

SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church

Volume 19, Issue 7

August 2019

July Council Highlights

- ✘ June's Operating Income was \$18,658.58 and Operating Expenses were \$15,423.37 resulting in a positive operating income of \$3,236.22 for the month.
- ✘ Annual Blessing of Students and Teachers will take place on Sunday, September 8th.
- ✘ Subcommittee formed to assess church security.
- ✘ The Parish Council will not be meeting in August.
- ✘ Please pick up your mid-year contribution statements at the back of the church.



SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church

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www.orthodoxfellowship.org

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Our Ladder from Earth to Heaven

The Feast of the Dormition (or Falling Asleep) of the Theotokos is celebrated each year.

A hymn of the feast tells us that Mary, after dying as we all do, had the unique experience of being "translated to life by the One who dwelt in her virginal womb." Mary was taken to paradise by her Son. She immediately entered the eternal life that has been prepared for the future of everyone who follows her example of faithful obedience to God.

Having lived as a human being like us, the Mother of God now shows us the way to everlasting life with God. The festal hymns also tell us that as heaven receives her, the angels join the apostles in gazing at her with awe.

A different view of angels is depicted in a 1987 German movie entitled "Wings of Desire." The actor Peter Falk, who was probably best known as the TV detective Columbo, was featured

in the movie, and Falk's obituaries included discussion of its content and meaning.

The movie's lead character is Damiel, an angel who (invisibly) watches with loving care over the human inhabitants of Berlin. He helps and comforts people when he can, and pays close attention to the things they do and feel.

But Damiel is not happy. He tells another angel that he has become dissatisfied with his inability to share in human life, to physically feel the weight of an object in his hand, or to bleed from a cut.

The dissatisfaction grows after a conversation with Falk, whose unnamed character can see Damiel as others cannot because he himself is a former angel. Falk's character tells him how good it feels to rub one's hands together to warm them, or to enjoy a cup of coffee with another person. He encourages Damiel to make the change from angel to human. Damiel

does so, and finds love with a trapeze artist to whom he has always been attracted while keeping watch over her life.

"Wings of Desire" seems to be making the point that a purely spiritual life, the life of angels, could never be as satisfying as human life with all its "real" problems and joys. But the Church is telling us something quite different in the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos.

We will never be angels, and should refrain from telling children that a person who has died is now an angel; that is not the Church's teaching. Rather, we are called to life in its fullness. Having completed our life on earth, with all the pleasures the movie describes, we are offered the greater gift of eternal life with our Creator.

It's not for us to speculate that angels are dissatisfied with their lives. But we needn't be dissatisfied with ours. The Theotokos did what God asked her to do, as we all can. And for doing that she is called "more honorable than the cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim"—the highest angels of all.



Message from Our Rector

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We begin this month with the Dormition Fast, in preparation for the celebration of the Great Feast of the Dormition (Falling Asleep) of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. Through this feast, the Church joyfully expresses its veneration of the Virgin Mother of God and her role in the history of our salvation. The Church does this through its celebration of the Divine Liturgy and also with thousands of different forms of piety, including the blessing of flowers. As we honor this feast, we recall that the prophecy of Mary continues to be fulfilled: "all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48). Because the Lord has raised his humble handmaiden and, through the millennia, those who have followed her Divine Son have recognized her as the Mother of all the Faithful.

The Falling Asleep of the Most Blessed Theotokos and her Assumption into heaven, in body and soul, is a divine privilege accorded to the Holy Mother of God for her particular union with Jesus. It is a special bond and union which began with the Annunciation and matured throughout Mary's life through her unique participation in the saving mystery of her Son. Mary always went with her Son: she followed Jesus and thus we say she was the first and foremost disciple.

