

The Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)

23 March / 5 April 2015

Extracts from the Vigil Service:

Today the grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us together, and we all take up Thy Cross and say: Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

Today the Word and co-eternal Son of God the Father, whose throne is the heaven and whose footstool is the earth, humbles Himself and comes to Bethany, seated on a dumb beast, on a foal. Then the children of the Hebrews, holding branches in their hands, praise Him saying: 'Hosanna in the highest: blessed is He that comes, the King of Israel'.

Let us also come today, all the new Israel, the Church of the Gentiles, and let us cry with the Prophet Zechariah: Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem; for behold, thy King comes unto thee: He is meek and brings salvation, and He rides upon the colt of an ass, the foal of a beast of burden. Keep the feast with the children, and holding branches in your hands sing His praises: Hosanna to the highest; blessed is He that comes, the King of Israel.

1st, 2nd 3rd Stichera of 'Lord, I have cried'



Tropar of The Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, Tone 1: In confirming the common Resurrection, O Christ God, Thou didst raise up Lazarus from the dead before Thy Passion. Wherefore, we also, like the children bearing the symbols of victory, cry to Thee, O Vanquisher of death: Hosanna in the highest, blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

Another Tropar of The Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, Tone 4: As by baptism we were buried with Thee, O Christ our God, so by Thy Resurrection we were deemed worthy of immortal life; and praising Thee, we cry: Hosanna in the highest; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Kondak of The Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, Tone 6: Being borne upon a throne in heaven, and upon a colt on the earth, O Christ God. Thou didst accept the praise of the angels and the laudation of the children as they cry to Thee: Blessed is he that cometh to recall Adam.

Vespers: Gen. 49:1-2, 8-12; Zeph. 3:14-19; Zech. 9:9-15

Matins Gospel: Matthew 21:1-11, 15-17

Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND ... ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY—MEDITATE ON THESE THINGS

It is possible to grieve for our own sins and yet to rejoice in Christ. Or when your communion with God is not hindered, rejoice ...Is it best to envy, or to rejoice with one another? Let us search out all these things, and we will find that virtue, like a truly kind mother, places us in safety, while vice is a treacherous thing and full of danger ...That which is 'honourable' belongs to external virtue and that which is 'pure' to the soul ...If we will be at peace with each other, God will be with us ...Therefore we must make a beginning on our part, and then we will draw God towards us ...For he 'who digs a pit for his neighbour, falls into it' (Prov. 26:27) ...As we injure ourselves when we injure our neighbours, so by benefiting them, we benefit ourselves.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XIV on Philippians IV. B#57, pp. 246, 248, 249.

Gospel - John 12: 1-18

Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always." Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus. The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!" Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: "Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey's colt." His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him. Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign.

THE ENTRY OF CHRIST INTO JERUSALEM

Brothers and sisters! So the Holy Church indicates for us spiritual spring. Winter is over. Ended is the state in which our heart was like ice, as if dead in languor, thirsting for Grace. And now, during the past six weeks the sun has been warming us more and more, and nature has gradually started to come back to life. And so our heart too should have come back to life.

Last night during the evening service, we sang, "Children were bearing the sign of Victory . . ." "What sign? Pussy willows, branches which had already budded, indicating that spring was coming, as if saying to us: Look here, joy is already beginning, happiness. So through the pussy willows, the Church has been saying to us: This is the beginning for you too; just be Christians, and think it over, and you will begin to see a sign. A sign of what? —that Christ is Risen.

And we, brothers and sisters, we close our eyes like an ostrich who puts his head under his wing. We don't want to think that a limit will come, just as it comes to old people: hands stop working, eyes stop seeing, ears stop hearing—a limit. The end will come. And it seems that in these moments, when we begin to recognize the approach of old age, we involuntarily compare it with winter, with snow. Yes, but after winter comes spring. And in a spiritual understanding: after our eyes close, then comes Eternal Life, the joy of Life with Christ. This is what last night's pussy willows were telling us about, "bearing the sign." Abide not in grief; turn to joy. And now comes the moment when the Lord, by a special mystery, through Passion Week which we are approaching, will give us the feeling of this joy of Eternal Life.

Now we worry about a piece of bread, about a roof over our heads, about our social conditions. And it seems to us that the meaning of life consists of this. But the Church says, Look at the pussy willows: leaves will sprout and later flowers and fruit. So it is even in a Christian soul. Everything we are busying ourselves with, all this will remain here. But with us there will go another stream of life—spiritual life. You should think about this. But is it so? Maybe it's not. Brothers, it is so! Today the Holy Church speaks to us through the Apostle. What does the Church say? She says: "Rejoice in the Lord always, (Phil. 4:4). Today, at the conclusion of Great Lent, she says to us, rejoice! Do you have this joy? If this is joy about Eternal Life, then yes, you will have this joy, because Christ is Risen. And all our sicknesses, our old age, our expectancy of death—all of this will dissolve. In what? In Christ. And when the moment of our departure comes (this is how we believe and what the Church says), God Almighty, the Giver of Life, will come to us and will perform for us the mystery of releasing our bonds, and we will enter eternal existence.

"Rejoice," says the Apostle, "and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). See how the Apostle is exhorting us. But what is this? There is a condition: "Let all men know your meekness," (trans. forbearance or moderation in English versions) continues the Apostle. Look here, spring has come to nature. But it will not stop here, it will go further; it will change into summer. And so it is with us—life goes on. "Let all men know your meekness." This means that our life should move in such a way that pride will depart. It should dissolve in Christ's patience, in Christ's meekness. The Apostle says: May your meekness be of the Lord. And further, "Have no anxiety about anything," but be always in prayer. Hear what promises the Lord gives. "Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your wishes (trans. requests in English version) be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). What daring is given to us!

But what kind of wishes should our prayers express? If they are the wishes which people experience in sitting rooms, theatres, worldly amusements—then of course, brothers, the Lord desires something else for us, because all of this will remain here. This senselessness, this commotion, this quarrelling, this adversity, this rage, all this will remain here. And only joy will depart with us. This is joy: if you wish for meekness, humility, prosperity, brotherly love, Christian living, quiet—then pray! The Lord will be with you. Rejoice! The Holy Day is approaching. Tomorrow there will come great moments when the Sacrament is being performed. And so in our hearts will be revealed this joy: Christ is Risen! May this joy abide with us in a joyous feeling of Eternal Life.

Let us hasten, O believers, moving from one divine festival to another; from palms and branches to the fulfilment of the august and saving sufferings of Christ. Let us watch Him, bearing His sufferings voluntarily for our sake; and let us sing unto Him with worthy praise, crying, O Fountain of mercy, O Haven of Salvation, O Lord, glory to You.

Palm Sunday Evening Vespers.

Saints of the Week

23 March / 5 April — The Hieromartyr Nikon - Born in Naples of a pagan father and a Christian mother, he was an officer in the Roman army in Naples. He was not baptised, although his mother, unbeknown to his father, had instructed him in the Christian faith. Once, when he was setting off with his company to war, his mother advised him, if he were in trouble, to make the sign of the Cross and call on Christ to help him. And so, when Nikon's company was surrounded during the battle and close to final extermination, Nikon made the sign of the Cross and began to call upon Christ. At that moment he was filled with exceptional strength and rushed upon his opponents, killing some and putting the others to flight. Returning home, Nikon could not stop exclaiming in wonder: 'Great is the God of the Christians!' After he had brought joy to his mother with his report of the victory by the aid of Christ's Cross, he set sail in secret for Asia, where the Bishop of Cyzicus, Theodosius, baptised him. After his baptism, he shut himself up in a monastery and devoted himself to study and to asceticism. However, Bishop Theodosius had a vision before his death, in which he was told to consecrate Nikon as his successor. The aged Theodosius summoned Nikon immediately and ordained him deacon, and then priest and bishop. By divine providence Nikon came soon after this to Neapolis, where he found his mother still alive. On her death, he went to Sicily with nine disciples, one-time comrades in battle, and devoted himself to preaching the Gospel. There was a terrible persecution of Christians at that time, and Prince Quintianus seized Nikon and his companions and gave them over to great torture. One hundred and ninety of his disciples and friends were slain. The torturer tied Nikon to the tails of horses, threw him from a high cliff into a ravine, beat him and flayed him, yet Nikon survived all these tortures. He was finally slain with the sword and his body was abandoned in a field for the birds to eat, but a shepherd boy, possessed by a raging evil spirit, fell on the dead body of Christ's martyr, took hold of it, and was immediately healed. He spread the news about Nikon's body, and Christians came and buried it. St Nikon suffered and went to the Lord in the reign of the Emperor Decius; Our Holy Father Nikon of the Kiev Caves.

