise in efforts of virtue and prayer, strive with their mind towards God. True beauty, essentially, can be contemplated only with a purified mind. To gaze upon its luminance assumes a sort of participation in it, as though some bright ray etches itself upon the face.**

**Even the face of Moses was illumined by his association with God. Do you not know that Moses was transfigured when he went up the mountain, and there beheld the Glory of God? But he (Moses) did not effect this, but rather he underwent a transfiguration. However, our Lord Jesus Christ possessed that Light Himself. In this regard, actually, He did not need prayer for His flesh to radiate with the Divine Light; it was but to show from whence that Light descends upon the saints of God, and how to contemplate it. For it is written that even the saints “will shine forth like the sun” (Mt.13:43), which is to say, entirely permeated by Divine Light as they gaze upon Christ, divinely and inexpressibly shining forth His Radiance, issuing from His Divine Nature. On Mount Tabor it was manifest also in His Flesh, by reason of the Hypostatic Union (i.e., the union of the two perfect natures, divine and human, within the divine Person [Hypostasis] of Christ, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity). The Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon defined this Hypostatic union of Christ’s two natures, divine and**



**human, as “without mingling, without change, without division, without separation.”**

**We believe that at the Transfiguration He manifested not some other sort of light, but only that which was concealed beneath His fleshly exterior. This Light was the Light of the Divine Nature, and as such, it was Uncreated and Divine. So also, in the teachings of the Fathers, Jesus Christ was transfigured on the Mount, not taking upon Himself something new nor being changed into something new, nor something which formerly He did not possess. Rather, it was to show His disciples that which He already was, opening their eyes and bringing them from blindness to sight. For do you not see that eyes that can perceive natural things would be blind to this Light?**

**Thus, this Light is not a light of the senses, and those contemplating it do not simply see with sensual eyes, but rather they are changed by the power of the Divine Spirit. They were transformed, and only in this way did they see the transformation taking place amidst the very assumption of our perishability, with the deification through union with the Word of God in place of this.**

**So also she who miraculously conceived and gave birth recognized that the One born of her is God Incarnate. So it was also for Simeon, who only received this Infant into his arms, and the aged Anna, coming out [from the Jerusalem Temple] for the Meeting, since the Divine Power illumined, as through a glass windowpane, giving light for those having pure eyes of heart.**

**And why did the Lord, before the beginning of the Transfiguration, choose the foremost of the Apostles and lead them up onto the Mount with Him? Certainly, it was to show them something great and mysterious. What is particularly great or mysterious in showing a sensory light, which not only the foremost, but all the other Apostles already abundantly possessed? Why would they need a transforming of their eyes by the power of the Holy Spirit for a contemplation of this Light, if it were merely sensory and created? How could the Glory and the Kingdom of the Father and the Holy Spirit project forth in some sort of sensory light? Indeed, in what sort of Glory and Kingdom would Christ the Lord come at the end of the ages, when there would not be necessary anything in the air, nor in expanse, nor anything similar, but when, in the words of the Apostle, “God will be all in all” (1 Cor.15: 28)? That is to say, will He alter everything for all? If so, then it follows that light is included.**

**Hence it is clear that the Light of Tabor was a Divine Light. And the Evangelist John, inspired by Divine Revelation, says clearly that the future eternal and enduring city “has no need of the sun or moon to shine upon it. For the Glory of God lights it up, and the Lamb will be its lamp” (Rev 21:23). Is it not clear, that he points out here that this [Lamb] is Jesus, Who is divinely transfigured now upon Tabor, and the flesh of Whom shines, is the lamp manifesting the Glory of divinity for those ascending the mountain with Him?**

**John the Theologian also says about the inhabitants of this city: “they will not need light from lamps, nor the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shed light upon them, and night shall be no more” (Rev 22:5). But how, we might ask, is there this other light, in which “there is no change, nor shadow of alteration” (Jas 1:17)? What light is there that is constant and unsetting, unless it be the Light of God? Moreover, could Moses and Elias (and particularly the former, who clearly was present only in spirit, and not in flesh [Elias having ascended bodily to Heaven on the fiery chariot]) be shining with any sort of sensory light, and be seen and known? Especially since it was written of them: “they appeared in glory, and spoke of his death, which he was about to fulfill at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:30-31). And how otherwise could the Apostles recognize those whom they had never seen before, unless through the mysterious power of the Divine Light, opening their mental eyes?**

**But let us not tire our attention with the furthestmost interpretations of the words of the Gospel. We shall believe thus, as those same ones have taught us, who themselves were enlightened by the Lord Himself, insofar as they alone know this well: the Mysteries of God, in the words of a prophet, are known to God alone and His perpetual proximity. Let us, considering the Mystery of the Transfiguration of the Lord in accord with their teaching, strive to be illumined by this Light ourselves and encourage in ourselves love and striving towards the Unfading Glory and Beauty, purifying our spiritual eyes of worldly thoughts and refraining from perishable and quickly passing delights and beauty which darken the garb of the soul and lead to the fire of Gehenna and everlasting darkness. Let us be freed from these by the illumination and knowledge of the incorporeal and ever-existing Light of our Savior transfigured on Tabor, in His Glory, and of His Father from all eternity, and His Life-Creating Spirit, Whom are One Radiance, One Godhead, and Glory, and Kingdom, and Power now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.**