

# WORKSHEETS

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## The Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ & The Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos





## HOLY TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

The Feast of the Transfiguration is one of the twelve great feasts of the Lord. On that day, the Church prayerfully (liturgically) remembers the biblical event of Christ's transfiguration on Mount Tabor in front of his disciples when He visibly revealed to them His divine glory. The transfiguration of the Lord is described in the evangelists Matthew (17: 1-9), Mark (9: 2-8), Luke (9: 2-36) and in 2 epistle of the Apostle Peter (1: 17-18). Jesus Christ took the disciples Peter, James and John with him and took them to the mountain of Tabor in Galilee. When the Lord transfigured Himself, His face shone like the sun, and His garments were white as light. During the event of the Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah, the representatives of the Law and the Prophets, appeared as well and talked with Christ. A voice from heaven was heard: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him."

The event of Christ's Transfiguration took place six days before Jesus foretold to His disciples' of his impending sufferings. The Church hymns for this feast day describe that the Lord Jesus Christ wanted to preserve the faith of the Apostles in Him as the Savior by His Transfiguration, so that they would not be afraid of the coming sufferings of Christ. The Gospels note that the Lord commanded the disciples not to tell anyone what they saw, until the Son of Man rose from the dead.

A Church custom of the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord is the blessings of grapes after the Holy Liturgy. In areas where grapes don't grow, apples are blessed. It is interesting that the early church canons forbade eating grapes before the Feast of the Transfiguration. The Feast of the Transfiguration begins to be celebrated in the Christian East from the 6th to the 8th century. In that period, the earliest sermons for this feast day were written. In the Christian West, the celebration of the holiday was established (unified) in 1457 in memory of the Christian victory of John of Capistrano and John Hunyadi over the Turks near Belgrade (Serbia) on August 6, 1456.



### HOLY PROPHET ELIJAH

The holy prophet Elijah was an Old Testament prophet and a great saint of the Church of Christ. Church hymns describe him as an angel in flesh, the founder of the Prophets, who prophesied the coming of the Savior (Messiah). Even during the life of Christ, he is mentioned as the most terrible and most powerful prophet of the Old Testament. Some Jews considered Christ to be the prophet Elijah (Mt. 16:14). During the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor, both Holy Prophets Moses and Elijah talked with the Lord.

From the apostolic days, particular honor continues for the Holy prophet Elijah in Christianity. In the 3rd century, the monk Chariton founded the Eliota monastic order on the site of Elijah's desert residence. In the Church calendar (liturgical year), the beginning of the commemoration of the feast of the Holy Prophet Elijah dates can be traced as far back as the 8th-9th century.

Of particular interest is the relationship of the Byzantine emperor Basil (10th century), the founder of the famous Macedonian dynasty, towards Saint Elijah. This prophet appeared in a dream to Basil's mother in the form of an old man with gray hair, from whose mouth a flame licked. He told Basil's mother in that dream that her son would become a Byzantine emperor. The dream came true, and Basil became emperor. In honor of the Holy Prophet Elijah, he built a church at his court in which a part of the cloak and belt worn by the prophet Elijah was kept. The memory of the cloak of the Holy Prophet Elijah was very much alive in the consciousness of the ancient faithful Byzantine people.

#### SERBS AND SAINT ELIJAH

Saint Elijah occupies a very important place in the Orthodox Serbian people's consciousness. Churches built in his memory can be found throughout the Serbian lands. Serbian medieval epic songs describe how Saint Elijah resolves the dispute between earth and heaven over justice and injustice. There is also a saying "from Saint Elijah day, the sun becomes more mild," which indicates that the summer season is passing and autumn is coming. Our people fervently prayed to the Holy Prophet Elijah to remove drought and famine. The life of the prophet Elijah is narrated in the 3rd book of Kings, chapters 17, 18, 19, 21; and in the 4th Kings chapter 1-3.

#### WHEAT FOR SAINT ELIJAH SLAVA: YES OR NO?

In the conscience of some Serbs, who celebrate Saint Elijah as the protector of their household, it can be heard that it is not necessary to prepare wheat (zhito, kolyivo, panaiya) for their slava. The excuses for this phenomenon are that he is a "living saint" and for that reason there is "no need to prepare zhito in his memory." Certainly, this is an unfounded and incorrect custom. Every Serbian Orthodox family, when preparing the slava, should also offer wheat, because wheat is prepared for the eternal memory of the deceased members of a family. In this way, our firm faith in the event of Christ's Resurrection from the dead is confessed, since the wheat symbolically refers to the event of the Resurrection of Christ. It is necessary to prepare zhito for every slava that is celebrated in the Serbian Orthodox people, and this also applies to the feast of the Holy Prophet Elijah.