24 March / 6 April — Forefeast of the Annunciation — St Artemon, Bishop of Seleucia; Our Holy Father James the Confessor; The Hieromartyr Parthenius, Patriarch of Constantinople;

Commemoration of the miracles at the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev - Two friends, John and Sergius, swore brotherhood before the icon of the holy Mother of God in this monastery. John was a rich man, with a five-year-old son, Zachariah. John fell ill, and at his death commended his son to the care of Sergius, and left in Sergius's keeping a large sum of silver and gold for him to hand over to Zachariah when he had grown up. When Zachariah came of age, however, Sergius denied receiving anything from the deceased John. Then Zachariah said: 'Let him swear before the same icon of the most holy Mother of God, in front of which he accepted brotherhood with my late father, that he received nothing from John, and then I will seek nothing more from him.' Sergius agreed, but when he had sworn this and went up to kiss the icon, some force held him back and would not allow him to come near. Then, tormented all at once by a demon, he began to cry out: 'Holy fathers Antony and Theodosius, do not let this merciless angel destroy me!' The demon had attacked him by God's permission. He then told them of all the money which John had left. But when they opened the box, they found double the amount. Taking it, Zachariah gave it to the monastery and was himself tonsured as a monk. He lived a long time and was worthy of God's great gifts, entering peacefully into eternity; Our Holy Father Zacharias.



25 March / 7 April — The Annunciation of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary — Wine & Oil allowed but not fish an account of the feast falling in Holy Week - when the most holy Virgin had lived and served in the Temple at Jerusalem for eleven years, and was by then fourteen years old— when, that is, she was entering on her fifteenth year—the priests informed her that, according to the Law, she could no longer remain in the Temple but must be betrothed and marry. But, to the great surprise of all the priests, the most holy Virgin replied that she had dedicated herself to God and wished to a maiden remain till death and enter into wedlock with no-one. Then, by God's providence and under His inspiration, Zacharias, the high priest and father of the Forerunner, in consultation with the other priests, chose twelve unmarried men from the tribe of David so that they might entrust the Virgin Mary to one of them to preserve her virginity and care for her. She was thus entrusted to Joseph, an old man from Nazareth and a kinsman of hers. In his house, the most holy Virgin continued to live in the same manner as in the Temple of Solomon, passing her time in the reading of the sacred Scriptures, in prayer, in pondering on the works of God, in fasting and in handwork. She scarcely ever left the house, nor took an interest in worldly matters or events. She generally conversed very little with anyone, and never

without a particular need. She was close friends only with the two daughters of Joseph. But when the time prophesied by the Prophet Daniel had come and when God was pleased to fulfil the promise made to Adam when He drove him out of Paradise, and to the prophets, the mighty Archangel Gabriel appeared in the chamber of the most holy Virgin, at the precise moment (as some priestly writers have related) that she was holding open on her lap the book of the Prophet Isaiah and pondering on his great prophecy: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son'. Gabriel appeared to her in angelic light and said to her: 'Rejoice, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee!', and so forth, just as is related in the Gospel of the divine Luke. With this angelic greeting and the descent of the Holy Spirit, the salvation of mankind and the renewal of creation were set in motion. The Archangel turned the first page of the story of the New Testament with the word 'Rejoice!', to show by this the joy that the New Testament signifies for mankind and for all things created. And therefore the Annunciation is looked upon as a joyous, as well as a great, feast;

Patriarch Tikhon (in the world, Vassily Ivanovich Bellavin) was born in 1865 in the district of Pskov. He was very religious and a good pupil, always willing to help his fellow students. When he entered seminary at the age of 19, his fellow students prophetically nicknamed him "the patriarch". He was tonsured in 1891, and in 1898, at the tender age of 33, he was consecrated Bishop of the Aleutian-Alaskan Diocese in North America. He laboured tirelessly for his flock, earning their great love and respect. In 1907 he was recalled to Russia and raised to the rank of Archbishop. When war broke out Archbishop Tikhon was based in Vilno, Poland. He participated eagerly in all organisations which helped soldiers and the wounded, and visited the injured and dying at the front lines. In 1914 he was elected Archbishop of Moscow and in 1917 he was raised to the rank of Metropolitan. Shortly thereafter he was chosen by lot to be the first patriarch for 217 years. The consecration was performed in the ancient Patriarchal Cathedral. What a burden the new patriarch had to bear! Patriarch Tikhon was probably the greatest martyr of the Russian Church during the period of its persecution by the communists. As Patriarch of All Russia for eight years, he was invested with tremendous power and consequent responsibility. During that period he lived a selfless life, scarcely a free man, and in the end became another victim, for the sake of his faith and the whole Russian Church. He died on March 25, 1925. Holy New Martyr Tikhon, pray for us!

Our Holy Father Justin, Abbot of Chelije Monastery in Valjevo, Serbia - was born into a pious & priestly family on the Feast of the Annunciation, 1894. His name in the world was Blagoje. A church-minded youth, he entered seminary at the age of 11, where he studied under the then Hieromonk Nikolai Velimirovic, who was also his Father Confessor, and who was the most influential person throughout his life. After his graduation, the young Blagoje served as a student nurse during WW1. He was tonsured in 1916, receiving the name Justin. He then studied in Russia, forming a great love for Russian spirituality and piety, especially that of the common people. He then studied at Oxford, England, afterwards returning to teach in Seminary in Serbia, and undertake further study in Greece. He was ordained deacon in 1920 and priest in 1922. Many were attracted to this humble priestmonk, coming to him for confession and spiritual guidance. Father Justin had close contact at this time with two luminaries of the Russian Church: Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) and the then Bishop John Maximovitch. A great intellect and ascetic, his labours enriched the Serbian Church. Worthy of special mention is his three volume exposition of the Orthodox Faith in Serbian, *The Dogmas of the Orthodox Church*, published in 1932. After WW2, Father Justin was exiled from Belgrade by the communists. He lived in several monasteries before settling in Chelije in 1948., where he remained until his repose on March 25, 1979. This women's monastery flourished under his guidance. Many pious people travelled from all over the world to hear him preach and teach the correct Orthodox Faith. He was a pillar of Orthodoxy and a true Holy Father of the 20th Century.

26 March / 8 April — Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel - The Holy Archangel Gabriel - The herald of the incarnation of the Son of God, he is one of the seven great angels who stand before the throne of God. He revealed to Zacharias the birth of the Forerunner, and said of himself: 'I am Gabriel that stands in the presence of God' (Lk. 1:19). His name, Gabriel, signifies 'man of God'. Speaking about the Annunciation, the holy Fathers comment that an angel with such a name was sent to signify who He was, and of what nature He was, who would be born of the most pure Virgin. He would be the Man of God, the Man-God, the strong and mighty God. Others have found that it was this same Gabriel who announced the conception of the Virgin Mary to Joachim and Anna, and that it was he who taught Moses in the wilderness to write the Book of Genesis. The holy Fathers considered that Gabriel belongs to the foremost and highest order of the heavenly powers, the seraphim, since the seraphim stand closest to God. And so he is one of the seven seraphim closest to God. The names of these seven are: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Selathiel, Jegudiel and Barachiel. Some would add Jeremiel to this number. Each has his own particular service, but all are equal in honour. Why did God not send Michael? For the reason that Michael's service is the suppression of the enemies of God's truth, while Gabriel's is the annunciation of the salvation of the human race;

The Hieromartyr Irenaeus, Bishop of Srem - It is thought that Irenaeus was a Slav. He was married and had children prior to becoming a bishop. He suffered for Christ during the reign of Maximian. At the time of horrible sufferings, his relatives stood around him crying and begged him to spare himself and them [that is, to deny Christ]. But this wonderful priestly-martyr loved the wounds of Christ more than all the riches of this world. At the same time Seren, a certain gardener in Srem, also suffered at the hands of Prince Probus, as did Afrius suffer in Regia. Because Irenaeus did not want to deny his faith, Prince Probus ordered that he be hurled from a bridge into the Sava river, where this shepherd of Christ's flock died and took up habitation among the citizens of heaven. He honourably suffered in the year 304 A.D.;

27 March / 9 April — The Holy Martyr Matrona - She was an orphan, and a servant in the house of a certain Jew in Salonica. The wife of this Jew constantly derided Matrona for her faith in Christ, and urged her to cast Christ aside and go to the synagogue. But the humble Matrona went about her work conscientiously, not replying to her mistress and secretly praying to Christ our God. On one occasion the Jewess discovered that Matrona had gone to church unbeknown to her, and demanded, in a great rage, to know why she had gone to the church and not the synagogue. 'Because God is alive in the Christian Church, but He has departed from the synagogues of the Jews', replied Matrona. Enraged by such a courageous answer, the Jewess thrashed her and locked her in a dark chamber, and in addition to that had her bound. But the next day she found her unbound by the power of God and kneeling in prayer, praising God. Then she locked her up again for the second time until she died of hunger. Then that wicked woman took the body of the holy maiden and threw it to the ground from the top of her house. Christians took the body of the martyr and buried it, and the bishop, Alexander, when he had learned of the many miracles worked by the holy martyr, built a church over her grave. As for the evil Jewess, she soon received her just reward, when, standing on the same spot from which she had thrown Matrona's body, she slipped and fell onto the cobbled pavement and was smashed to pieces; Our Holy Father John the Seer; Our Holy Father Paphnutius.

