

Summertime Faith: Living for Christ

THERE'S MORE TO SUMMERTIME than relaxing at the beach or cottage. While there is plenty of value in rest, you'll also want to take advantage of the many restorative and personally fulfilling opportunities that this season provides. Here are a few ideas for living out your faith this summer.

Strengthen Your Relationships

Christ our Lord instructs us to love one another and yet, mired down in our usual to-do lists, we fail to follow this basic command. We were created by God to have fulfilling relationships, and for a Christian there are few worthier pursuits than to spend time with loved ones. If you've spent months away or apart from them, summer may grant you the time you need to maintain or even strengthen these bonds. As Christians, we are called upon to care for others. Keep an eye open to suffering around you. Be prepared to provide emotional and spiritual support where needed. Our family members and friends should know that they can unburden themselves of their worries and fears in our presence — and that we're always happy to help.

Get Reacquainted with Your Bible

Now that you finally have more spare time, dedicate some of your reading efforts to your Bible. Consider joining a summer Bible study if available. Otherwise, feel free to peruse your Bible at your own pace. Keep a journal as you explore new Bible passages or revisit favourites. This is a great way to grow stronger in faith and to understand how this beautiful, God-breathed book is still so important 2,000 years after it was written — especially during these unprecedented times.



Relearn to Pray

If you've fallen into the habit of praying only on Sundays or when you're worried about something, it's time to break out of the trap and establish a more routine prayer life. Summer provides you with more time to relearn how to pray, and the impact prayer has in our lives as believers. If you struggle to get started, begin by thanking God for the many blessings you've received throughout the year.

Embrace a Spirit of Service

Opportunities for volunteerism abound during the summer months, and you'll love the spirit of service at local charities and service organizations. There are also ways to help your church such as counting the collection offering and being an usher/greeter. Dedicate yourself to a worthy cause and determine where your talents can best be utilized.

Make this summer a season of intention. There's nothing wrong with relaxation, but you'll come away feeling far more rejuvenated if you take this time to invest in your faith journey.

Celebrating Our Deep Faith

Byzantine Catholic Worship: Our Church, Its Customs and Rich Heritage

The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost: Gospel Meaning

THE STORY OF JESUS casting the legion of demons into a herd of pigs found in Matthew 8: 28-34 on the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost (and again in Luke 8: 26-39 on the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost) allows us to witness the spiritual warfare in which our Saviour was constantly engaged. Demons knew exactly who Jesus was — "Son of God" — and were aware of their ultimate doom.



Why the demons begged to be allowed to enter the swine is unclear from the account. It could be because they did not want to leave the area where they had been successful in doing their mischief among the people. Perhaps they were drawn to the unclean animals because of their own filthiness. The demons may have made this strange request because it was their last chance to avoid confinement in the Abyss, the place of confinement to which evil spirits are doomed (Revelation 9: 1-6). Whatever their reasoning, it is clear from the account that demons had little power of their own and were unable to do anything without Jesus' permission. As Christians, we can take comfort in the knowledge that the forces of the enemy of our souls are under the complete control of God and can only act in ways He allows.

The Bible doesn't explain to us Jesus' reasoning, but displaying His sovereign power over demons could be one reason why Jesus sent them into the pigs. If the pigs' owners were Jews, Jesus could have been rebuking them for violating Mosaic law which forbids Jews from eating or keeping unclean animals such as swine (Leviticus 11: 7). If the swineherds were Gentiles, perhaps Jesus was using this miraculous event to show them the malice of evil spirits under whose influence they lived, as well as displaying His own power and authority over creation. In any case, the owners were so terrified to be in the presence of such spiritual power that they made no demand for restitution for the loss of their property and begged Jesus to leave the region. The people were awestruck but unrepentant — they wanted no more of Jesus Christ. This shows the hardness of their hearts and their desire to remain in sin. The healed demoniac, on the other hand, demonstrated the true faith and repentance of a changed heart and begged to be allowed to follow Jesus. Perhaps the unmistakable difference between the saved and the unsaved was an object lesson for the disciples and all who witnessed the event. Jesus sent the healed man away, giving him a commission that he joyfully obeyed: "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." (Luke 8: 39)

IMMOVABLE FEASTS IN JULY

WHEN SOMEONE MENTIONS the month of July, Canada Day comes to mind for most of us. It's also the time for summer vacations, wedding and anniversary celebrations, tending gardens, spending time at the lake, and enjoying the warmer weather. Unfortunately, it may mean less time at church and praying which, in reality, is a defiance of God's invitation given to us through the gospels and puts us in danger of the sentence, "None of those who were invited will taste a morsel of my dinner." (Luke 14:24)

So, despite the 'off-season' even with church, there are still important feasts on our church calendar in July. Here are the prominent ones listed in *The Divine Liturgy: An Anthology for Worship*.