To most of those who knew her, the life of Mary unfolded like that of an

ordinary woman of her time, unrecognized as the Mother of the Savior. In her home in Nazareth, she prayed, managed her family and home, visited with her family and neighbors, and attended the synagogue services. However, every daily action she performed was always done in total union with her Divine Son. And on Calvary this special union culminated in love, in compassion, in heartache, and in faith as she stood faithfully and watched her Son shed His blood and give His life for "the life of the world." For this reason God also gave her full participation in Jesus' *Resurrection*. The body of the Blessed Mother was preserved from corruption, like that of the Son.

The wondrous reality of the Dormition of the Theotokos reveals and confirms the unity of the human person and reminds us that we are called to *serve and glorify God with our whole being*, both soul and body. To serve God with the body alone would be the action of slaves; to serve him with the soul alone would be counter to our human nature. Around the year 220 AD, a great Father of the Church, Saint Irenaeus, stated that "the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God" (*Against Heresies*, iv, 20, 7). If we live this way, in joyful service to God, which is also expressed in generous service to our brothers and sisters, then on the day of the resurrection our fate will be like that of our heavenly Mother. We must

therefore fully dedicate ourselves to accomplishing the exhortation of the Apostle Paul: "glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:20), and we shall forever glorify him in heaven.

Let us pray that the Most Holy Theotokos, through her maternal intercession, may help us live our daily journey in the earnest hope of being able to reach her one day, with all the Saints in the Kingdom of Heaven.

With love in the Lord,

+Bishop Daniel

"Let us scatter our love selflessly to all, without regard to the way they act towards us. When the grace of God enters us, we will not be concerned about whether they love us or not or whether they speak to us politely or not. We will feel the need to love all people. It's egotism on our part to wish for others to speak to us politely. If they don't, we shouldn't be upset. Let them speak to us as they wish. We needn't become beggars for love. Our aim should be to love them and pray for them with all our soul. Then we will become aware that all people love us without our seeking it and without our begging for their love.

They will love us freely and sincerely from the depths of their heart without our blackmailing them. When we love without seeking to be loved, people will gather around us like bees. This is true for everyone."

– St. Porphyrios



Transfiguration: Cultivating the Image of Divine Beauty

Fr. Steven Kostoff

On August 6—we celebrate the Great Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, which we will continue to celebrate through Sunday 13, the Leavetaking of the Feast. The mysterious presence of Beauty is revealed on Mount Tabor in an overwhelming manner as Christ is transfigured, resplendent in divine glory. This is the beauty of the first-formed human creatures, created to reflect the beauty of the divine nature, for by grace they—and we—were created in



the image and likeness of God. And they were placed in a world that also reflected this divine beauty. That is why God, after completing the creation process, declared that it was all “very good.”

Yet, the presence of sin marred that beauty. This lost beauty was restored to humanity when the Son of God assumed our human nature, uniting it to His divine Person and revealing the glory of God in a human being. Thus, on Mount Tabor, Christ reveals the beauty of His divine nature and the beauty of our created human nature. This is why the Transfiguration is often referred to as a “Feast of Beauty.”

The Russian novelist Dostoevsky [+1881] famously and somewhat enigmatically once said, “Beauty will save the world.” Yet, Dostoevsky also realized that in a world filled with sin, beauty can evoke responses that fall short of any saving value. In fact, beauty can even degenerate toward sin and sensuality, as one of Dostoevsky’s greatest creations, Dmitri Karamazov, acknowledged with great anguish. Therefore, for Dostoevsky

beauty itself had to be “saved” and linked to Truth and Goodness. Thus, for the Russian novelist, beauty is not simply an aesthetic concept, but one that must have a moral, ethical and spiritual dimension for it to be rightly perceived and experienced. And for Dostoevsky—as well as for not only great artists, but for the great minds of the Church—beauty is not an abstract concept or Idea. Beauty is a Person, and this Person is Christ. In Christ, Truth, Goodness and Beauty are harmoniously united. This is why Dostoevsky also spoke of the “radiant image of Christ.”