# THE HOLY PROPHET ELIJAH.



## HOLY PROPHET MOSES

Moses was born at a time of great persecution of Jews by the Egyptians as described in the Old Testament books. The Old Testament describes in detail how his life was saved after he was left as a baby in a coffin in the reeds along the river. The Pharaoh's daughter, who came to the river to bathe, heard a child's cry and found him. She recognized that it was a Jewish child, but feeling sorry for his fate, she accepted him as her own child. Since he was found in the water and removed from it when he was saved, he was given the name Moses, "drawn from [water]."

The boy Moses received an excellent education at the Egyptian court. He quickly surpassed his teachers in science. Moses gained a good reputation among the pharaoh and all the courtiers. However, when he learned of his Jewish origins, he wanted to learn about the faith in the Jewish God and the history of the Jewish people. This soon drew the wrath of the Pharaoh. On one occasion, defending a Jew, he killed an Egyptian and fled the land of Egypt. He started a family in the land of Midian. During his stay in the land of Midian, the Angel of the Lord appeared to him on Mount Horeb in a fiery flame from a bush that burned but did not burn. Through His angel the Lord called Moses to be the leader of the Jewish people and to deliver them from the bondage of Egypt.

Empowered by faith in the Jewish God, Moses fearlessly returned to Egypt. He gathered all the Jewish leaders and conveyed to them the plan of deliverance from slavery, which he did with success. The prophet Moses performed many miracles in the name of God. In order to save the Jewish people from persecution by Egyptians, he parted the Red Sea. In the desert, he tapped drinking water from a rock and quieted the superstitious Jews. Whenever ungrateful Jews grumbled, Moses would beg God to be merciful and not to be angry with his people.

The prophet Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai written on stone tablets, having previously fasted for forty days and forty nights. During his stay on Sinai, Moses was so worthy and dignified to speak to the Lord face to face. That is why he is called Moses the God-seer.

While the prophet Moses appointed Joshua as his successor, he did not enter the Promised Land. He was 120 years old when he died and was buried in the land of Moab. In the Orthodox Church, the first week of the Great and Holy Lent was originally dedicated to the memory of the prophets Moses, Aaron and Samuel. The holy prophet Moses appeared in the event of the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor, as described in the Gospel.

## THE HOLY PROPHET MOSES



J	D	W	S	B	G	O	X	L	F	O	F	W	J	E
T	R	A	N	S	F	I	G	U	R	A	T	I	O	N
B	G	H	F	O	X	Y	E	O	A	G	D	O	S	K
A	O	E	K	L	W	K	R	E	L	I	J	A	H	W
E	S	J	E	H	F	D	J	H	E	F	A	B	X	Y
Y	M	O	S	E	S	E	K	G	O	W	J	S	R	G
K	E	F	B	A	E	B	I	E	L	T	A	B	O	R
R	D	W	I	H	O	T	F	F	D	Q	E	K	J	B
X	A	S	G	I	S	I	N	A	I	E	A	G	Y	O
Q	W	Y	A	F	B	J	R	H	Q	G	E	W	D	L
O	D	B	U	S	H	E	F	K	G	D	F	B	Q	E
P	K	A	E	J	I	P	R	O	P	H	E	T	G	B
W	E	Q	B	D	S	W	Q	B	G	S	A	J	W	O
F	R	W	E	F	A	E	O	R	H	Y	W	E	F	T
G	O	K	S	J	O	H	N	D	T	G	B	S	H	X

TRANSFIGURATION

ELIJAH

MOSES

TABOR

SINAI

BUSH

PROPHET

JOHN



## Test your Knowledge

### 1. Where the Transfiguration event took place?

- A. Mount Olive
- B. Mount Tabor
- C. Mount Horeb

### 2. When the Lord transfigured Himself His face shone like:

- A. Sun
- B. Light
- C. It didn't shine at all

### 3. What did Christ command to His disciples after the Transfiguration of Christ?

- A. Go and tell everyone
- B. Go and tell the Apostles
- C. Not to tell anyone what they saw

### 4. What did the prophets do during the event of the Transfiguration of the Lord?

- A. They sang with Christ
- B. They talked with Christ
- C. They prayed with Christ

### 5. What is the Church custom for the feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ?

- A. Blessings of grapes
- B. Blessings of willows
- C. Blessings of watermelons

ANSWERS:  
1. B; 2. A; 3. C; 4. B; 5. A.

