



St. George

Orthodox Christian Church
Terre Haute, Indiana

The Messenger

August 2020 Vol. 33 Issue 8

Why a Fast for the Dormition of the Mother of God?

It would be a gross understatement to say that much has been written about the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos. Yet very little has been written about the fast that precedes it.

Every Orthodox Christian is aware and generally knows the reason behind the fasts for Pascha and Christmas. But while they may know of the Dormition Fast, few follow it, and more than a few question why it is there, neither knowing its purpose. First, given the pervasive misunderstanding of the purpose of fasting itself, a refresher on its purpose is always a good idea. There is a perception that we should fast when we want something, as though the act of fasting somehow appeases God, and seeing us “suffer” gets Him to grant our request. Nothing can be further from the truth. **It is not our fasting that pleases God, it is the fruits of our fast (provided we fast in the proper mind set, and do not merely diet) that please Him. We fast, not to get what we want, but to prepare ourselves to receive what God wants to give us.** The purpose of fasting is to bring us more in line with another Mary, the sister of Lazarus, and away from their sister Martha, who in the famous passage was “anxious and troubled about many things.” Fasting is intended to bring us to the realization of “the one thing needful.” It is to help us put God first and our own desires second, if not last. As such it serves to prepare us to be instruments of God’s will, as with Moses in his flight from Egypt and on Mt. Sinai, as well as our Lord’s fast in the wilderness. Fasting turns us away from ourselves and toward God. In essence it helps us become like the Theotokos, an obedient servant of God, who heard His word and kept it better than anyone else has or could.

So why do we fast before Dormition? In a close-knit family, word that its matriarch is on her deathbed brings normal life to a halt. Otherwise important things (parties, TV, luxuries, personal desires) become unimportant; life comes to revolve around the dying matriarch. It is the same with the Orthodox family; word that our matriarch is on her deathbed, could not (or at least should not) have any different effect than the one just mentioned. The Church, through the Paraklesis Service, gives us the opportunity to come to that deathbed and eulogize and entreat the woman who bore God, the vessel of our salvation and our chief advocate at His divine throne. And as, in the earthly family, daily routines and the indulgence in personal wants should come to a halt.

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Fasting₂ in its full sense (abstaining from food and desires) accomplishes this. Less time in leisure or other pursuits leaves more time for prayer and reflection on she who gave us Christ, and became the first and greatest Christian. In reflecting on her and her incomparable life, we see a model Christian life, embodying Christ's retort to the woman who stated that Mary was blessed because she bore Him: blessed rather are those who hear His word and keep it. Mary did this better than anyone. As Fr. Thomas Hopko has stated, she heard the word of God and kept it so well, that she of all women in history was chosen not only to hear His Word but give birth to it (Him). So while we fast in contemplation of her life, we are simultaneously preparing ourselves to live a life in imitation of her. That is the purpose of the Dormition Fast.

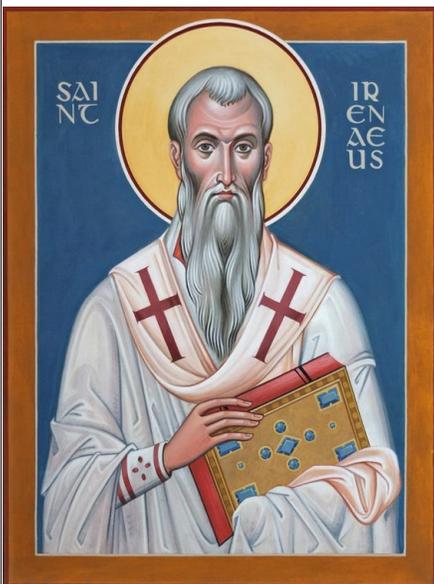
Exaposteilaria (Tone 3) for the Feast

*O ye Apostles from afar, * being now gathered together * here in the vale of Gethsemane, * give burial to my body, * and Thou, my Son and my God, * receive Thou my spirit.*

*Thou art the sweetness of Angels, * the gladness of afflicted ones; * and the protectress of Christians, * O Virgin Mother of our Lord; * be thou my helper, and save me * from out of eternal torments.*

*I have thee as Mediatress * with the man-befriending God; * may He not censure my actions * before the hosts of the Angels. * I supplicate thee, O Virgin, * come unto mine aid most quickly.*

*Thou art a gold-entwined tower * and twelve-wall encircled city, * a throne besprinkled with sunbeams, * a royal chair of the King. * O inexplicable wonder * that thou dost milk-feed the Master.*



Hiero-martyr Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons – August 23

The Hiero-martyr Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, was born in the year 130 in the city of Smyrna (Asia Minor). He received there the finest education, studying poetics, philosophy, rhetoric, and the rest of the classical sciences considered necessary for a young man of the world.