28 March / 10 April — Our Holy Father, the Martyr Eustratius of the Kiev Caves - He was very wealthy, but, moved by the love of Christ, gave away all his goods for His sake, entered the Monastery of the Caves and became a monk. When the Polovtsians conquered Kiev in 1097, they looted the monastery, slew many Christians and monks and gave Eustratius and other of the faithful to a certain Jew in the town of Khorsun as slaves. This Jew mocked the Christian faith and tried to compel the Christians to convert to the Jewish faith. Seeing that they had no other alternative, they all decided to starve to death rather than deny the true Faith. Eustratius encouraged the Christians in this decision. They all perished from hunger, some after three days, some after four and some after seven days. Eustratius, accustomed to fasting, remained the only one alive, and survived fourteen days without food. Infuriated that he had lost the money he had paid for the slaves, the Jew took his revenge by having Eustratius nailed to a cross. But Eustratius gave thanks to God from the cross and predicted an imminent and vicious death for the Jew. Possessed by a furious anger, the Jew stabbed him with a spear. And thus the holy man of God gave his soul to his Saviour. They cast his body into the sea, but it rose to the surface and many were the great miracles performed over it. Soon after this, the Byzantine Emperor commanded that the Jews in Khorsun be punished for their wickedness towards the Christians, and the torturer of the Christians was hanged on a tree and received the wages of Judas. Our Holy Father Hilarion the New; Our Holy Father Hesychius of Jerusalem; The Holy Martyr Boyan; The Miraculous Experience of Taxiotis.

29 March / 11 April — St Mark the Confessor, Bishop of Arethusa - St Gregory the Theologian and Blessed Theodoretus have given us an account of his sufferings. According to these accounts, Mark destroyed some pagan temples and brought many to the Christian faith during the reign of the Emperor Constantine. But when the Emperor Julian came to the throne and quickly became an apostate from the Faith, some of the inhabitants of Arethusa renounced Christ and lapsed into paganism. They rose up against Mark because he had demolished the temple and demanded that he either rebuild it or pay them a very large sum of money. As Mark refused to do either the one or the other, he was flogged and flayed and dragged through the streets. They then cut off his ears with strong, fine threads, stripped him naked, smeared him with honey and left him bound to a tree in the summer heat for the wasps, mosquitoes and hornets to eat. The martyr of Christ endured all this without complaint. He was quite old, and his face shone like an angel of the Lord. The pagans lowered the price of their temple again and again, finally demanding a quite insignificant amount which Mark could easily have given. But he refused to give even a single coin for that purpose. His endurance made a great impression on the citizens, and they began to admire him for it and to feel sorry for him, and gradually reduced the price of their temple to nothing just to allow him to remain alive. Finally, they let him go free and, one by one, all came to him to receive instruction and become Christians again. A deacon, Cyril, also suffered at this time for a similar cause in Heliopolis at the foot of mount Lebanon. He had broken some idols at the time of the liberation of Christianity and was cruelly tortured under Julian for this. The pagans were so enraged with him that, after they had killed him, they tore out his teeth and ripped open his stomach. Many others suffered on the same day as St Cyril. The evil pagans cut their bodies into small pieces, coated them with barley and fed them to the pigs. But retribution came swiftly upon them; all their teeth fell out and their mouths emitted an unbearable stench; Our Holy Father John the Hermit.

The Passion Gospels:

- 1) Jn. 13:31-18:1 (Farewell conversation of the Savior with His disciples and His high-priestly prayer for them).⁵
- 2) Jn. 18:1-28 (the Seizure of the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane and His suffering at the hands of the high priest Annas).
- 3) Mt. 26:57-75. (Suffering of the Savior at the hands of the high priest Caiaphas and Peter's denial of Christ).
- 4) Jn. 18:28-19:16 (Suffering of the Lord in the court of Pilate).
- 5) Mt. 27:3-32 (The despair of Judas by the new suffering of the Lord by Pilate and the judgment for His crucifixion).
- 6) Mk. 15:16-32 (Leading the Lord to Golgotha and his suffering on the cross).
- 7) Mt. 27:33-54 (The continuation of the narrative about the Lord's suffering on the cross, the wonderful signs accompanying His death).
- 8) Lk. 23:32-49 (The Prayer of the Savior on the cross for His enemies and the repentance of the wise thief).
- 9) Jn. 19:25-37 (Words of the Savior from the cross to the Theotokos and Apostle John and the repetition of the narrative of His death and perforation).
- 10) Mk. 15:43-47 (Removal of the body of the Lord from the cross).
- 11) Jn. 19:38-42 (Participation of Nicodemus and Joseph in the burial of the Savior).
- 12) Mt. 27:62-66 (Posting of the guards at the tomb of the Savior and the sealing of the tomb).



PASCHA

The Bright and Glorious Resurrection of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ

30 March / 12 April 2015

ODE ONE

Heirmos: IT is the day of Resurrection, let us be radiant, O ye peoples; Pascha, the Lord's Pascha; for Christ God hath brought us from death unto life, and from earth unto Heaven as we sing the triumphal hymn. Troparia: LET us purify our senses and we shall behold Christ, radiant with the unapproachable light of the Resurrection, and we shall clearly hear Him say: Rejoice! as we sing the triumphal hymn. FOR meet it is that the Heavens should rejoice, and that the earth should be glad, and that the whole world, both visible and invisible, should keep the feast; for Christ, our everlasting Joy, hath arisen. Katavasia: It is the day of Resurrection . Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life. (Thrice) JESUS, having risen from the grave as He foretold, hath granted us life everlasting and great mercy. These last two hymns are chanted thus after each Ode.

Then the Little Litany, with the exclamation: : For Thine is the dominion, and Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. The choir: Amen.

ODE THREE

Heirmos: COME, let us drink a new drink, not one marvellously brought forth from a barren rock, but the Source of incorruption, which springeth forth from the grave of Christ, in Whom we are established.

Troparia: NOW are all things filled with light; Heaven and earth, and the nethermost regions of the earth. Let all creation, therefore, celebrate the arising of Christ, whereby it is established.

YESTERDAY I was buried with Thee, O Christ, and today I arise with Thine arising. Yesterday was I crucified with Thee; do Thou Thyself glorify me with Thee, O Saviour, in Thy Kingdom.

Katavasia: Come, let us drink a new drink . . .

Then the Little Litany, with the exclamation: For Thou art our God, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. The choir: Amen.

THE HYPAKOE - Fourth Tone

WHEN they who were with Mary came, anticipating the dawn, and found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre, they heard from the Angel: Why seek ye among the dead, as though He were mortal man, Him Who abideth in everlasting light? Behold the grave-clothes. Go quickly and proclaim to the world that the Lord is risen, and hath put death to death. For He is the Son of God, Who saveth the race of man.

And a reading from the Theologian, beginning with the words, It is the Day of Resurrection, and my beginning hath good auspices.

ODE FOUR

Heirmos: LET the Prophet Habakkuk, the proclaimer of divine things, keep the divine watch with us, and show forth the radiant Angel who with resounding voice hath declared: Today doth bring salvation to the world, for Christ is risen as omnipotent.

Troparia: CHRIST revealed Himself as of the male sex when He opened the Virgin's womb, and as a mortal was He called the Lamb. Thus, without blemish is our Pascha. for He tasted not corruption; and since He is truly God, perfect was He proclaimed. CHRIST, our blessed Crown, like unto a yearling lamb, of His own good will did sacrifice Himself for all, a Pascha of purification: and from the grave the beautiful Sun of Righteousness shone forth again upon us.

DAVID, the ancestor of our God, danced with leaping before the symbolical Ark of the Covenant. Let us also, the holy people of God, beholding the fulfilment of the symbols, rejoice in godly wise: For Christ is risen, as omnipotent.

Katavasia: Let the Prophet Habakkuk, the proclaimer of divine things . . .

Then the Little Litany, with the exclamation: For a good and man-befriending God art Thou, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. The choir: Amen.

ODE FIVE

Heirmos: LET us arise in the deep dawn and, instead of myrrh, offer praise to the Master; and we shall see Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, Who causeth life to dawn for all.

Troparia: WHEN those held captive in the bonds of Hades beheld Thy boundless compassion, O Christ, they hastened to the light with a joyful step, exalting the eternal Pascha.

BEARING lights, let us go forth to meet Christ, Who cometh forth from the grave like a bridegroom. And with the ranks of them that love and keep this festival, let us celebrate the saving Pascha of God.

