Sunday, August 4, 2019

The 7th Sunday after Pentecost – Tone 6

On this date, August 4, we commemorate, among others, The Seven Holy Youths of Ephesus (3rd c.), the Martyr Eudokia of Persia (4th c.), and the Martyr Eleutherius of Constantinople (3rd c.)

Our Veneration of the Mother of God

By Fr. Stephen Freeman

This item is an excerpt from a longer blog post of Fr. Stephen’s posted on his blog on Ancient Faith Radio on November 24, 2018. That blog, Glory to God for All Things, can be accessed at: https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/glory2godforallthings.

The Orthodox veneration of the Mother of God is grounded in its understanding of salvation. As such, the veneration of Mary is an expression of the most foundational doctrine of the faith. This is generally misunderstood by the non-Orthodox for the simple reason that they do not understand salvation itself. Salvation is about a union or communion with God. It is a participation in the very life of God. We were created for this communion, breathed into us in the act of our creation. Through sin, we have broken that communion and become subject to death and disintegration.

Christ, in becoming a human being, united Himself to our human nature. He suffered death and was buried. But in His death, because He is also God, He tramples down death and rises from the tomb. Our human nature is raised with Him. When we are Baptized, the Scriptures say we are Baptized “into His death and raised in the likeness of His resurrection.” In Holy Communion, we eat His very Body and drink His Blood, a true communion and participation in His life.

When this fundamental doctrine is understood, Mary’s role in history and her place in the Church become clear. Christ does not enter her womb as though it were a borrowed space. The Creed says, “He took flesh of the Virgin Mary.” Christ’s humanity is not a separate creation, but “bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh.” She is truly His mother.

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PARISH PRAYER LIST
Please pray for all victims of disaster, difficulty and senseless violence throughout the world.

+ THOSE WHO HAVE DEPARTED THIS LIFE: Memory Eternal!

**Newly Departed**
- Archimandrite Pitarim (Stenach)—priest acquaintance of Fr. John’s
d. 7/10/19
- Boris—father of a friend of the Hopkos
d. 7/26/19
- Rupert Twombly—D. Twombly’s brother & M. Petroff’s cousin
d. 7/11/19

**Anniversaries of Repose — Memory Eternal!**
- Ann Shular 8/4/1939
- Dimitri Markovich 8/4/1967
- Julia Kucirka 8/4/1981
- Maria Karptisky 8/5/1950
- Tatiana Kaidalow 8/5/2010
- Rosemary Felzko 8/7/1990
- Lydia Hussey 8/8/1963
- Sophie Kaplanik 8/9/1963
- Natalia Venger 8/9/1941
- Francis Boudreau 8/9/1985
- William Hasko 8/10/1956
- Pelagia Pavelchak 8/10/1979
- Anna Wasyluk 8/10/2005

**Those in Need of God’s Mercy and Help**

**Persons captive and suffering for the Faith**
- Metropolitan Paul and Archbishop John—hostages in Syria

**Those who are sick and suffering**
- His Eminence Archbishop Nikon—ongoing health issues
- Archpriest Steven Belonick—C. Belonick’s brother; now in hospice care
- Fryodor (Frank) Guba—increasing sufferings from Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
- Dolores Twombly—permanent colon malfunction following colon cancer treatment
- Karen—Mary Fomenko’s niece; unwell in need of prayers
- child Drew—grandson of friends of the Nimchevs; ongoing treatment for eye cancer
- Jadwiga ["Yahd-vee-gah"]—mother of an acquaintance of E. Watras; cancer
- Alex—John Dubnansky’s brother, suffering permanent effects of stroke
- Darlyne—facing health challenges; daughter of Bob and Vera Martin
- child Aza—great-grandson of friend of E. Watras; child with developmental challenges
- Donna—Ann Sovyrda’s niece; kidney disease
- Dayrl—Ann Sovyrda’s niece; kidney disease
- JoAnn—acquaintance of Jeanne Moore; ovarian cancer
- MaryEllen—Louine King’s daughter-in-law; declining due to Huntington’s Disease
- Virginia ("Gina")—Elena Watras’ sister; unwell and in need of prayers
- Vera—Waterbury parishioner; unwell and in need of prayerful support
- Maria Oraschewsky—now requires dialysis three times a week
- Charlotte—Chezelle Serev’s mother; unwell and in need of prayerful support
- Mark—friend of Frank Guba; battling non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma
- Michael—friend of Frank Guba; rehabbing after bilateral lung transplant
- Nina Gorbachev—very unwell
- Mat. Cindy Votyovich—facing health challenges at this time
- Barbara—friend of Jack Kinisick; hip replacement surgery followed by complications
- Yelena “Lenna” Massicotte—facing serious health challenges at this time
- Vincent—Maria Oraschewsky’s brother-in-law; battling cancer
- Katie and Aubrey—a mother and daughter for whom we have been asked to pray
- Anna Szepel—recently unwell; Waterbury parishioner
- Tanya Beach—recovering from brain hemorrhage
- Vera Wegh—recently unwell
- Helen—friend of Anna Marie Boruch; suffering in illness
- Eleanor—Rdr. Joseph Boruch’s mother; increasing health challenges
- Georgia Anna Marie Boruch’s cousin; broken ankle suffered in fall
- Wayne—acquaintance of C. Palleria; suffering in illness