His guide in the truths of the Christian Faith was a disciple of the Apostle John the Theologian, Saint Polycarp of Smyrna (February 23). Saint Polycarp baptized the youth, and afterwards ordained him presbyter and sent him to a city in Gaul then named Lugdunum [the present day Lyons in France] to the dying bishop Pothinus.

A commission was soon entrusted to Saint Irenaeus. He was to deliver a letter from the confessors of Lugdunum to the holy Bishop Eleutherius of Rome (177-190). While he was away, all the known Christians were thrown into prison. After the martyric death of Bishop Pothinus, Saint Irenaeus was chosen a year later (in 178) as Bishop of Lugdunum. "During this time," Saint Gregory of Tours (November 17) writes concerning him, "by his preaching he transformed all Lugdunum into a Christian city!"

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When the persecution against Christians quieted down, the saint expounded upon the Orthodox teachings³ of faith in one of his fundamental works under the title: Detection and Refutation of the Pretended but False Gnosis. It is usually called Five Books against Heresy (Adversus Haereses). At that time there appeared a series of religious-philosophical gnostic teachings. The Gnostics [from the Greek word "gnosis" meaning "knowledge"] taught that God cannot be incarnate [i.e. born in human flesh], since matter is imperfect and manifests itself as the bearer of evil. They taught also that the Son of God is only an outflowing ("emanation") of Divinity. Together with Him from the Divinity issues forth a hierarchical series of powers ("aeons"), the unity of which comprise the "Pleroma", i.e. "Fullness." The world is not made by God Himself, but by the aeons or the "Demiourgos," which is below the "Pleroma."

In refuting this heresy, championed by Valentinus, Saint Irenaeus presents the Orthodox teaching of salvation. "The Word of God, Jesus Christ, through His inexplicable blessedness caused it to be, that we also, should be made that which He is ... ," taught Saint Irenaeus. "Jesus Christ the Son of God, through exceedingly great love for His creation, condescended to be born of a Virgin, having united mankind with God in His own Self." Through the Incarnation of God, creation becomes co-imaged and co-bodied to the Son of God. Salvation consists in the "Sonship" and "Theosis" ("Divinization") of mankind.

In the refutation of another heretic, Marcian, who denied the divine origin of the Old Testament, the saint affirms the same divine inspiration of the Old and the New Testaments: "It is one and the same Spirit of God Who proclaimed through the prophets the precise manner of the Lord's coming," wrote the saint. "Through the apostles, He preached that the fulness of time of the filiation had arrived, and that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand." The successors of the Apostles have received from God the certain gift of truth, which Saint Irenaeus links to the succession of the episcopate (Adv. Haer. 4, 26, 2). "Anyone who desires to know the truth ought to turn to the Church, since through Her alone did the apostles expound the Divine Truth. She is the door to life."

Saint Irenaeus also exerted a beneficial influence in a dispute about the celebration of Pascha. In the Church of Asia Minor, there was an old tradition of celebrating Holy Pascha on the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan, regardless of what day of the week it happened to be. The Roman bishop Victor (190-202) forcefully demanded uniformity, and his harsh demands fomented a schism. In the name of the Christians of Gaul, Saint Irenaeus wrote to Bishop Victor and others, urging them to make peace.

After this incident, Saint Irenaeus drops out of sight, and we do not even know the exact year of his death. Saint Gregory of Tours, in his *Historia Francorum*, suggests that Saint Irenaeus was beheaded by the sword for his confession of faith in the year 202, during the reign of Severus. The Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian, Saint Polycarp of Smyrna, and Saint Irenaeus of Lyons are three links in an unbroken chain of the grace of succession, which goes back to the Original Pastor, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Troparion (Tone 4) of St. Irenaeus of Lyons:

By sharing in the ways of the Apostles, you became a successor to their throne. Through the practice of virtue, you found the way to divine contemplation, O inspired one of God; by teaching the word of truth without error, you defended the Faith, even to the shedding of your blood. O Hiero-martyr Irenaeus, entreat Christ God to save our souls!