In another famous passage from his pen, found in one of his letters, Dostoevsky articulated his personal “creed” as he writes, “I have constructed for myself a symbol of faith in which everything is clear and holy for me. The symbol is very clear, here it is: to believe that there is nothing more beautiful, more profound, more sympathetic, more reasonable, more courageous and more perfect than Christ, and not only is there nothing, but I tell myself with jealous love that never could there be.”

It is these qualities that make Christ such an attractive figure that a well-disposed mind and heart not unduly influenced by the marks of a fallen world will almost naturally turn to as an “ideal,” but again as a concrete living Person. There is a passage from the personal diary of Father Alexander Elchaninov [+1934] that captures that same intuition as found in Dostoevsky: “It is impossible not to love Christ. If we saw Him now, we should not be able to take our eyes off Him, we should ‘listen to Him in rapture;’ we

should flock around Him as did the multitudes in the Gospels. All that is required of us is not to resist. We have only to yield to Him, to the contemplation of His image—in the Gospels, in the saints, in the Church—and He will take possession of our hearts.”

Here, again, there is an inherent moral, ethical and spiritual dimension from that beauty that flows outward from Christ. This is rendered in the form of very practical and concrete advice in the words of Vladimir Solovyov [+1900], for many the greatest Russian philosopher known to us: “Before any important decision, let us evoke in our soul the image of Christ. Let us concentrate our attention upon it and ask ourselves: Would He Himself do this action? Or, in other words: Will He approve of it or not? To all I propose this rule: it does not deceive. In every dubious case, as soon as the possibility of a choice is offered to you, remember Christ. Picture to yourself His living Person, as it really is, and entrust Him with the burden of your doubts. Let men of good will, as individuals, as social factors, as leaders of men and peoples, apply this criterion, and they will really be able, in the name of truth, to show to others the way toward God.”

This concreteness is all the more interesting, for Solovyov was often a highly speculative thinker. That which he wrote just over a century ago is hardly a public ideal any longer—to our great loss. It is our role to maintain and cultivate the image of divine beauty in our lives as seen in the face of the incarnate and transfigured Christ as a sacred obligation.

Reprinted from the Orthodox Church in America web site, <https://oca.org/reflections/fr.-steven-kostoff/transfiguration-cultivating-the-image-of-divine-beauty> ✂

Commitment vs. Convenience: The Dormition Fast

On Thursday, August 1, 2019, we begin the observance of the relatively brief Dormition Fast that prepares us for the celebration of the Great Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God on August 15. And, as with every fast, we once again are presented with a challenge and a choice. In this instance, the Dormition Fast presents us with a choice between “convenience” and “commitment.” We can choose convenience because of the simple fact that to fast is decidedly inconvenient. It takes planning, vigilance, discipline, self denial,



and an overall concerted effort. It is convenient to allow life to flow on at its usual summer rhythm, which includes searching for that comfort level of least resistance. To break our established patterns of living is always difficult—something we would only contemplate with reluctance. So, one choice is to do nothing different during the Dormition Fast—or perhaps just doing something minimal, as a kind of token recognition of our life in the Church. Such a choice may not yield in terms of further growth in our life “in Christ.” It may, rather, mean a missed opportunity.

Yet, the choice remains to embrace the Dormition Fast, a choice that is decidedly “counter-cultural” and one that manifests a conscious commitment to an Orthodox Christian “way of life.” Such a commitment signifies that we are looking beyond what is convenient toward what is meaningful. It would be a choice in which we recognize our weaknesses, and our need pre-

cisely for the planning, vigilance, discipline, self denial and overall concerted effort that distinguishes the seeker of the “mind of Christ” which we have as a gift within the life of the Church. That is a difficult choice to make, and one that is perhaps particu-

larly difficult within the life of a family with children who are often resistant to any changes. However, such a difficult choice has its “rewards,” and such a commitment will bear fruit in our families and in our parishes. (If embraced legalistically and judgmentally, however, we will lose our

access to the potential fruitfulness of the fast and only succeed in creating a miserable atmosphere in our homes.) It is a choice that is determined to seize a good opportunity as at least a potential tool that leads to spiritual growth.