**Shut-ins and those resident in long-term Care Facilities**
- Eva Kopche—at Sheriden Woods, Bristol
- Irene Kiehart—Jayne Grasso’s mother
- Mary Fomenko—recently unwell
- Robert (Bob)—Patty Nimchek’s brother
- Manliou Petroff—will be traveling during the period August 7 to 21

**Travelers, Those Soon to be Traveling, and Those Apart from Us**
- Paul and Claudia Senelcen—away August 3 through 10
- Joel Orelop—U.S. Navy, hospital corpsman ("medic")
- Joseph Bellmay—A Terryville neighbor; U.S. Marine Corps
- Joshua PCSolyar—fiancé of a niece of Fr. John’s; U.S. Army pilot, now in Afghanistan

**Anniversaries**
- Protodeacon Paul & Patty Nimchek 8/9

**Birthdays**
- David Crosby 8/4

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The Scriptures recognize this in various ways. In particular, when Mary brings the Christ Child to the Temple on the 40th day, the Prophet Simeon prophesies the coming sufferings of Christ and adds, “...and a sword will pierce your soul as well.” This is far more than saying, “It will make you unhappy.” In Christ’s suffering on the Cross, Mary suffers as well. This is because of the peculiar union that was their relationship from the beginning.

Christians describe the life of salvation as “beholding Christ face to face.” Mary would have done this quite literally numerous times a day for nearly three years as she nursed Him. In St. John’s gospel, at the Wedding in Cana, there is a level of communion between mother and Son that transcends words.

At the wedding feast, she comes to her Son and says, “They have no wine.” She does not ask Him anything. His response is frequently misinterpreted. He says, in the Greek: “Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί,” (Jn. 2:4). (“What is this to me and you?”) It is a very strange phrase in the Greek, but is a direct quote from the widow of Zarephath when she is speaking to Elijah about the death of her son (1 Kings 17:18). Christ is warning His mother that “it is not my time.” But, if He acts in helping with this wedding and its harvest, He will set in motion something that cannot be stopped – His karios – His time. And when His time comes, she will be like the widow of Zarephath, a widow whose son is dead. All of this is contained in this tiny conversation of but a few words.

Her response is equally terse, “Do whatever He tells you.” This is similar to her first words to the angel, “Let it be to me according to your word.” She is ready for what will take place, including its most fearful consequences.

But all of this can only be rightly understood if we remember the nature of the union between mother and Son. It is also a union that will be our own salvation. Christ has become what we are by nature, that we might become what he is by grace. This is the great “exchange.”

Orthodox prayer gives expression to this communion. St. Paul says that the Holy Spirit prays within us saying, “Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). Those words are the words of the Son (the one says, “Abba”). We do not pray as strangers, but as members of the household, now emboldened to speak with the very voice of the Son of God. It is this same voice that speaks of Mary as “Mother,” and gives her honor. That honor, or veneration, is the expression of love. Just as she loves Him, so she loves us.
News and Notes

ONGOING: The Dormition Fast, August 1 to August 14: The fourteen days from August 1 through August 14 constitute the Dormition Fast. We keep this short, two-week-long, fast each year to prepare ourselves for the commemoration of the death of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, which we commemorate each year on August 15, on the Feast of the Dormition (the Falling Asleep) of the Most-Holy Theotokos. The Feast of Dormition marks the day that the Virgin Mary died and, also, commemorates the fact that, after her blessed repose, the Virgin Mary was received bodily into the Kingdom of Heaven by her Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ. During this period of fasting, we offer special prayers to the Mother of God asking her motherly intercession before her Son, and Our God, Our Lord Jesus Christ. We know that it is often the case that the intercessions of a mother have great influence with a son, so we ask the Mother of God to intercede for us before the Lord, Jesus Christ, her Son.