## THE DORMITION OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS

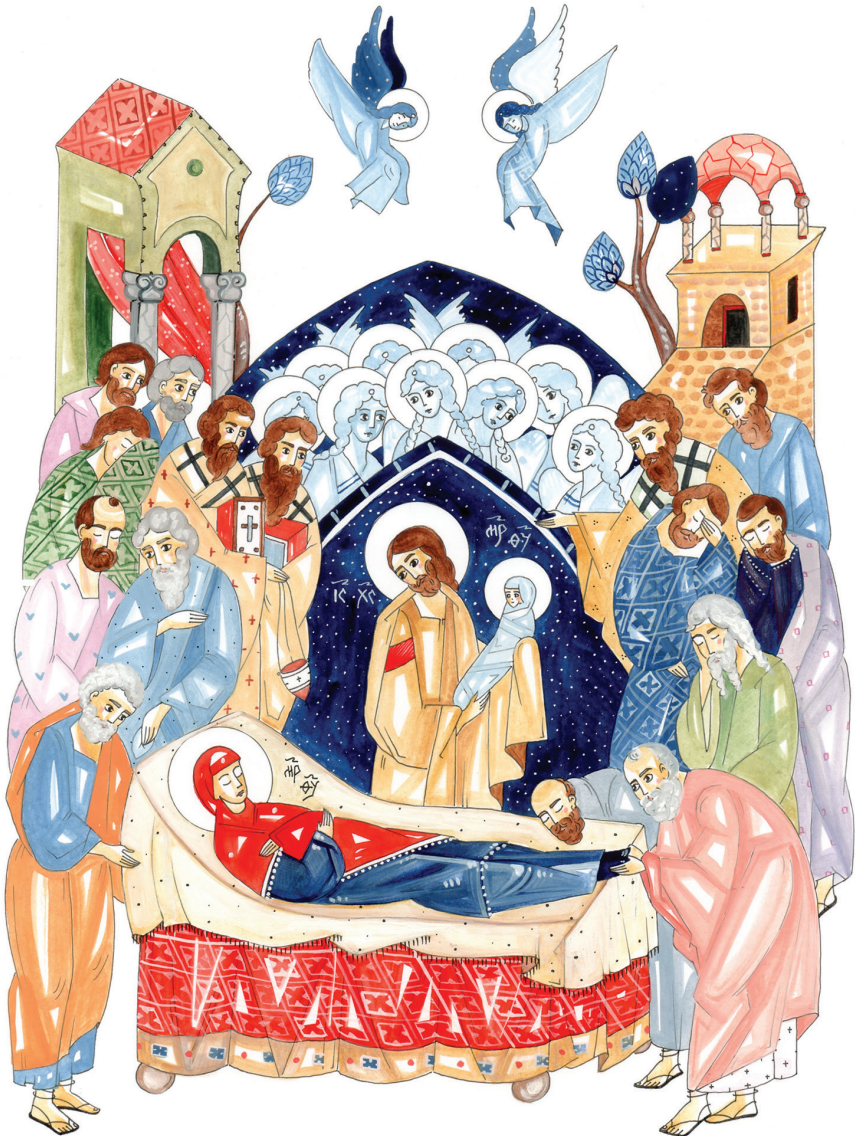
A living tradition of the person of the Most Holy Mother of God is preserved in the Christian church. By accepting to be the mother of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, she took the most important role in the event of the salvation of the human race. In the consciousness of the Christian Church and its liturgical life, she received the most sublime name the Mother of God, since she gave birth to God in the flesh. This teaching was accepted at the Third Ecumenical Council held in Ephesus 431. The Gospel of John describes the moment when the Lord under the Cross entrusted his Mother to his disciple St. John the Theologian for care, but also entrusted young John to His Mother for care (John 19, 26).

Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:12) describe that the Mother of God spent time in prayer together with the Apostles. Oral tradition reports that she lived in Jerusalem, in the home of St. John the Theologian, which was located on Mount Zion. During her earthly life, she visited St. Ignatius the God-bearer in Antioch. The tradition says she also visited Lazarus, the bishop of Cyprus and a friend of Christ. During that trip, she stepped on the shores of the Holy Mount Athos, thus becoming the heavenly Protector of the future monastic republic of Mount Athos. Upon her return, she settled in Jerusalem, visiting the places where her Son, Jesus Christ, had been. She spent time in fasting and prayer. On one occasion, while she was praying on the Mount of Olives, to see the end of her life, the archangel Gabriel stood before her. He told her the good news - in three days she would go to Christ God.