Combining the “convenient” with our “commitment” within our contemporary social and cultural life is, to some degree, an option. We often don’t allow the Church to “get in the way” of our plans and goals, and that may be hard to avoid in the circumstances and conditions of our present “way of life.” It is hard to prevail in the never-ending “battle of the calendars.” The surrounding social and cultural milieu no longer supports our commitment to Christ and the Church. In fact, it is usually quite indifferent and it may even be hostile toward such a commitment. Though we may hesitate to admit it, we find it very challenging not to conform to the world around us. But it is never impossible to

choose our commitment to our Orthodox Christian way of life over what is merely convenient – or simply desired. That may just be one of those “daily crosses” that the Lord spoke of – though it may be a stretch to call that a “cross.” This also entails choices, and we have to assess these choices with honesty as we look at all the factors that make up our lives. In short, it is very difficult – but profoundly rewarding – to practice our Orthodox Christian Faith today!

The heart of a sincere Orthodox Christian desires to choose the hard path of commitment over the easy (and rather boring?) path of convenience. During the Dormition Fast, we now have the God-given opportunity to escape the summer doldrums that drain our spiritual energy. With prayer, almsgiving and fasting, we can renew our tired bodies and souls. We can lift up our “drooping hands” in an attitude of prayer and thanksgiving. The Dormition of the Theotokos has often been called “Pascha in the summer.” It celebrates the victory of life over death—or of death as a translation into the Kingdom of Heaven. The Dormition Fast is our spiritually vigilant preparation leading up to that glorious celebration honoring the Mother of God and contemplate our own entrance into the Kingdom of God. “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold; now is the day of salvation!” [2 Corinthians 6:2].

Reprinted from the Orthodox Church in America web site, <https://oca.org/news/headline-news/commitment-vs.-convenience-the-dormition-fast> ✕

“The mind that is occupied with the thought of God has little room for other thoughts, especially evil ones.”

– St. Ignatius Brianchaninov

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHORAL FELLOWSHIP

ONE DAY. ONE HYMN. ONE CHURCH.

September 21, 2019

ASSUMPTION GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH - SCOTTSDALE, AZ

COME SING WITH US!

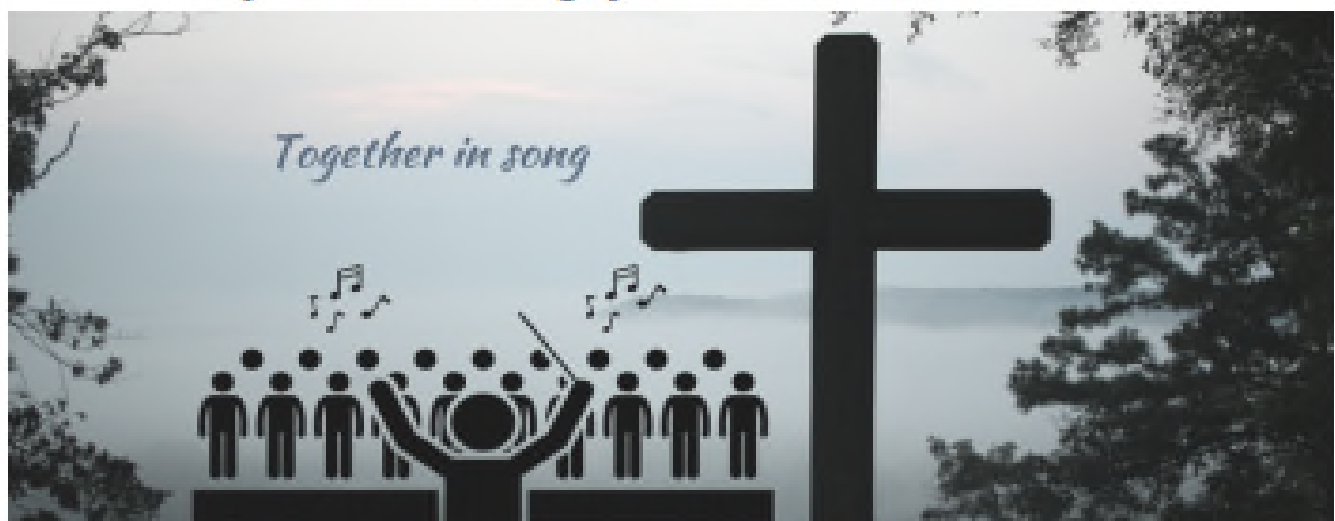
- An enjoyable day of choral music fellowship
- Join parishioners from AZ Orthodox churches
- World premiere of "Christ is Born; Glorify Him!", a new Orthodox Christmas hymn
- Video recording to be posted on social media