Katavasia: Let us arise in the deep dawn . . .

Then the Little Litany, with the exclamation: For hallowed and glorified is Thine all-honourable and majestic Name, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. The choir: Amen.

ODE SIX

Heirmos: THOU didst descend into the deepest parts of the earth, and didst shatter the everlasting bars that held fast those that were fettered, O Christ. And on the third day, like Jonas from the sea monster, Thou didst arise from the grave.

Troparia: HAVING kept the seals intact, O Christ, Thou didst rise from the tomb, O Thou Who didst not break the seal of the Virgin by Thy birth; and Thou hast opened unto us the gates of Paradise.

O MY Saviour the life-giving and unslain Sacrifice, when, as God, Thou of Thine own will, hadst offered up Thyself unto the Father, Thou didst raise up with Thyself the whole race of Adam when Thou didst rise from the grave.

Katavasia: Thou didst descend . . .

Then the Little Litany, with the exclamation: For Thou art the King of Peace, and the Saviour of our souls, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. The choir: Amen.

KONTAKION - Tone 8: THOUGH Thou didst descend into the grave, O Immortal One, yet didst Thou destroy the power of Hades, and didst arise as victor, O Christ God, calling to the myrrh-bearing women, Rejoice, and giving peace unto Thine Apostles, O Thou Who dost grant resurrection to the fallen.

OIKOS: THE myrrh-bearing maidens anticipated the dawn, seeking, as it were day, the Sun Who was before the sun and Who had set in the tomb, and they cried out one to another: O friends, come, let us anoint with sweet-smelling spices the life-bringing and buried Body, even that Flesh which raiseth fallen Adam, who lieth in the grave. Let us go hence, let us make haste like the Wise Men, and let us adore and offer before Him myrrh as it were a gift to Him, Who is no longer wrapped in swaddling bands, but in a winding-sheet. And let us make lamentation and cry aloud in exclamation: Arise, O Master, Thou Who dost grant resurrection to the fallen.

The Synaxarion of the Menaion, then the following: On this, the holy and great Sunday of Pascha, we celebrate the life-bringing Resurrection of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Verses: Christ, going down alone to the struggle with Hades, Came forth again and brought with Him plenteous spoils of victory. To Him be glory and dominion unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Then there is chanted in Tone 6: LET us who have beheld the Resurrection of Christ worship our holy Lord Jesus, Who is alone without sin. We worship Thy Cross, O Christ, and we praise and glorify Thy holy Resurrection. For Thou art our God, and we know none other beside Thee, and we call upon Thy Name. Come, all ye faithful, let us worship Christ's holy Resurrection, for behold, through the Cross joy hath come to the whole world. Forever blessing the Lord, we praise His Resurrection. He endured the Cross for us, and by death destroyed death. (Thrice)

JESUS, having risen from the grave as He foretold, hath granted us life everlasting and great mercy. (Thrice)

ODE SEVEN

Heirmos: THE only blest and most glorious God of our Fathers, Who hath redeemed the Children from the furnace, is become man, and as a mortal doth suffer, and through suffering doth clothe mortality with the grace of incorruption.

Troparia: THE godly-wise women followed after Thee in haste with sweet-smelling myrrh. But Him Whom they sought with tears as dead, they joyfully adored as the living God, and announced unto Thy disciples, O Christ, the glad tidings of the mystical Pascha.

WE celebrate the death of death, the destruction of Hades, the beginning of an everlasting life. And with leaps of joy we praise the Cause thereof, the only blest and most glorious God of our Fathers.

TRULY sacred and supremely festive is this saving night, radiant with light, the forerunner of the bright-beaming Day of the Resurrection, whereon the Timeless Light in bodily form shone from the grave for all.

Katavasia: The only blest . . .

Then the Little Litany, with the exclamation: Blessed and glorified be the dominion of Thy Kingdom, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. The choir: Amen.

ODE EIGHT

Heirmos: THIS chosen and holy day is the first of the sabbaths, the queen and lady, the feast of feasts, and the festival of festivals, wherein we bless Christ unto the ages.

Troparia: COME on this auspicious day of the Resurrection, let us partake of the new fruit of the vine of divine gladness and of the Kingdom of Christ, praising Him as God unto the ages.

CAST thine eyes about thee, O Sion, and behold! For lo, like divinely-radiant luminaries, from the West, the North, the Sea, and the East have thy children assembled unto thee, blessing Christ unto the ages.

O FATHER Almighty, the Word, and the Spirit, one Nature in three Hypostases united, transcending essence and supremely Divine! In Thee have we been baptized, and Thee will we bless unto all the ages. We praise, we bless, and we worship the Lord.

Katavasia: This chosen and holy . . .

Then the Little Litany, with the exclamation: For blessed is Thy Name, and glorified is Thy Kingdom, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. The choir: Amen.

The deacon: The Theotokos and the Mother of the Light, let us magnify in song.

And the choirs chant the hymns of the ninth Ode:

ODE NINE

Megalynarion: Magnify, O my soul, Him Who suffered willingly, and was buried, and arose from the grave on the third day.

Heirmos: SHINE, shine, O new Jerusalem, for the glory of the Lord hath arisen upon thee; dance now and be glad, O Sion, and do thou exult, O pure Theotokos, in the arising of Him Whom thou didst bear.

Megalynarion: Magnify, ... And again the Heirmos:

Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem . . .

Megalynarion: Christ is the new Pascha, the living sacrificial Victim, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

Troparion: O THY divine and beloved and most sweet voice; Thou hast truly promised that Thou wouldst be with us unto the end of the world, O Christ; and we faithful rejoice, having this as an anchor of hope.

Megalynarion: Today the whole creation is glad and doth rejoice, for Christ is risen, and Hades hath been despoiled.

And again the Troparion: O Thy divine and beloved . . .

Glory. Megalynarion: Magnify, O my soul, the dominion of the Undivided Godhead of Three Hypostases.

Troparion: GREAT and most sacred Pascha, Christ; O Wisdom and Word and Power of God! Grant that we partake of Thee fully in the unwaning day of Thy Kingdom. Both now.

Megalynarion: Rejoice, O Virgin, rejoice; rejoice, O blessed one; rejoice, O most glorified one, for thy Son hath arisen from the grave on the third day.

And again the Troparion: O great and most sacred Pascha . . .

Megalynarion: The Angel cried unto her that is full of grace: O pure Virgin, rejoice, and again I say, rejoice; for thy Son hath arisen from the grave on the third day.

Katavasia: SHINE, shine, O new Jerusalem, for the glory of the Lord hath arisen upon thee; dance now and be glad, O Sion, and do thou exult, O pure Theotokos, in the arising of Him Whom thou didst bear.

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life. (Thrice)

JESUS, having risen from the grave as He foretold, hath granted us life everlasting and great mercy.

Then the little litany with the exclamation: For all the hosts of the Heavens praise Thee, and unto Thee do they send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. The Choir: Amen.

EXAPOSTILARION, Second Tone: WHEN Thou hadst fallen asleep in the flesh as one mortal, O King and Lord, Thou didst rise again on the third day, raising up Adam from corruption, and abolishing death: O Pascha of incorruption ! O Salvation of the world! (Thrice)

FROM THE OCTOECHOS, First Tone:

Verse: Praise Him for His mighty acts, praise Him according to the multitude of His greatness.

WE praise Thy saving Passion, O Christ, and glorify Thy Resurrection.

Verse: Praise Him with the sound of trumpet, praise Him with the psaltery and harp.

THOU Who didst endure the Cross, and didst abolish death, and didst arise from the dead: Make our life peaceful, O Lord, since Thou alone art omnipotent.

Verse: Praise Him with timbrel and dance, praise Him with strings and flute.

THOU Who didst despoil Hades, and didst raise up man by Thy Resurrection, O Christ: Deem us worthy to hymn and glorify Thee with purity of heart.

Verse: Praise Him with tuneful cymbals, praise Him with cymbals of jubilation. Let every breath praise the Lord.

GLORIFYING Thy God-befitting condescension, we praise Thee, O Christ; for thou wast born of a Virgin, and yet Thou wast inseparable from the Father. Thou didst suffer as man, and didst endure the Cross willingly. And as one coming forth from the bridal chamber, Thou didst rise from the grave that Thou mightest save the world. O Lord, glory be to Thee.

THE STICHERA OF PASCHA WITH THEIR VERSES, Tone 5:

Verse: Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Him flee from before His face.

A SACRED Pascha hath been shown forth to us today; a new and holy Pascha, a mystic Pascha, an all-venerable Pascha, a Pascha that is Christ the Redeemer; a spotless Pascha, a great Pascha, a Pascha of the faithful, a Pascha that hath opened unto us the gates of Paradise, a Pascha that doth hallow all the faithful.

