

# August

Serpen in Old Slavonic and Little Russian<sup>1</sup>

## August 1

### *D. + Procession of the Honorable Wood of the Honorable and Life-creating Cross*

According to general opinion, this feast was established in Constantinople because of the frequent illnesses occurring there in August. Annually on August 1, part of the life-creating wood of the Cross of the Lord, kept in the house church of the Greek Emperors, was carried into the Temple of St. Sophia where water was blessed. Then, for 2 weeks this holy relic was carried about the city, and Litiias "for the sanctification of places and for the healing of illnesses" were served. On August 14, the life-giving wood of the Cross was returned to the royal chambers. The origin of this feast goes back to the 9th century. Russia began to celebrate it at the beginning of the 15th century. The name of the feast "origin" is an incorrect translation of the Greek words *προέλευσις* (or *πρόδοσ*) which means solemn ceremony, cross procession.

Motivating the faithful to glorify the life-giving Cross on this day, the Holy Church in its hymns exclaims: "Today the Cross is lifted up and the world is freed from error; today the Resurrection of Christ is renewed, and the ends of the earth rejoice"; "Let us begin and receive enlightenment, gladness and salvation, and forgiveness, offering praise to the Lord"; "joyfully let us take up the All-Blessed Cross, offering it in churches and cities, and let us worship it that we may receive forgiveness of debts"; "this led the human race, very much held captive, out of Hades, having deposed the enemy and having destroyed the pride of demons unto the end".

### *Kontakion, tone 4*

**Voluntarily lifted up on the Cross,  
Grant bounties to those bearing your name, O Christ God,  
Make our right-believing Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich glad in Your power,  
Granting him victories over adversaries;  
May he be enabled with Your weapon of peace, an invincible victory.**

**On August, 1 the Cross is carried out for its veneration.**

**After the dismissal for daily Vespers the priest, deacon and psalm reader with candles enter into the Vessel Depository or Prothesis, i.e. into that part of the temple where the table of oblation is, and are vested. Then they cense the Holy Cross, and the deacon says "Bless Master". The priest replies:**

**"Blessed is our God", and the psalm reader reads the "Trisagion Prayers". After reading "Our Father" and the exclamation of the priest, the Troparion to the Cross is sung: "O Lord, save Thy people", then "Glory, Now and ever" and the Kontakion: "Voluntarily lifted up on the Cross". During the singing of these hymns the priest takes up the honorable Cross on a platter on his head and carries the cross, preceded by two lampadas and censer, and places it on the altar where the Gospel usually lays. The Gospel is placed at the high place on the holy table, and lights an all night candle before the Cross.**

**In the Ustav [Typikon] no vigil is prescribed for August 1 except where there is a temple of the Savior (see below). The Ustav prescribes the great Vespers and Litia; but there is no blessing of the loaves, and the dismissal is placed after "Save, O God, Thy people". In Matins before singing the Great Doxology the priest puts on all his priestly vestments. During the singing of the Great Doxology the priest with the deacon censers the holy table and cross, going around the holy table three times. At the singing of the "Trisagion" the priest takes up the honorable Cross on a platter on his head and goes out through the North Doors, preceded by two lampadas and censer. Having come to the Royal Doors and standing directly in front of them, the priest will wait until the end of singing the "Trisagion". After the "Trisagion", the priest exclaims: "Wisdom, attend!". The singers sing the Troparion: "O Lord, save Thy people" three times. The priest carries the cross to the Analogion, facing the Royal Doors, places the honorable Cross on it, censers around it cross wisely from 4 sides, going around the Analogion three times. Then the priest and the deacon sing: "Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master" three times, and each time during the singing of this verse, the priest and the deacon bow down in worship before the Cross. After this the singers sing the same verse three times. After this singing the priest and the deacon venerate the Cross three times and kiss it, after the kissing bows fully once. (According to the Ustav [Typikon] the laity should also venerate the cross in a similar way). Singers then sing the stikhera to the cross, after which is said the usual Matins Litanies. (See the Ustav [Typikon] for Aug. 1, Sept. 14 and the Third Sun. of the Great fast).**

**Paramoia:** 1) and 2) see July 2 and 3; 3) Pr. 9:1 11. **Matins Gospel:** Jn. 12:28-36; sel. 42. **Epistle:** 1 Cor. 1:18-24; sel. 125. **Gospel:** Jn. 19:6-11, 13-20, 25-28, 30-35; sel. 60.