DETAILS

- Family event for ages 8 - 98!
- 10:00am - 3:00pm
- Lunch included
- Adults \$15
- Students \$10
- Register at occfellowship.org after August 1st

No choral experience necessary.

If you love to sing, you will love this event!



<https://www.facebook.com/occfellowship>



“Back to School” Outreach a Success!

On Saturday July 20, twenty-eight underprivileged neighborhood children each received about \$75 in school supplies, including a quality backpack, notebooks, paper, pencils, pens, etc. Our generous parishioners donated \$1350 toward these supplies. Thirty-five parishioner families contributed.

A committee of Bill Weiss, Sue Bieber & David Bieber organized and executed this event. Stephanie Homyak donated a large amount of supplies. About a dozen parishioners helped at the school supplies party. Amy Rendon, Principal of Whittier Elementary School, gave an orientation talk, refreshments were served, and kids played a variety of games.



Around SS Peter & Paul

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

- August 1 Peter Radjenovich
Barbara Peterson
Joe & Jane Matthews
- 6 Elona Stark
- 8 Yana Molodova
- 9 Dan Perrotto
- 13 Boris & Carrie Niegoda
- 15 William Osolinsky
- 19 Dan & Trish Sieckman
- 25 Juliana Delsante
- 26 Jim Hanemaayer

Mnogaya Leta! Many Years!



Patriarchal service on the feast day of St. Prince Vladimir, Equal to the Apostles. Liturgy in the Assumption Cathedral in the Kremlin. Procession and prayer at the monument to the Baptizer of Russia.

PRAYER LIST

We offer prayers to all of our parishioners who are ill or unable to attend services:

- Patricia Starkey
- Jamie Arango
- Ann Garza
- Marilyn Bezkorovainy
- Rose Kurowski
- Anna Michkofsky
- Frank Kulik
- Vickie Kulik

May Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Physician of our souls and bodies, reach out his healing hand and bless these, His servants.

If you know anyone else in need of our prayers, please contact Bishop Daniel.

Bits and Pieces

THANK YOU to all who contributed to the School Supplies Project. Twenty-eight young students received school supplies because of your generosity. Special thanks to Stephanie Homyak for the extra school supplies she was able to donate and to David Bieber and Bill Weiss for their fine work of coordinating this event. Thanks, as well, to our parishioners who were present to welcome our neighbors as the school supplies were distributed.

THE BLESSING OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS will be held on Sunday, September 8th at the end of Divine Liturgy. The annual blessing marks the beginning of the Church School Year. We encourage all students and teachers to be there.

CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD (CGS)

Welcome to a new year of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd at Saints Peter and Paul! If you have not yet set up a time for orientation, please contact me so that this can be done before our first day in the atrium.

Thank you for your support for and dedication to the CGS program and our children! Please feel free to contact me with any questions!