Verse: As smoke vanisheth, so let them vanish; as wax melteth before the fire.

COME from that scene, O women, bearers of good tidings, and say to Sion: Receive from us the tidings of joy, of the Resurrection of Christ. Exult, dance, and be glad, O Jerusalem, for thou hast seen Christ the King as a bridegroom come forth from the tomb.

Verse: So let sinners perish at the presence of God, and let the righteous be glad.

THE myrrh-bearing women at deep dawn drew nigh to the tomb of the Giver of life; they found an Angel sitting upon the stone, and he, addressing them, in this manner did say: Why seek ye the Living among the dead? Why mourn ye the Incorruptible amid corruption? Go, proclaim it unto His disciples.

Verse: This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad therein.

A PASCHA of delight, Pascha, the Lord's Pascha, an all-venerable Pascha hath dawned for us, a Pascha whereon let us embrace one another with joy. O Pascha, ransom from sorrow! Today Christ hath shone forth from the tomb as from a bridal chamber, and hath filled the women with joy, saying: Proclaim it unto the Apostles.

GLORY; BOTH NOW, Plagal of First Tone

IT is the day of Resurrection; let us be radiant for the festival, and let us embrace one another. Let us say, O brethren, even to those that hate us: Let us forgive all things on the Resurrection; and thus let us cry: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life.

Then Christ is risen is repeated thrice more, and we continue chanting it until the brethren have greeted each other.

**Homily of our Father among the Saints John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople
For the Holy and Radiant Day of the Glorious and Saving Resurrection of Christ our God**

Master Bless - IF any be pious and a lover of God, let him delight in this fair and radiant festival. If any be an honest servant, let him come in and rejoice in the joy of his Lord. If any have wearied himself with fasting, let him now enjoy the recompense. If any have worked from the first hour, let him receive today his just reward. If any have come after the third, let him feast with thankfulness. If any have arrived after the sixth, in no wise let him be in doubt; in no way shall he suffer loss. If any be later than the ninth, let him draw nigh, let him not waver. If any arrive only at the eleventh, let him not be fearful for his slowness, for the Master is munificent and receiveth the last even as the first; He giveth rest to him of the eleventh even as to him who hath wrought from the first hour. He is merciful to the last and provideth for the first; and to this one He giveth, and to that one He showeth kindness. He receiveth their labours and acknowledgeth the purpose, and He honoureth the deed and praiseth the intention. Wherefore, enter ye all into the joy of our Lord, and let the first and the second take part in the reward. Ye rich and ye poor, join hands together. Ye sober and ye heedless, do honour to this day. Ye who fast and ye who fast not, be glad today. The table is full: do ye all fare sumptuously. The calf is ample: let no one go forth hungry. Let all enjoy the banquet of Faith. Let all enjoy the wealth of righteousness. Let no one lament his poverty, for the Kingdom is made manifest to all. Let no one bewail transgressions, for forgiveness hath dawned forth from the tomb. Let no one be fearful of Death, for the death of the Saviour hath set us free. He hath quenched Death by being subdued by Death. He Who came down into Hades, despoiled Hades; and Hades was embittered when he tasted of Christ's Flesh. Isaiah, anticipating this, cried out and said: Hades was embittered when below he met Thee face to face. He was embittered, for he was set at nought. He was embittered, for he was mocked. He was embittered, for he was slain. He was embittered, for he was cast down. He was embittered, for he was fettered. He received a body, and encountered God. He received earth, and met Heaven face to face. He received what he saw, and fell whither he saw not. O Death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is thy victory? Risen is Christ, and thou art overthrown. is Christ, and the demons are fallen. Risen is Christ, and the Angels rejoice. . Risen is Christ, and life doth reign. Risen is Christ, and there is none dead in the tomb. For Christ is raised from the dead, and is become the first-fruits of them that slept. To Him be glory and dominion unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Then we chant the Dismissal Hymn of Saint John Chrysostom, Tone 8: GRACE shining forth from thy mouth like a beacon hath illumined the universe, and disclosed to the world treasures of uncovetousness, and shown us the heights of humility; but whilst instructing us by thy words, O Father John Chrysostom, intercede with the Word, Christ our God, to save our souls.
After the dismissal the Liturgy begins:

Epistle: The Acts of St Apostles 1: 1-8

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, To whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; For John truly baptised with water, but you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

TO WHOM HE PRESENTED HIMSELF ALIVE

But why did He appear... only to the Apostles? Because to the many it would have seemed a mere apparition, inasmuch as they did not understand the secret of the mystery. For the disciples themselves were at first incredulous...and needed the evidence of actual touch with the hand, and of His eating with them...For this reason therefore, by the miracles wrought by the Apostles, He renders the evidence of His resurrection unequivocal...All men thereafter should be certain ...that He was risen...But they did not, you say, perform miracles? How then was our religion instituted?

St. John Chrysostom. Homily I on Acts I, B#55, p. 5.

The Gospel According To St. John 1: 1-17

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.' " And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

AND THE WORD WAS GOD

Now this is a proof that Christ is God the Word, and the Power of God. For whereas human beings cease, and the word of Christ abides, it is dear to all eyes that what ceases is temporary, but that He who abides is God, and the true Son of God, His only begotten Word.

St. Athanasius of Alexandria. On The Incarnation, 55. B#7, p. 109.

Through the incarnation of God the Logos, there entered into human nature the all- perfect Divine Wisdom, the all- perfect Divine Logic, and the all-perfect Divine Mind. 'The Word became flesh,' which means: all the transcendental Divine values became internal to human nature, for they are congenial to the essence of man's godlike soul. All the eternal Divine values, incarnated in man, ultimately merge into one immeasurable and insuperable value: the God-man Christ. Consequently, the God-man is the first, the greatest, the most basic, and the supreme value in the world of man. For nothing is more human than the Lord Christ, who personifies in Himself the most ideal perfection of all that is truly human, truly manlike. Furthermore, He, as the God-man, is the most perfect synthesis of the Divine and the human ...of the natural and the supernatural, of the physical and the metaphysical, of the real and the ideal. In Him, being the God-man, there was created and preserved in the most ideal way an equilibrium between the Divine and the human; and preserved together with this was the autonomy of what is of man and human, as well as the autonomy of what is of God and divine ...

What especially makes the God-man Christ the value above all values is the fact that He is the first and only one to solve completely the problem of life and death ...having actually demonstrated in His Divine-human person incarnate, humanised immortality and life eternal. He demonstrated and proved this powerfully indeed by His resurrection from the dead and ascension into the eternal life of the Godhead ...

'He came into His own.' Yet how are they His people unless by reason of their godlike soul? ...By acknowledging the God-man, we indirectly acknowledge the Christlikeness of man. the divine descent of man, the divine elevation of man ...The struggle for the God-man is the struggle for man. Not humanists, but men of divine-human faith and life are struggling for true man, godlike and Christlike man.

Archimandrite Justin Popovic. The Supreme Value and Infallible Criterion, B#80A, Vol. 4, pp. 114,116,138.

And He is called the Word, because He is related to the Father as word to mind ...Perhaps, too, this relation might be compared to that between the definition and the thing defined since this also is called logos. For, it says, he who has mental perception of the Son (for this is the meaning of 'has seen') has also perceived the Father; and the Son is a concise demonstration and easy setting forth of the Father's nature. For everything that is begotten is a silent word of Him who begat it ..He is also called Wisdom, as the knowledge of things divine and human...And Power, as the sustainer of all created things and the furnisher to them of power to keep themselves together. And Truth...and as the pure seal of the Father and His most unerring impress. And the Image, as of one substance with Him...For this is the nature of an image, to be the reproduction of its archetype.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus. Fourth Theological Oration, 20. B#7, p. 191.

Since the exile from paradise and the dispersion of Babel, human language has lost its transparency. Words have become void of truth ...But the Word of God was made flesh, has become human word. It was a becoming which was prepared step by step from the creation right up to the fiat of the Virgin, prepared through continuous and successive revelations ...The image of God has never been totally erased from mankind by the primal transgression and fall. In its incarnation, the Word of God - clothed in human flesh and in human language - possesses an efficacy which is both spiritual and sacramental...

The primary aim [of Christian language] is to express and describe the mystery of Christ: the mystery of His incarnation, of his redemptive Passover, and of His sacramental presence in the Church for the life of the world, until His second glorious coming...We may affirm quite clearly that the trinitarian revelation in its entirety proceeds from the coming and the presence of Christ, in whom and through whom and by whom we discover the love of the Father and the power of the Spirit. In the first place, all names, titles, attributes of God, all biblical types and figures pertain to Jesus, the divine Logos.

Archpriest Boris Bobrinskoy, Revelation of the Spirit, Language beyond Words. Sobornost, Vol. 8 No. 1,1986.