**Check the Ustav [Typikon]: If the first day of August falls on a Sunday.**

**On August 1, there is a blessing of water<sup>2</sup>. The order of this water-sanctification is in the August Monthly Menaion and in the Book of Needs. If this water-sanctification occurs in Matins it is done after carrying out the cross after the singing of the Troparion: "O Lord, save Thy people", but before singing: "Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master", and the veneration of the Cross. It is the Lesser Blessing of Water and begins with**

**the singing of the troparia: "O Virgin who received the greeting, 'rejoice'". Then after the veneration of the cross, during the kissing of it, the faithful is sprinkled with holy water. In parish churches water-sanctification usually occurs at rivers after the Liturgy. It begins, as always, i.e. after blessing of the priest the "Trisagion Prayers", the psalm: "Lord, hear my prayer [Ps 142]" is read and so forth.**

**After the water-sanctification the priest sprinkles the dwelling with holy water.**

**At the sanctification of water: Epistle: Heb. 2:11-18; sel. 306. Gospel: Jn. 5:1-4; sel. 14.**

*Festival to the All-merciful Savior, Christ our God, and the All-holy Theotokos Mary, His Mother*

In 1164 Andrei Bogoliubsky undertook a campaign against the Volga Bulgars, who repressed the inhabitants of the Rostov and Suzdal lands. Hoping for the help of the Heavenly Queen, the Prince took Her Wonderworking Vladimir Icon (see May 21) with him. Two vested priests carried the holy icon and the precious Cross of Christ before the warriors. Before the battle the devout prince, having participated in the Holy Mysteries, passionately addressed the Sovereign Lady in prayer: "placing all hope on You, O Lady", the prince prayed, "I will not be defeated, and I, a sinner, have a wall and protection in You". After the prince commanders and warriors fell down before the holy icon and, having kissed Her, bravely went against the enemy. The Bulgars were beaten and turned to flight. On this same day, with help from above, the Greek Emperor Manuel also gained victory over the Saracens. As the immutable proof of the miraculousness of both these victories fiery rays were served, coming from the presence of the Icons of the Savior and the Mother of God and the Holy Cross in the armies of the right-believing Prince Andrei and Emperor Manuel. These wonderful rays covered the regiments of the right-believing authorities of Greece and Russia and were seen by all the combatants. In memory of both these wonderful victories, with the mutual consent of Prince Andrei and Emperor Manuel and by the blessing of the representatives of the higher church authority, the feast to the All-Merciful Savior and All-holy Theotokos was established. One is by the initiative of Prince Andrei and the other by Emperor Manuel to establish this feast. It is undoubtedly admitted that this feast existed in the Russian Church since the 12th century. In our August Monthly Menaion the special service to the All-Merciful Savior is published, containing hymns in honor of the Cross of the Lord within it, printed separately from the services for the "Procession of the Honorable Wood" in the same Menaion. The Service to the Savior maintains a general character and there is no indication of the circumstances in it, contributing to the reason for the establishment of this feast. The Ustav [Typikon] prescribes this service in those temples, which are consecrated to the All-Merciful Savior.