THIS WEEK: Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, August 5-6: In our parish, we will mark the annual Great Feast of the Holy Transfiguration of Our Lord with the celebration of Festal Vespers and the Divine Liturgy (“Vesperal Liturgy”) on Monday evening, August 5, beginning at 6:15 PM. On the Feast of Transfiguration we celebrate the occasion when our Lord, Jesus Christ was transfigured in glory on Mount Tabor, before his disciples, Peter, James, and John. The purpose of this event was, as it says in the hymns of the feast, so that the disciples would understand, when Jesus was later crucified, that His suffering was voluntary. Traditionally, on the Feast of Transfiguration we bless fruits and vegetables, the first fruits of the harvest, as a symbol of the final transfiguration of all things in eternity. Just as ripe fruits and vegetables are beautiful and full of life, so, too, in the Kingdom of Heaven, all things will be made beautiful and fruitful.

THIS WEEK: Feast of Saint Herman of Alaska, Friday, August 9: Each year, on August 9, we celebrate the summer festival of Saint Herman of Alaska, the first glorified and canonized of the North American saints. We will mark this feast with the celebration of a Service of Prayer to Saint Herman to be served at 8:00 a.m. on Friday morning, August 9. Saint Herman, who died in 1837, is the first saint to be recognized here in North America. Given that status, he is, in a way, the patron saint of all North American Orthodox Christians. Saint Herman is a wonderful example of steadfast faith and faithfulness under the most trying of circumstances, and, also, is an example of the virtue of obedience. Holy Father Herman, pray to God for us! (We are blessed in our parish to have a wonderful, large icon of Saint Herman, set up by the Choir. In front of that icon is enshrined a portion of Saint Herman’s relics, which we are blessed to venerate and to pray before.)

NEXT SUNDAY: Sunday, August 11, 50th Anniversary Service of Thanksgiving: Patty and Deacon Paul Nimchek are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary on Friday, August 9. So, at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, August 11, we will serve a brief thanksgiving service, thanking God for all the blessings he has poured out upon Deacon Paul and Patty in their life together. (Since Sunday, August 11, is within the Dormition Fast, we will celebrate Patty and Deacon Paul’s wedding anniversary the following Sunday, August 18, with food and fellowship, since by then the fast will have concluded. See the next note for information about that.)

TWO WEEKS FROM NOW: Sunday, August 18, Parish Picnic, and celebration of Patty and Deacon Paul’s Wedding Anniversary: On Sunday, August 18, after the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, we will have a “bring-and-share” Parish Picnic, to celebrate summer, but, also, and significantly, to celebrate Deacon Paul and Patty’s 50th wedding anniversary. Watch for the “sign-up list” for that event, soon to be posted in the Parish Basement Social Hall.

LOOKING AHEAD: Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, the Most-Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, August 14-15: We will mark the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God (which is described in one of the earlier notes, listed above) on Wednesday evening, August 14, the Eve of the Feast, with the celebration of Festal Vespers and Divine Liturgy (“Vesperal Liturgy”) beginning at 6:15 p.m. On the Feast of Dormition it is customary in the Church to bless flowers and herbs. This is because, in earlier times, flowers and herbs, and other plants, were seen as medicinal, and in blessing them, we remember the healing intercessions of the Mother of God, who fervently prays and intercedes for us before her son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

GRATITUDE: Thank you! Thanks are expressed to all those who contributed last Sunday to the festive occasion of Jacob Janco’s baptism. Especially, we thank all those who contributed to the festive meal that we enjoyed after the service. It was a joyful and spiritually uplifting and renewing occasion. We thank God for the grace that He has poured out upon his servant, Jacob, and upon all of us, Jacob’s fellow faithful Orthodox Christian people.
Readings from Holy Scripture

Readings for the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, which this year is August 4

The Reading from the Letter of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Romans (Rom. 15:1-7)

Brothers and Sisters: We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves; let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him. For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached thee fell on me." For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

The Reading from the Gospel according to St. Matthew (Matt. 9:27-35)

At that time, when Jesus was passing by, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then Jesus touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly charged them, "See that no one knows it." But they went away and spread his fame through all that district. As they were going away, behold, a dumb demoniac was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the dumb man spoke; and the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel." But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons." And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity of the people.

Readings for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, which this year is August 11

The Reading from the First Letter of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:10-18)

Brothers and Sisters: I appeal to you, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brethren. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I am thankful that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius; lest any one should say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any one else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

The Reading from the Gospel according to St. Matthew (Matt. 14:14-22)

At that time, when Jesus went ashore he saw a great throng; and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a lonely place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." And Jesus said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass; and taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Then Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.