Saints of the Week

Bright Week – Fast Free Week

30 March / 12 April — Our Holy Father John Climacus (of the Ladder) - The author of the famous 'Ladder', he came from an unknown place to Mount Sinai as a sixteen-year-old boy and remained there, first as a novice, then as a hermit and finally as abbot of Sinai, until he died at the age of eighty, in about 649. His biographer, the monk Daniel, says of him: 'He brought his body up to Mount Sinai, but his spirit he brought to the Mount of Heaven'. He spent nineteen years in obedience to his spiritual father, Martyrios. Anastasius of Mount Sinai, who saw John once as a young man, foretold that he would be abbot of Mount Sinai. After the death of his spiritual father, John took himself off to a cave, where he lived for twenty years in strict asceticism. His disciple, Moses, fell asleep one day in the cool shade of a huge rock. John was at prayer in his cell, and, perceiving that his disciple was in danger, began to pray for him. Moses came up to him later, fell to his knees and began to thank him for saving him from certain death. And he related how he had heard John calling him in his sleep and had jumped up at the very moment that a rock fell. Had he not jumped out of the way, the rock would certainly have killed him. At the importunate urging of the brethren, John accepted the abbacy, and guided their souls to salvation with loving zeal. He once

heard a monk reproach him for being too verbose. He was not in the least angered, but was silent for an entire year, not uttering a single word until the brethren begged him to speak. He then began to instruct them with the wisdom with which God had endowed him. Once 600 pilgrims came to Mount Sinai. At supper they all noticed an agile young man dressed as a Jew who was serving at table and giving orders to the other servants, taking charge of everything. Suddenly, he disappeared. While everyone was pondering this and asking questions among themselves, John said: 'Do not bother to look for him; that was the prophet Moses serving you in his own home.' During the time that he was silent in his cave, John wrote many instructive books, of which the most famous, 'The Ladder', is much read to this day. It describes the way to raise the soul to God as if on a ladder. Before his death, John appointed his own brother, George, to the abbacy, but George began to grieve greatly at the approaching parting with John. Then John said that, if he were found worthy to stand close to God in the next world, he would pray that George be taken up to heaven in the same year. And so it came to pass. After ten months, George also fell asleep and departed to take his place among heaven's citizens alongside his brother John; Commemoration of an Uncondemning Monk; St. Osburga of Coventry, virgin (c.1015)

31 March / 13 April — Metropolitan Innocent, Enlightener of Siberia and Alaska - born John in the Irkutsk district in 1797 the son of a poor sacristan. His father died when he was seven leaving him and his family in great poverty. Fortunately his uncle took him in, provided for his education and taught him manual crafts himself. He entered seminary at age 9 and was a good student. Whilst there the rector changed his surname to Veniaminov. John married in 1817 at the age of 20 and became a deacon in Irkutsk. After a year he was ordained priest and in 1823 the Bishop sought a priest to undertake missionary work in the islands between Siberia and Alaska. Although at first unwilling, Father John was seized with the desire to preach the Gospel of Christ to the unenlightened. His bishop consented, and although his family were at first opposed they began the long journey. In the following year they arrived on the island of Unalaska. He began to teach the natives carpentry and building, and with their help erected a church and dwellings. He then began to study the native language, hoping to translate the Gospel and divine services. He preached to the natives in their own language, adapting concepts to their understanding. He travelled widely throughout the diocese, which stretched over several thousand kilometres, serving, preaching, and baptising. He sometimes traversed great distances on the open sea in a small canoe. He developed an alphabet for the Aleutian language and translated the catechism and the Gospel of St. Matthew. At this time he wrote his most famous work - Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven. He opened a school and himself taught the children to read and write. He spent 10 years in Unalaska, in which time he converted all the inhabitants to Christianity. He was then transferred to Sitka, an island port close to the mainland of Alaska. He laboured there for five years, learning the language and translating, preaching and baptising, and teaching the natives manual trades. He was greatly loved by the native peoples. In 1838 returned to Russia to seek help for his work and for a blessing to print his translations. He was raised to Archpriest and at the same time his wife died. He accepted monasticism and in 1840 was tonsured with the name of Innocent eventually becoming Bishop Innocent and returning to Alaska to finish his work. In 1850 he was elevated to Archbishop and in 1857 was recalled to Russia where he laboured greatly for the conversion of the unenlightened peoples on the Russian-Chinese border. Finally in 1867, he was chosen to succeed the newly reposed Metropolitan Philaret. By now an old man he accepted this great burden with humility, fulfilling his duties to the glory of God until his repose on 31 March, 1879. This great worker planted the Faith of Christ amongst a great many pagan tribes, labouring for their salvation with true patience, humility and simplicity. For his labours, the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad resolved in May 1993 to recognise Metropolitan Innocent as a saint on January 17/30, 1994.

Archbishop Averky of Jordanville - the world known as Alexander Pavlovich Taushev) was born on October 19, 1906, in the city of Kazan. His father was employed by the government until the Revolution of 1917 and was required to travel widely. Thus Vladika, although only 14 when he was forced to leave Russia, knew a great deal of his beloved homeland. He read widely from a young age, and was especially moved by spiritual books which he father obtained from the Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mt. Athos. In 1920 the family settled in Bulgaria amongst many other Russian refugees. Then in 1925, he met Archbishop Theophan who had a tremendous influence on this young man, and it was at this time he became firm in his desire for monasticism. He entered theological Academy and graduated in 1930 with top marks. Desiring greatly to labour for the Russian people, he decided to travel to Czechoslovakia, where many were returning from the Unia to Orthodoxy. Vladika Theophan blessed him, and Alexander was appointed secretary to the Diocesan Administrator. In 1931 he was tonsured a monk with the name Averky. The next day he was ordained to the diaconate, and in the next year was ordained priestmonk. In 1937 he was made Abbot before in 1940 he was forced as a result of World War II to move to Belgrade where he taught and laboured in the serve of the Synod. In 1951 he moved to America and was invited to teach at Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville. In 1961 he was made Archbishop - a great preacher and zealot of True Orthodox Christianity, Vladika suffered greatly as a result of the attacks of modernism and ecumenism on the Orthodox Faith. It was said that he was one of the last giants of 20th Century Orthodoxy. May his memory be eternal! The Hieromartyr Hypatius, Bishop of Gangra; St. Jonah, Metropolitan of Moscow; The Hieromartyr Audas; Our Holy Father Apollonius.

1 / 14 April — St Mary of Egypt - The recorder of the life of this wonderful saint was St Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem. A hieromonk, the elder Zossima, had gone off at one time during the Great Fast a twenty-days' walk into the wilderness across the Jordan. He suddenly caught sight of a human being with a withered and naked body and with hair as white as snow, who fled in its nakedness from Zossima's sight. The elder ran a long way, until this figure stopped at a stream and called: 'Father Zossima, forgive me for the Lord's sake. I cannot turn round to you, for I am a naked woman.' Then Zossima threw her his outer cloak, and she wrapped herself in it and turned round to him. The elder was amazed at hearing his name from the lips of this unknown woman. After considerable pressure on his part, she told him her life-story. She had been born in Egypt, and had lived as a prostitute in Alexandria from the age of twelve, spending seventeen years in this way of life. Urged by the lustful fire of the flesh, she one day got into a ship that was sailing for Jerusalem. Arriving at the Holy City, she tried to go into one of the churches to venerate the Precious Cross, but some unseen power prevented her from entering. In great fear, she turned to an

icon of the Mother of God that was in the entrance, and begged her to let her go in and venerate the Cross, confessing her sin and impurity and promising that she would then go wherever the Most Pure led her. She was then allowed to enter the church. After venerating the Cross, she went out again to the entrance and, standing in front of the icon, thanked the Mother of God. Then she heard a voice: 'If you cross the Jordan, you will find true peace.' She immediately bought three loaves of bread and set off for the Jordan, arriving there the same evening. She received Communion the following morning in the monastery of St John, and then crossed the river. She spent forty-eight whole years in the wilderness in the greatest torments, in terror, in struggles with passionate thoughts like gigantic beasts. She fed only on plants. After that, when she was standing in prayer, Zossima saw her lifted up in the air. She begged him to bring her Communion the next year on the bank of the Jordan, and she would come to receive it. The following year, Zossima came with the Holy Gifts to the bank of the Jordan in the evening, and stood in amazement as he saw her cross the river. He saw her coming in the moonlight and, arriving on the further bank, made the sign of the Cross over the river. She then walked across it as though it were dry land. When she had received Communion, she begged him to come again the following year to the same stream by which they had first met. Zossima went, and found her dead body there on that spot. Above her head in the sand was written: 'Abba Zossima, bury in this place the body of the humble Mary. Give dust to dust. I passed away on April 1st, on the very night of Christ's Passion, after communion of the divine Mysteries.' Zossima learned her name for the first time, and also the awe-inspiring marvel that she had arrived at that stream the previous year on the night of the same day on which she had received Communion—a place that he had taken twenty days to reach. And thus Zossima buried the body of the wonderful saint, Mary of Egypt. When he returned to the monastery, he recounted the whole story of her life and the wonders to which he had been an eyewitness. Thus the Lord glorifies repentant sinners. St Mary is also commemorated in the Fifth Week of the Great Fast. The Church holds her up before the faithful in these days of the Fast as a model of repentance. She entered into rest in about 530.