Lesley Zaremba

WELCOME all visitors to SS Peter & Paul. We hope your visit was enriching and enlightening. Please join us in the Cultural Center, behind the church, for our Fellowship Hour. It's a chance to meet some of our members, other visitors, and enjoy some coffee and fellowship.

HOLY SUPPER TRADITIONS Now that Christmas in July is behind us, and fall merchandise is already in the stores, it's time to think about Holy Supper! Marty Gala is seeking input from everyone about their family's Holy Supper traditions, with a focus on the foods that were served. To share your traditions, please contact Marty Gala.

SUMMER AIR CONDITIONING REMINDER

When running the Hall's A/C remember to keep all doors closed and return thermostats to their original setting after use. Running A/Cs costs!

PARKING It is great having so many people attending services at our parish. With more people come more cars. Please be aware that there is no double parking or blocking other vehicles when parking on church property. Please only park in parking spaces. Please do not park in the access lanes since this is also for Emergency vehicles, if needed. Please be advised that there is a sign for "Additional Church Parking" directing cars into the Bamboo Bakery parking lot located across the street from our Parish. Please be cognizant of driveway access if parking on the street. Thank-you for your assistance in this matter.

OUR CHURCH SCHOOL program is searching for volunteers to help in classes. Please contact Stephanie Homyak, 602.432.7473, if you are interested in volunteering.

LIGHTING CANDLES is an important part of Orthodox worship. We light them as we pray, making an offering to accompany our prayers. Orthodox typically light candles when coming into the church - and that is usually the best time to light them, but there are times when candles should not be lit. It is not proper to light candles during the Epistle or Gospel readings, during the Little or Great Entrances, the sermon, and most of the times when the faithful are standing. If you find yourself arriving to church after the Liturgy has begun, a good rule of thumb to remember is - if everyone is standing, wait until they are sitting to light a candle (unless they are sitting for the sermon, of course). Finally, no candles are lit after the Great Entrance.

FOCA is taking orders for personalized coasters. They are \$12 for a set of 4 and make great shower, wedding and housewarming gifts. A set will be on display in the hall. This is an ongoing fundraiser so remember us for the holidays.

BLESSING OF VEHICLES It is our parish custom to bless vehicles on the Sunday nearest to the Feast of the Holy Prophet Elijah. This year, that commemoration fell on Sunday, July 21.



August 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>MARK YOUR CALENDARS BLESSING OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2019</p>				1	2	3
				1 Procession of the Lifegiving Cross Beginning of Dormition Fast		5:00pm Vespers
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy FOCA Meeting	Forefeast Transfiguration 6:00pm Vespers	Transfiguration of Our Lord 9:00am Divine Liturgy <i>Blessing of Fruit</i>	Valaam Icon	Tolga Icon	Ven. Herman of Alaska, Wonderworker of All America	5:00pm Vespers
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Constantinople Icon 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy MBAS Meeting		St. Tikhon, Wonderworker of Zadonsk NO COUNCIL MEETING	Forefeast Domition 6:00pm Vespers	Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos 9:00am Divine Liturgy <i>Blessing of Flowers</i>	Feodorovskaya Icon	Icon "Our Lady of the Kievan Caves" 5:00pm Vespers
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy	Donskaya Icon			Georgian Icon	Leavetaking Dormition	Petrovskaya Icon 5:00pm Vespers
<p>We welcome all of our guests and visitors. Please join us in the Cultural Center for Fellowship Hour following Divine Liturgy each Sunday.</p>						
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy <i>11:00-11:30am CGS Parent Meeting</i>	Vladimir and Pskov-Pechersk Icons		Ven. Job of Pochaev	Beheading of St. John the Baptist		5:00pm Vespers
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Church New Year Chernigov-Gethsemane Icon 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy	Kaluga Icon LABOR DAY		Icon "The Unburnt Bush"		Arapetskaya and Kievo-Bratskaya Icons	Forefeast Nativity of the Theotokos 5:00pm Vespers