As a sign of victory over death and physical incorruptibility, Archangel Gabriel gave her a branch of paradise, which was to be carried in front of her scaffold during the funeral. Upon returning home, her face was illuminated with light and the Mother of God began to prepare for her dormition. She informed St. John the Theologian about everything, showing him a branch with a will. St. John informed all the Apostles of Christ of this news.

The Mother of God bequeathed to be buried in the Garden of Gethsemane, at the foothill of the Mount of Olives, where stood the tomb of her parents Saints Joachim and Anna, and her guardian St. Joseph the Righteous. The Mother of God left her two dresses as well as all her property to the poor widows who served her. Suddenly, there was a noise like thunder and clouds that surrounded the home of St. John the Theologian. By the command of God, the angels seized the Apostles, who scattered to all parts of the world to preach the Gospel, and were brought to Jerusalem in the clouds in front of the house of the Most Holy Mother of God.

# DORMITION OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS AND EVER-VIRGIN MARY



Finally, the Holy Apostle Paul came with his disciple Dionysius, the first bishop of Athens; Hierotheus, Bishop of Athens; and Timothy, Bishop of Ephesus. By the Holy Spirit, 70 apostles gathered on August 15 at 3 o'clock in the Jewish time. The Mother of God laid on a decorated scaffold, awaiting the arrival of Her Only Begotten Son. Suddenly, the light shone, the Lord revealed Himself and descended from heaven personally, accompanied by angels, and the Mother of God said the verses: My soul glorifies the Lord (Luke 1: 46-47). At the same time, a wonderful angelic chant of the words of the Annunciation was heard, "Rejoice, O Full of Grace" (Luke 1, 28).

The apostles saw how the angels singing this hymn accompanied the soul of the Mother of God, which the Lord ascended to heaven. Her face shone like the sun, and her body gave off a pleasant fragrance, from which many were healed of their infirmities. The enraged Jews even sent an army to disperse the participants, but the cloud descended like a wall and protected the faithful. A Jewish priest named Aponia, filled with hatred, wanted to turn over the bed of the Mother of God. When he touched the scaffold, the angel cut off his hands with a sword. Aponius repented and was miraculously healed. The angels came to Gethsemane with the body of the Mother of God and laid the body in the tomb. Then the angels spent three days at the tomb, singing psalms.

The Holy Apostle Thomas came to the tomb only on the third day. Having opened the tomb of the Mother of God, the Apostles did not find the body of the Mother of God, but only her clothes that emitted a pleasant fragrance.

Saint John of Damascus mentions that Empress Pulcheria (+453), the wife of Emperor Marcian (450-457), built several churches in Constantinople in honor of the Mother of God. This pious woman had a desire to place her relics in the church, so she turned to the Juvenal Patriarch of Jerusalem for relics. Patriarch Juvenal (+458) told her the story of the Assumption of the Mother of God and that Mary's body was not in the grave. This holy man sent her the funeral clothes of the Mother of God instead of the body. Empress Pulcheria laid this gift in the Vlacherna Church in Constantinople. One of the oldest sermons on the feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God is from the 7th century, written by Modestus, Patriarch of Jerusalem (+632). There are no written pieces of evidence of the event of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God. During the time of the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II (1282-1328), the entire month of August was dedicated to the Most Holy Mother of God. The Feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos is celebrated on August 28. A lent was established in her memory in the month of August, and according to the importance, it comes immediately after the Great and Holy Lent.

A	W	K	E	A	L	B	V	E	D	A
F	D	O	R	M	I	T	I	O	N	S
U	E	H	G	A	B	R	I	E	L	K
L	A	D	E	U	A	W	H	B	A	I
K	Z	I	O	N	I	S	A	X	F	W
T	H	E	O	T	O	K	O	S	E	L
A	W	V	A	F	E	Z	A	B	V	H
U	G	E	T	H	S	E	M	A	N	E
K	A	Z	E	D	B	A	K	X	W	S
E	B	W	M	O	T	H	E	R	D	I
S	P	R	A	Y	E	R	W	L	A	V