St Meliton, Bishop of Sardis - A well-known pastor of the Church in the second century, he was a man of great learning and laboured to codify all the books of Holy Scripture. He laboured also in meekness and devotion to bring peace to the Church in Laodicea, involved in a quarrel about the celebration of Easter. Apart from this, he defended Christianity against the pagans. He travelled to Rome in about 170, bringing a written apologia on the Faith and the Christian Church to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. St Meliton, this learned, devout and zealous man, entered peacefully into rest in the Lord in about 177;

2 / 15 April — Our Holy Father Titus the Wonderworker - He conceived a love for Christ from his earliest years, and despised the vanities of the world. For His sake, he left the world, went off to a monastery and received the angelic habit. With not a backward glance, he gave himself to the sober and narrow way of monasticism. Through great patience, he attained the two basic virtues of humility and obedience, and in these virtues he exceeded 'not only the brethren, but all men'. He preserved his purity of soul and body right from his youth. In the time of the iconoclast heresy, he was seen to be a steadfast pillar of the Church of God. For his great humility and purity, he was endowed by God with the gift of wonderworking, both in his lifetime and after his death. And when he went to the Lord, he left a large number of disciples behind him. He entered peacefully into rest in the 9th century;

The Holy Martyrs Amphianus, and Edesius - These two young men were blood brothers from the city of Patara of distinguished but pagan parents. While they were studying the secular sciences in the city of Beirut, they were enlightened by the Spirit of God, and acknowledging the falsehood of paganism, discerned the truth of Christianity. When they returned home they could no longer live with their pagan parents and kinsmen and secretly fled to Caesarea in Palestine to the presbyter Pamphilius, renowned for his sanctity and spiritual learning. With Pamphilius, they studied the Law of God day and night and practiced Christian asceticism. It is said of Pamphilius that he was twenty years old according to the flesh but, in understanding and generosity, he was a hundred years old. When a persecution began during the reign of Maximian, many Christians fled the city and hid themselves. Others, willingly and joyfully, gave themselves into the hands of the persecutors in order to suffer for the Name of Him, Who first suffered for them. Amphianus was among the latter. Unafraid, he entered a pagan temple where Prince Urban was offering sacrifices to the idols, grabbed the prince by the hand which was holding the sacrifice and cried to him to refrain from serving and making sacrificial offerings to dead idols and to acknowledge the True God. Some of the pagans who heard these words and witnessing the great courage of Amphianus, repented and embraced the Faith of Christ. The enraged prince subjected Amphianus to torture. Among the other tortures, they wrapped the legs of Amphianus with cotton and set them on fire. When he remained alive, they tossed his body into the sea with a stone around his neck. The sea became turbulent and hurled his martyred body back into the city. At first, Edesius was sent to a cooper mine in Palestine and was later taken to Egypt. In Alexandria, Edesius was filled with holy zeal against a certain Prince Hierocles who, in the market place, assembled Christian nuns, maidens and virtuous women and handed them over to the most shameful perverts for derision. Edesius, filled with holy zeal, struck the disgraceful prince. For that, he was tortured and drowned in the sea as was his brother Amphianus. As two innocent lambs, they were sacrificed for Christ about the year 306 A.D. and were translated to the glorious mansions of the Lord.

3 / 16 April — St Nicetas the Confessor - He was born in Bithynia, in the town of Caesarea. His father, Philaret, losing his wife, became a monk. Nicetas remained with his paternal grandmother. After he had grown up and finished his schooling, he went to a monastery in Midikion, where Nicephorus, the abbot, tonsured him as a monk. After seven years of toil and asceticism, he was ordained hieromonk by Patriarch Tarasius. After the deaths of Nicephorus and Nicetas's great friend, Athanasius, the brethren chose Nicetas as abbot, much against his will. St Nicetas was a holy example of life and asceticism to his brethren for many years. But when Leo V, the Armenian, came to the throne, following the devout Empress Irene and the pious Emperors Nicephorus and Michael, the iconoclast heresy sprang up again. The Emperor deposed Patriarch Nicephorus and sent him into exile, and in his place put a heretic, Theodotus Cassiteras, a man of impure life. Nicetas was imprisoned and tortured, but remained unwavering in his Orthodoxy. He was taken from prison to prison and tortured by hunger and thirst, by cold and heat and malice. But he remained utterly unwavering. A certain Nicolas pestered him particularly with his derision and malice. But one night the dead father of this Nicolas appeared to him in a dream and said: 'Leave that servant of

God alone!' From that moment Nicolas repented, and not only refrained from pestering him but prevented others doing likewise. When the Emperor Leo the Armenian had made an evil end, the throne passed to the Orthodox Emperor Michael Balbus, who freed all the Orthodox sufferers. Nicetas retired to a lonely place near Constantinople, where he spent the remaining days of his earthly life in prayer and thanksgiving to God. When he died, his body was taken to his monastery and, during that journey, many of the sick, on touching his body, were healed. His relics were placed close to the graves of his spiritual father, Nicephorus, and his friend Athanasius. This great hierarch entered into rest in 824; St Paul the Wretched; **The Holy Martyr Ulphianus** - a young man from the city of Tyre. He suffered for Christ at the hands of Urban, the mayor of the city of Tyre, who also was the torturer of Amphianus [April 2]. Finally, he was tied in a sack along with a dog and a snake and tossed into the sea. He suffered and was glorified in the year 306 A.D.

4 / 17 April — Our Holy Father Joseph the Hymnographer - He was born in Sicily of devout and virtuous parents, Plotinus and Agatha. After the death of his parents, he moved to Salonica, where he became a monk. As a monk, he was an example to all in fasting, restraint, ceaseless supplication, psalmody, vigils and toil. The Bishop of Salonica ordained him hieromonk. The famous Gregory of Decapolis, visiting Salonica, loved Joseph with heart and soul for his rare character, and took him back with him to his monastery in Constantinople. When the flame of iconoclasm sprang up again under Leo the Armenian, Joseph was sent to Rome to call the Pope and the Roman Church to battle for the true Faith. But pirates captured him on the way and took him to Crete, where he was kept in prison for six years by the heretics. Joseph rejoiced that he was made worthy to suffer for Christ, and thanked God constantly, regarding the iron chains with which he was bound as golden ornaments. In the sixth year, around Christmas, the wicked Emperor was murdered at the morning service in church. At the same moment, St Nicolas appeared to Joseph in the prison and said to him: 'Get up and follow me.' Joseph felt himself lifted up in the air, and found himself all at once in Constantinople. His arrival was a source of rejoicing to all the Orthodox faithful. He composed Canons and hymns for many of the saints. He had the gift of insight, because of which Patriarch Photius made him spiritual father and confessor to his priests, recommending him as 'a man of God, an angel in the flesh, a father of fathers'. In great old age, he gave his soul into the hands of the God he had served so faithfully in work and song. He died peacefully on the eve of Holy Thursday in 883;

The Holy Martyr Pherbutha - During the reign of the Persian Emperor Saborius, St. Simeon, the bishop, was slain. At the wish of the empress, Pherbutha, the sister of Bishop Simeon, was taken to the palace. Pherbutha was exceptionally beautiful and because of that many suitors thronged to her among whom were many pagan priests and soothsayers. Pherbutha rejected them all and provoked much anger against herself. At that time, the empress became ill and all the pagan priests explained to the emperor that the empress was poisoned by Pherbutha and, as a cure for the ailing empress, they recommended the following: that Pherbutha, her sister and their slave, as Christians, be sawn and that three parts of their bodies be placed on one side and three parts on the other side and that the empress should be borne between them. The emperor agreed to the recommendation of these blood-thirsty pagan priests. Pherbutha, together with her sister and their slave, suffered for Christ in the year 343 A.D., thereby earning the incorruptible wreath in the eternal kingdom of their Lord; Our Holy Father Zossima; **Our Holy Father, the Martyr Nicetas** - a Slav from Albania. As a monk of the Holy Mountain (Mt. Athos), he went to Serres where he debated with the Mullahs about religion. Being that they could not overcome him with reason, the Turks subjected him to torture under which Nicetas, the holy one, died and gave up his soul to his God in the year 1808 A.D.