July 2 ~ The Placing of the Precious Robe of Our Most Holy Lady and the Mother of God in the Church at Blacharnae in Constantinople — an event that occurred in the year 458 under Emperor Leo the Thracian (457-474)

July 5 ~ Our Venerable Father Athanasius of Athos (c. 1003), founder of the Great Lavra Monastery on Mount Athos



July 10 ~ Our Venerable Father Anthony of the Monastery of the Caves in Kyiv (1073), whom God glorified with the gift of clairvoyance and wonderworking

July 11 ~ Repose of Blessed Olga (Olha), Princess of Kyiv, named Helen at Holy Baptism (c. 970). She is the first Christian to occupy the throne of the Grand Principedom of Kyiv; the first enlightener and teacher of the Christian faith in Rus'-Ukraine

July 15 ~ The Holy Grand Prince Volodymyr, Equal to the Apostles, named Basil at Holy Baptism (1015), who accepted the Christian faith for Rus'-Ukraine

July 16 (Sunday) ~ Commemoration of the First Six Ecumenical Councils

July 20 ~ The Holy and Glorious Prophet Elijah (Elias) (9th c. BC), who was a hero of faithfulness to God in Israel. Many churches are dedicated in his memory.

July 24 ~ The Holy Martyrs Borys and Hlib, named Roman and David at Holy Baptism (1015), known as Passion-bearers, since they did not resist evil with violence

July 25 ~ Dormition of Saint Anna, Mother of the Most Holy God-bearer (Theotokos, Virgin Mary)

July 27 ~ The Holy Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon (286-305), invoked in the sacraments of anointing of the sick, at the blessing of holy water, and prayers for the sick.

Remember: God does not take the summer off and neither should we. So, let's make it our determination to bring ourselves and our families to His house during July...and August.

The Holy and Glorious Prophet Elijah (Elias)

THE HOLY PROPHET ELIJAH is one of the greatest of the prophets and the first dedicated to virginity in the Old Testament. He was born in Tishba of Gilead into the Levite tribe 900 years before the Incarnation of the Word of God.

Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus gives the following account about the birth of the Prophet Elijah: "When Elijah was born, his father Sobach saw in a vision angels of God around him. They swaddled him with fire and fed him with flames." The name Elijah (meaning the Lord's strength) given to the infant defined his whole life. From the years of his youth he dedicated himself to the One God, settled in the wilderness and spent his whole life in strict fasting, meditation and prayer. Called to prophetic service, which put him in conflict with the Israelite king Ahab, the prophet became a fiery zealot of true faith and piety.



During this time the Israelite nation had fallen away from the faith of their Fathers, they abandoned the One God and worshipped pagan idols, the worship of which was introduced by the impious king Jeroboam. Jezebel, the wife of king Ahab, was devoted to idol worship. She persuaded her husband to build a temple to the pagan god Baal, which led many Israelites away from the worship of the true God. Beholding the ruin of his nation, the Prophet Elijah

began to denounce King Ahab for impiety, and exhorted him to repent and turn to the God of Israel. The king would not listen to him. The Prophet Elijah then declared to him, that as punishment there would be neither rain nor dew upon the ground, and the drought would cease only by his prayer. Indeed, the word of Elijah was a torch (Eccles. 48: 1) The heavens were closed for three and a half years, and there was drought and famine throughout all the land.

According to Church tradition, the prophet Elijah will be the Forerunner of the dread Second Coming of Christ. He will proclaim the truth of Christ, urge all to repentance, and will be slain by the Antichrist. This will be a sign of the end of the world.

The life of the Holy Prophet Elijah is recorded in four Old Testament books (3 Kings; 4 Kings; Sirach/Ecclesiasticus 48: 1-15; 1 Maccabees 2: 58). At the time of the Transfiguration, the Prophet Elijah conversed with the Saviour upon Mount Tabor (Mt. 17: 3; Mark 9: 4; Luke. 9: 30).

In iconography, the Prophet Elijah is depicted ascending to heaven in a fiery chariot, surrounded with flames, and harnessed to four winged horses. We pray to him for deliverance from drought, and to ask for reasonable weather

Troparion, Tone 4:

The glorious Elijah (Elias), angelic in body, pillar of prophets, second herald of Christ — by sending grace upon Eliseus from on high, dispels disease, cleanses lepers, and overflows with healing for those who honour him..