Learn from the Writings of the Church Fathers

– St. Cyprian of Carthage (3rd century), “On the Church”

Chapter 29: Exhortation to Acts of Penitence

Let each of you confess, I beg you, brothers [and sisters], his own sin whilst the sinner is still in the world, while he can still be allowed confession, while there is the possibility of making amends, and forgiveness, granted through the priests, is still efficacious with God. Let us turn to God with our whole heart and expressing penitence for our sin with true sorrowing, let us plead with God for His mercy. Let us prostrate our soul before Him, let us repay our debt with mourning, and let all our hope rest on His support. God Himself tells us in what condition we must entreat: “‘Return,’ He says, ‘to Me with all your heart and at the same time with fasting and weeping and lamentation, and rend your hearts and not your garments’” (Joel 2:12-13). Let us turn again to the Lord with our whole heart. Let us placate His anger, and our offence caused, with fasts, with tears, with lamentations, just as He Himself admonishes us.

Chapter 36: In Conclusion: Seek Absolution through Acts of Penitence

If anyone prays with his whole heart, if his voice quivers with the mourning and tears of true repentance, if he thus turns the Lord to pardon his sin through his unceasing words of righteousness, to such a person the Lord is able to grant forgiveness. God extends to such an one His mercy when He says, “When having returned you mourn, then you will be saved and you will know where you have been” (Isaiah 30:15), and again, “ ‘I do not wish the death of him who dies,’ says the Lord, ‘so much as that he should return and live’” (Ezekiel 18:11, 23 and 32; 33:11). And Joel the prophet declares the fatherly affection of the Lord, when the Lord Himself also admonishes: “ ‘Return,’ he says, ‘unto the Lord your God, since He is compassionate and fatherly and patient and of great mercy, and who deflects the sentence He has demanded for your wickedness’” (Joel 2:13).

God can grant leniency, He is able to modify His sentence. He is able to pardon the penitent, the performer of good works, the person who makes entreaty. He is able to acknowledge receipt of whatever both the martyrs have sought to obtain for such persons and the bishops have provided. Truly, if anyone moves God by his works to obtain forgiveness, if He should conciliate His anger and the offence that causes His wrath by suing for a just pardon, God grants both the weapons by which he who was once overcome is re-armed, and restores and strengthens His powers by which faith re-established can be re-energized.

The soldier will rejoin his battle, he will repeat his assault, and he will challenge the enemy, having been made stronger for the battle through his remorse. He who thus has paid his due to God, who has done so in penitence for his sin, who has formed within him by his sorrow for his fall more of courage and of faith than disgrace for his sin, has caught the Lord’s ear and receives His aid. He will make the Church glad whom He has so lately made sorrowful, and now will merit not only God’s pardon but His victor’s garland.

ORTHODOX TERMINOLOGY – AUGUST 2020

5

JUDGMENT: The Last or Final Judgment, which, according to the Church's belief, will occur at the end of the world and the second coming of Christ. The judgment that takes place immediately after an individual's death is called particular judgment.

KERYGMA: (Greek for "message; preaching"). Proclaiming or preaching the word of God in the manner of the Apostles. It is a method of church instruction centered mainly on Christ and the concept of salvation.

LOGOS: (Greek for "word"). A symbol for Christ, the word incarnate, or "word made Flesh," which is also called "the Word of God" (cf. John 1:1-4).

PANTOCRATOR: (Greek for "He who reigns over all; almighty"). One of the appellations of God. In Orthodox art, Pantocrator is the name of the fresco decorating the center of the dome, depicting Christ as the almighty God and Lord of the Universe.

RELICS: The remains from the body of a Saint or even a Saint's possessions, such as clothes or vestments. The relics are honored and venerated by all Orthodox.

SERVICE BOOKS: They are special books containing the hymns or the services of the Orthodox Church. There are eight, as follows: Gospel (*Evangelion*), Book of Epistles (*Apostolos*), Psalter, *Triodion*, *Pentecostarion*, *Twelve Menaia*, *Horologion*, and Service or Liturgy book (*Euchologio* or *Ieratiko*).

THAUMATOURGOS: (Greek for "miracle-worker"). A title given to some saints distinguished among the faithful for their miracles.

