

Rector's Letter, August, 2019

Dear brothers and sisters:

What does it mean to be a Christian? Most basically, a Christian is a follower of Jesus Christ: someone who believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who has lived and died in the flesh and has risen, offering us new life.

But a lot of the time, we can live with some murkier definition: it's "how we were raised," what our parents were before us, one way of expressing our proud heritage, or even a way of making clear we are not Jewish or Muslim or atheist. We can spend a considerable portion of our life not really understanding what it means to follow Christ or to learn from him.

So the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, celebrated on August 6, can seem rather strange and removed from our daily existence. Three of his disciples follow Jesus up a mountain, where he is revealed to them in dazzling white, with the prophets Moses and Elijah beside him. And a voice from heaven declares: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" What are we supposed to hear and see?

First of all, we can see fellow disciples who follow their Master where he tells them to go. This is the most fundamental meaning of "Hear him!" We are not being true disciples, nor true

Christians, if we do not make a constant, sincere effort to learn and follow what our Master Jesus Christ commands us to do.

We need to follow him into his Church, to hear his word. We need to think and pray throughout the week about what we heard on Sunday. And we need to put those words into action: love God and your neighbor; forgive as God has forgiven you; make peace; be generous; show mercy to those in need. These are not abstract or scholarly matters—they are commandments made to all of us. Even young children can grasp them.

If we do make the daily effort to "hear him" we will slowly but surely be transformed, to be more like Jesus Christ. The wise St. Maximus the Confessor explains that it was not that the Lord changed at the Transfiguration but that the disciples eyes were opened to see the Lord clearly as he truly is. In following his commandments, they were granted wisdom and understanding to see the Lord "hidden in plain sight."

We are promised that on the Last Day all of us will see the Lord coming in glory. We are told that for those who have been listening to his voice, the sight will be full of joy and gladness. But we are warned that it will be less happy for those who have been avoiding his presence.

So we need to adjust our eyes to the coming divine glare by looking for signs of Jesus Christ among the humble and meek; we need to use the "hearing aids" Christ has given us: the Scriptures,

the worship, our prayers, confession, and all the rest. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" This is how we respond.

Yours in Christ,



Around the Parish

Last month, **Mary Smith** fell asleep in the Lord. At 99, She was the oldest member of our parish. May her memory be eternal!

Looking ahead to August, the **Dormition Fast begins on Aug. 1**. It always lasts two weeks, in preparation for the Feast of the Dormition (Falling-Asleep) of the Theotokos on Aug. 15.

We will celebrate the **Transfiguration of the Lord** on Aug. 6. We remember how the Lord took three of his disciples, Peter, James and John, up to Mount Tabor. There he was transfigured, revealing his divine glory to them as far as they could bear it. We will observe the eve on Monday, Aug. 5, with Great Vespers at 6 PM. We will also bless fruit at that service. For the feast itself on Tuesday, we are invited to Holy Transfiguration, New Haven, for Divine Liturgy at 9 AM.

Our parish is participating in Meriden's National Night Out on Tuesday, Aug. 6, 5-8 PM. This event, presented by the Meriden Council of Neighborhoods and the Police Dept.,

is an outreach to city youth, to offer free food, entertainment, and information. We plan to have a table, with the opportunity to engage with the wider community.

We will celebrate the **Dormition (Falling-Asleep) of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary** on Aug. 15. On the eve, Wednesday, Aug. 14, we will also celebrate Great Vespers, and on Thursday, the Divine Liturgy at 9:30, both services followed by the blessing of flowers. The Dormition is a foretaste of the universal hope of life following death. In the feast's icon (which we can see on the ceiling of our church), we see the Theotokos laid out upon her funeral bier, but her Son bearing her up to heaven, as a new-born babe. We glorify her, and pray that, on the last day, all of us may be carried into new life!

We look forward with joy to the **Baptism of Wesley Tack** on Saturday, Aug. 17, at 1 PM. Wesley has been a faithful participant in parish life as a catechumen for many months.

We have a new edition of the **parish directory**. Please pick up a copy from the candle desk at the church entrance or the display case downstairs.

As we are about two-thirds of the way through the year, **please review your pledge of support to the parish**. If you have questions, speak with Alexia Tassmer (203-284-0856). Thank you for your ongoing support of the ministry of this parish.