*Troparion, tone 8*

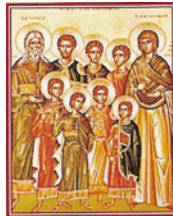
**With greatest oversight, accepting the wretched,  
Visit our embittered sins, O All-merciful Master,  
Through the prayers of the Theotokos,  
Bestow great mercy on our souls.**

*Kontakion, tone 4*

**I was the worker of every impurity, O All-Merciful Savior,  
And falling into the pit of despair,  
But I wail from the heart, and I cry out to Thee, O Word:  
Speedily come and intercede for our aid, O Bountiful One,  
For Thou art merciful.**

**Refer to the Ustav [Typikon]: If the temple is of the All-Merciful Savior.**

*Holy Seven Maccabean Martyrs (Abimus, Antoninus, Gurias, Eleazar,  
Eusabonus, Alimus and Marcellus) and their mother Solomonia, their teacher  
Eleazar and many other sufferers in the year 166 before Christ in Antioch*



The Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes, under whose authority at that time was Judea, wished to convert the Judeans to the pagan Greek faith and consequently began a severe persecution on the rebellious. Special severity in administering the torture for faithfulness to the Mosaic Law was shown to the family of the Maccabees: before the eyes of St. Solomonia [Salome] her seven sons one by one on command of the king had their hands and legs chopped off, their tongues cut out, were skinned and finally burned on heated frying pans. The holy brothers "with courageous and great spirit, noble branches of a noble mother, zealous strugglers for truth, true disciples of Mosaic law, precise guardians of ancestral customs, were zealous with each other in the desire for death, fearing only that the torturer would stop the tortures and that they would remain uncrowned". St. Solomonia [Salome], "vigorous, courageous and God-loving, endured the torments in her maternal heart, incongruous according to nature. She did not grieve for her suffering sons, but was tormented by the fear that her sons would not suffer affliction. She grieved not so much about the departed, however grievous, but that the rest would join them. She pointed to her breasts, recalling the nurture, witnessed to by grey hair. She used old age in the application for her petitions, not to save her children from death, but to encourage them in suffering; because she honored them not for the danger of death, but for the delay of death. She was not shaken in anything and did not shrink from hardness: not prepared for the wooden

racks, nor for the sharpness of the iron claws, nor for refined swords, nor for the boiling pots, nor for the roaring fire, nor for the terrible torturers, nor for the surrounding military guards, nor for the amputation of limbs, nor for the tearing apart of the flesh, nor for the expected suffering." In every thing she inspired asceticism in all her children. She courageously got up and gathering the severed members of one son gave another to the torturers and prepared the third for the struggle. After the martyr's death of her sons, St. Solomonia [Salome] died while fervently praying.

Their ninety year old guide Priest Eleazar, "with the grey hairs of wisdom", died before them in Jerusalem, having refused not only to sacrifice to idols but also to show an example to the people that he did not eat meat prohibited by Mosaic law.

The relics of the Maccabean brothers are now found in Rome. In the services for all these holy martyrs, only Solomonia and Eleazar are mentioned by name.

*Kontakion, tone 2*

**Pillars of the wisdom of God,  
Seven in number,  
And lamps with seven lights of the divine light,  
O All-Wise Maccabees, greatest martyrs before the Martyrs:  
With them pray to the God of all,  
To save those who honor you.**

**Epistle:** Heb. 11:33-40; sel. 30. **Gospel:** Mt. 10:32-40; sel. 38.

*Nine Martyrs: Leontius, Attius, Alexander, Cindeus, Minsitheus, Cyriacus, Mineon, Catanus and Eucleus,* suffered in Pamphilian Perga during the reign of Diocletian. For the destruction of the sacrificial altar to the goddess Artemis and their bold confession of Christ, all of them were beheaded by the sword.

*Siloam Icon of the All-Holy Theotokos*

The feast was established by the Greek Emperor Manuel in commemoration of the victory granted him over the Saracens with the help of the Mother of God.