DORMITION

GABRIEL

ZION

THEOTOKOS

GETHSEMANE

MOTHER

PRAYER



## Test your Knowledge

**1. Where did the event of the Dormition take place?**

- A. Bethlehem
- B. Ephesus
- C. Jerusalem

**2. The Third Ecumenical Council allowed the use of the name:**

- A. Theotokos
- B. Christotokos
- C. Neither of the two

**3. Which of the Apostles did not arrive in Jerusalem on time for the funeral of the Mother of God?**

- A. Peter
- B. Thomas
- C. Paul

**4. Where was the coffin with the body of the Mother of God laid?**

- A. Olive Garden
- B. Zion
- C. Gethsemane Garden

**5. When do we celebrate the feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos?**

- A. August 28
- B. August 19
- C. August 29

ANSWERS:  
1. C; 2. A; 3. B; 4. C; 5. A.



### THE MYSTERY OF JESUS' PRAYER

The event of Christ's Transfiguration is essentially connected with the practice of the Jesus' prayer, which has been used on the Holy Mountain since early times. The monks of Mount Athos, who nurtured this prayer, were called hesychasts. This word comes from the Greek word *nouxiá*, which translated into Serbian means: silence, serenity, quietness. The Venerable Justin Popovich (+1979) translated this term with those who reside in prayerful silence. This prayer of mind-and-heart, which the monks of Mount Athos kept as their greatest treasure, has few words and reads: Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me. This prayer is known as the Jesus Prayer. The guiding idea of that ascetic-prayerful asceticism on the Holy Mountain is based on the invitation of the Holy Apostle Paul (1 Thessalonians 5, 17): "Pray without ceasing."

In the first half of the 14th century, a dispute broke out over the question of hesychast monks and their practice. The main participants in this theological conflict were St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessaloniki (Greece), and Barlaam, a monk from Calabria (Italy). Arriving in Constantinople, Barlaam became acquainted with this practice from Mount Athos of knowing God through Jesus' prayer. Not understanding the context, Barlaam rejected this teaching and attacked St. Gregory Palamas, causing a conflict of unprecedented proportions in the Byzantine Empire.

### ST. GREGORY PALAMAS AND THE DIVINE LIGHT

St. Gregory Palamas was himself a monk and hesychast of Mount Athos, and so it was expected that he was the main defender of Jesus' prayer and hesychastic theology. He pointed out that it was not impossible to see the divine light, since the apostles saw it on Mount Tabor during the Transfiguration of Christ. Basically, the Lord revealed divine glory before His disciples, as much as they could accept. The iconography describes the moment of the Transfiguration and emphasizes the distraction of the faces of the Holy Apostles, whose eyes could not bear the power of light. The Hesychasts claimed that those who were transformed by the grace of God could know (perceive) God.

In his masterpiece, *The Triads*, Saint Gregory Palamas explains that God is unknowable and conceptually elusive in his essence. However, God reveals Himself to man through His uncreated energies. In this part one can recognize an essential difference that provides an opportunity for human deification, which is the goal of our life. For Gregory Palamas, it is light that represents a divine force (energy, *ενεργεια*) that originates from the deity but differs from the invisible divine being.

When the teachings of St. Gregory Palamas were first accepted on the Holy Mountain, they became a kind of manifesto of the monastic state of Mount Athos, and as such were sent to the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople for comments. After many overturns, the hesychastic teaching was confirmed at the council in Constantinople in 1351. Barlaam's attacks were condemned and he was expelled to Calabria, where he became a Latin bishop. Based on *The Life of Saint Stevan of Dechani*, written by Grigorije Camblak, St. Stevan of Dechani also participated in this dispute while he was in exile in Constantinople.



### THE GIFT OF GOD

What is the significance of this historical event? The efforts made in this discussion point to the fact that the state of prayer is the most intimate personal trust in God and withdrawal from the turmoil and chaos with which we are surrounded. Prayer is not a magical act, nor can it have a magical effect. It is the remembrance of God, repentance and transformation of our personality. Prayer is adorned with a whole system of spiritual values, attention and vigilance. We can affirm that this represents a human effort towards deification, a true event that defines the ultimate aspiration of our church life. Only thanks to the gift of divine grace is it possible to converse with the heavenly Father and attain oneness with God.

Contemporary orthodox theologians point out that there are also urban hesychasts, describing cities as modern deserts, in which attempts are made to create spiritual isolation despite the turmoil in which modern man lives. It is about withdrawing from the turmoil in order to entrust oneself to God the Lord, the Source of all good.

**Holy Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich:**  
**“From all memories, save me, o God, except the memory of you.”**

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