TRANSFIGURATION: (Greek for "Metamorphosis"). The transfiguration of Christ is a major feast day (August 6) commemorating the appearance of Christ in divine glory along with Moses and the prophet Elias on Mount Tabor (cf. Matt. 17: 1-7).

**THE MORE YOU LEARN,
THE MORE YOU GROW.**



CONTINUED PLEDGING & CONTRIBUTIONS—2020

6

We recognize that we are living in an uneasy time with the spread of the coronavirus. We hope that you continue your financial contribution and support to your Church. Even while limited in attendance, our obligations and expenses do not cease.



Online payments are still an excellent method to support the church - visit our parish website (stgeorgeterrehaute.com) and click the "DONATE" button/link at the bottom of the homepage to contribute financially. This donation option utilizes **PayPal** (E-commerce platform). If you usually bring cash or checks to the church for your pledge, please put those funds aside and bring them when we are all able to attend church together again OR mail a check to the Church Office. THANK YOU!

A Ministry for Seniors and those considered high-risk during the current Pandemic

We continue to offer an opportunity for our parish seniors and those considered high-risk to attend **liturgical services on Wednesday mornings at 10:00a during the month of August.**

At this time, we are still limiting our attendance in total numbers, as well as on Sundays for only those under the age of 65. Therefore, we strongly encourage and ask your help in spreading the word of these "special" Wednesday morning services for our seniors!

Also available by appointment, individual visits to our Church for private prayers and reception of the Sacraments – simply contact Fr. Paul to make arrangements.

Tuesday, August 25, 2020 @ 7:00p
(Last Tuesday of each Month)

VIRTUAL "TACO" TUESDAY

"Talking About
 Christian Orthodoxy"

Young Adult Discussion:
the MOTHER of GOD
 via ZOOM conference call
tinyurl.com/virtuالتacotuesday

Orthodox Prayers

"O Lord, in this hour receive our supplications...."



Please include the following people in your daily prayers.
 Prayer requests may be made to Fr. Paul Fuller (frpaul.fuller@gmail.com).

LIVING

Those suffering from the Coronavirus throughout the world;
 Those suffering in Syria, Lebanon, & Ukraine;
 Metropolitan Paul & Archbishop John (Aleppo, Syria);
 Bishop Alexander (Canada); Pdn. Elias Corey;
 Miriam Yazge; Mary Inman; Helen Corey;
 Kalea Ellis; Aziz Haddad (Phoenix);
 Denny Paris (Uncle of Brent Bocard);
 Sunday & new-born Bodhi (friends of Fr. Paul);
 Laura Burdick (friend of Nancy Ellis); Betty Azar;
 Noble Corey; Pam White (mother of Preston)

Special Petition: For all our doctors, nurses, medical professionals, scientists, volunteers, emergency personnel, and law enforcement agents, for those striving to help the sick and finding a cure in our current distress.

DEPARTED

+Those newly departed from the Coronavirus throughout the world
 +Mary Lou Saikley (2/13/20)
 +Jana Nasser (8/11/19)
 +Candy Nasser (9/17/19)
 +Grace (friend of Paula Powell)
 +Paul Tanoos (7/26/20)

St. George Orthodox Church
1900 South Fourth Street
Terre Haute, IN 47802

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Return Service Requested

Holy Oblation & Fellowship Hour – 2020

If you'd like to offer the Holy Oblation (including prayer list), please contact Fr. Paul for arrangements.

- Aug 2* Joe & Linda Tanoos
Aug 9* Green Family – Jacob's 9th Birthday
Aug 16 AVAILABLE
Aug 23 Michael & Mary Jo Tom
Aug 30 Anthony Tanoos
Sept 6 Simbol Family
Sept 13 Russell Leo
Sept 20 Kyle & Eleni Miller

* denotes Fasting season

We ask each family to sponsor at least one Sunday per year for the Holy Oblation & Fellowship Hour; please contact the Church Office for available dates.

"The Messenger" is the monthly publication of our Community at

St. George Orthodox Church
1900 South 4th Street
Terre Haute, IN 47802

Fr. Paul Fuller † Pdn. Elias Corey
812-232-5244 office stgeorgeoth@gmail.com

www.stgeorgeterrehaute.com

Please check our website for updates on all services, gatherings, and events.

Liturgical Schedule

- Sunday** 9:00 AM Matins
10:00 AM Divine Liturgy
Wednesday 6:00 PM Vespers
Saturday 6:00 PM Great Vespers

*A parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North America*