Beginning August 1<sup>3</sup> and continuing until August 15, the Church has always observed the **Dormition Fast**, as established of old, keeping it according to an unwritten tradition. The most ancient mention of it is by the name of Autumn Fast, placed in the 7th month by Leo the Great. However in the ancient Church there were disagreements concerning the duration of this fast. The reason for this was the feast of Transfiguration, because some decided to eat meat on this day and others continued the decision to fast for 4, others for 8 days. Finally, the old tradition concerning this fast in view of the doubts about the quantity of its days was sealed in a conciliar definition in 1166 during the reign of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch Luke Chrysoberges. Since that time the single

paradigmatic order of this fast was established in the Eastern Churches. With the establishment of the Dormition fast, the Church, on the one hand, guides us to spiritual transfiguration, observing the fast as a means to graceful internal circumspection, and on the other hand, motivates us to imitate the Mother of God, Who spent all her life in the asceticism of fasting and prayer. In the severity of fasting this fast approaches the Forty Day Fast. It is weakened on Saturdays, Sundays, and likewise on the feast of Transfiguration.

**In all this fast, except for the day of Transfiguration, the Ustav [Typikon] does not permit eating fish; on Saturdays and Sundays cooking with olive oil and wine is allowed; on Tuesday and Thursday, cooking is without olive oil; on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays xerophagia (Ustav [Typikon] Chapter 33) is specified. On some days of the Dormition fast, as well as in the Petrine Fast (see May 17), in Matins the Alleluia or Troparion is prescribed, "We do prostrations even up to the time of Communion" (see the Ustav [Typikon] Chapter 33).**

**See From February 10, except during the Holy Forty Day Fast and during the Pentecost Period, until August 1 the Katabasia is: "*I shall open my mouth*". From August 1 up to the feast of Transfiguration and on the feast of Transfiguration the Katabasia is: "*A Cross Moses traced*".**

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<sup>1</sup> *August* is named so in honor of the first Roman Emperor Augustus. *Serpen* comes from the word sickle - the tool which removes grain from the fields. In the north this month is still called *Zarev* (from here *and from Zarnik, Zornichnik*) from the flash of summer lightning.

<sup>2</sup> In the Greek Church the "Order for the Lesser Blessing of Water" is served on the first day of each month, wherefore the order of the blessing of water is quite often referred to at the "Order of the Blessing of Water in the new month". This custom traces its beginning to extreme antiquity. As is known at the beginning of the new month, pagans kindled fires before their houses to drive away evil spirits from them. Men and women jumped through these flaring flames to cleanse themselves from the influence of evil spirits. This continued through the entire night on the first day of the month and various sorts of games, charades and other social disorders were attributed to this practice. In the morning, pagans performed songs and dancing by rivers and, having gathered water, returned to their houses, which with various sorts of charms they even sprinkled with this water. Such superstitious customs in the way of life of simple people were long kept even in the days of Christianity (Trullo, 65). To turn Christians from such superstitions and to eliminate the connection to the damage of their customs, the Greek Church, according to Balsamon, also established to do water-sanctification and to sprinkle homes with holy water on the first day of the month. According to standard usage, the Greek Church blesses water inside the temples in "vials", which ordinarily are set up at the entrance doors of the temple (Works of the Kiev Theological Academy 1893, Vol. 3). Our contemporary Ustav [Typikon] prescribes the Lesser Sanctification of water on August 1 either in the temple or at the springs. The custom of the Greek Church to do the lesser sanctification of water on the first day of all other months has not taken root in our Church. Except for August 1, only in the Southwest do we still do water-sanctification on February 2 (see above, the note on page 63). In the opinion of some, the Cross Procession existing among us on August 1 at the springs is also established in memory of the baptism of Rus, which, according to the same opinion, was done on August 1 (see the Tserkovnyi Vedomosti [Church News], 1894, 39, page 1419).

<sup>3</sup> ) Simple people call this fast "gospozhinki [Dormition Fast]", and "spozhinki [Dormition Fast]", mixing two concepts: lady and wife (woman).