5 / 18 April — The Holy Martyrs Agathopous and Theodulus - The first was a deacon and the second a reader in the Church in Salonica; the first adorned with the white hairs of age and the second with the chastity of youth. In the time of Diocletian's hunting of Christians, these two were summoned for trial. They went there joyfully, and, each holding the other by the hand, went in crying: 'We are Christians!' The whole court's urging them to deny Christ and worship idols was in vain. After long imprisonment and starvation, they were condemned to death by drowning in the sea. Their hands were bound behind them and a large stone tied to their necks, and they were taken off to be drowned. When they went to throw Agathopous into the depths, he cried out: 'Lo, by a second baptism we are washed from all our sins, and will go cleansed to Christ Jesus!' The sea quickly threw their drowned bodies onto the shore, and Christians gave them burial. St Theodulus appeared to his friends in the form of a shining angel in white raiment and commanded them to distribute all his remaining goods to the poor. These great soldiers of Christ suffered with honour under the Emperor Diocletian and Faustinus, the governor of Salonica, in the year 303;

Our Holy Father Mark of Trache - also called "Mark the Athenian" because Athens was the place of his birth. His parents died after he completed his higher education in Athens. He thought to himself that death, even for himself, was unavoidable and that one should sufficiently prepare beforehand for that honourable departure from this world. Distributing all of his possessions to the poor, he sat on a plank in the sea and with a tenacious faith in God's help, prayed that God direct him wherever He wills. God, in His Providence, protected him and brought him to Lybia (or Ethiopia) to a mountain called Trache. Mark lived an ascetical life on this mountain for ninety-five years, seeing neither man nor beast. For thirty years, he waged a violent combat with evil spirits and suffered from hunger, thirst, frost and heat. He ate dirt and drank sea water. After thirty years of the most vehement suffering, the defeated demons fled from him and an angel of God began to bring him food daily in the form of bread, fish and fruit. St. Serapion visited him before his death and, afterward, made known the miraculous life of Mark. Mark asked St. Serapion: "Are there any Christians in the world now, who, if they were to say to this mountain, 'Arise from here and hurl yourself into the sea,' would it be so?" At that moment, the mountain upon which they stood moved in the direction of the sea. Mark raised his hand and stopped it. Such was the miracle-working power which this man of God possessed. Before his death, he prayed for the salvation of mankind and then gave up his soul to God. St. Serapion saw angels as they bore Mark's soul and he also saw an extended hand from heaven which received it. St. Mark lived to be one-hundred thirty years old and died about the year 400 A.D.

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Thomas Sunday

Second Sunday of Pascha

6 / 19 April 2015



Troparion of Thomas Sunday, Tone 7: While the tomb was sealed, Thou, O Life, didst shine forth from the grave, O Christ God. And while the doors were shut, Thou didst come unto Thy disciples, O Resurrection of all, renewing through them an upright Spirit in us according to Thy great mercy. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Kontakion of Thomas Sunday, Tone 8: With his searching right hand, Thomas did probe Thy life-bestowing side, O Christ God; for when Thou didst enter while the doors were shut, he cried out unto Thee with the rest of the disciples: Thou art my Lord and my God.

The Holy and Glorious Apostle Thomas - He was one of the twelve Great Apostles. Through his doubt of the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, a new confirmation was given of that wonderful and saving event, for the risen Lord appeared again to His disciples, to convince Thomas. The Lord said to Thomas: Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing', and Thomas cried: 'My Lord and my God! (John 20). After the descent of the Holy Spirit, when the apostles cast lots to see who would go where to preach the Gospel, it fell to Thomas to go to India. He was somewhat saddened at having to go so far away, but the Lord appeared to him and comforted him. In India, St Thomas converted many, both rich and poor, to the Christian faith, and founded a Church there, making priests and bishops. Among others, St Thomas converted two sisters, Tertiana and Mygdonia, wives of Indian princes. Both sisters were ill-treated for their faith by their husbands, who would not live with them after their baptism, and divorced them. Being freed from their marriages, they lived godly lives till their deaths. Dionysius and Pelagia, a couple at first betrothed to each other, heard the Apostle's teaching and did not live together, but devoted themselves to the ascetic life. Pelagia died a martyr for the Faith and Dionysius was made bishop by the Apostle. Prince Misdaeus, the husband of Tertiana, whose wife and son Iuzanes Thomas baptised, condemned the Apostle to death, and sent five soldiers who ran him through with their lances, and thus the holy Apostle Thomas gave his soul into the hands of his Christ. Before his death, he, with the other apostles, was miraculously borne to Jerusalem for the funeral of the most holy Mother of God. Arriving late, he grieved bitterly and, at his request, the tomb of the Most Pure was opened, but the body was not there; the Lord had taken His Mother to His heavenly home. Thus St Thomas first, by his unbelief, confirmed the faith in the Resurrection of the Lord and then, by his late arrival, revealed to us the wondrous glorification of the Mother of God.

Matins Gospel I

Epistle: St. Acts of the Apostles 5: 12 -20

And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, So that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed. Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, And laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

MANY SIGNS AND WONDERS WERE DONE AMONG THE PEOPLE

For though the Apostles themselves modestly ascribe it all to this cause, declaring that they did these things in the name of Christ, yet at the same time the life and noble conduct of the men helped to produce this effect ...Observe how he now no longer tells the number of those who believe: at such a rate was the faith making way even to an immense multitude, and also widely was the Resurrection proclaimed. So then 'the people magnified them': but they were now no longer lightly to be despised as once they were: for in a little moment, at a single turn of the scale, such have been the effects produced by the fisherman and the publican! Earth had become a heaven, for manner of life, for boldness of speech, for wonders, for all: like angels they were looked upon with wonder.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XII on Acts V B#55. p. 78.

The Gospel According To St. John 20: 19-31

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

For great is the dignity of the priests. 'Whosoever sins,' it says, 'you remit, they are remitted unto them' ...And hold them very exceedingly in honour ...The priest, even if he rightly orders his own life, if he does not have an anxious care for yours, yes and that of all those around him, will depart with the wicked into hell; and often when not betrayed by his own conduct, he perishes by yours, if he has not rightly performed his part... 'For they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account' (Heb.13:17)...For this is the Faith, to receive things not seen, since 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen' (Heb. 11:1).

St. John Chrysostom. Homily LXXXVI, 4 and LXXXVII, 1 on John XX. B#58, pp. 326,327

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe (Jn. 20:24-25).

What does this mean, his "I will not believe"? Is it possible he could not believe the other eleven Apostles, his brothers? Is it possible they could lie to him? The whole evangelical life of Christ, all His miracles, Golgotha, the death on the Cross, they had experienced together. And now this joy which they all had experienced they wanted to share with him. No, this was not a lie.

But He, Whom they had seen, was He really the same Christ? Was this not a vision or some other Christ? Was this not a mistake? And Thomas was afraid to lose what he had. And what did he have? This is what: during the years of fellowship with Christ, he had absorbed His teaching, the entire makeup of His life; and by now he was incapable of living any other way. It was painful for him not to have personal fellowship anymore with Christ; but by this time he understood that Christ came to earth in order to teach us the main commandment of God: love for God and neighbour, to perform it Himself, and to give us the strength to fulfill it.

In Paradise the first man fulfilled the commandment of God. The strength to fulfill this commandment of God he drew from eating the fruits of the Tree of Life. But then came the Fall. Paradise was lost, the Tree of Life was lost, and together with it, the strength for a godly life. And Christ came in order to give us the New Testament Tree of Life—His Body and Blood. "This do in remembrance of Me," He said at the Last Supper (Lk. 22:19).

Thomas knew the commandments of Christ, and he knew where to draw the strength to fulfill them. He lived this. Although he lived without the human presence of Christ, he lived in Christ. He was afraid to make a mistake. What if another Christ had appeared to the disciples, not the One in Whom he lived and continued to live? This is what his "I will not believe" meant. And on the eighth day after His Resurrection, the Lord again appeared to His disciples, while Thomas was also in the house, and allowed him to touch His wounds. And here resounded Thomas's triumphant cry, which even now stirs our hearts: "My Lord and my God!" (Jn. 20:28). And here are the words of Christ which relate to you and me, opening a new era of faith which will remain until the end of the world: "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed... But these are written," adds the Apostle John the Divine, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name" (Jn. 20:29, 31).

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei

Saints of the Week

6 / 19 April — St Eutychius, Patriarch of Constantinople - Born in Phrygia of devout parents, he was the son of an officer. Once, Eutychius was playing with some other children of his own age, their game being to write their names on a wall and put beside them the rank that they reckoned they would have in life. When Eutychius' turn came, he wrote: 'Eutychius— Patriarch!' He became abbot of a monastery in Amasea at the age of thirty, and ten years later the Metropolitan of Amasea sent him to the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553 as his representative. At the Council, he shone like a bright star among the Church fathers, both for his learning and his devotion. When a quarrel arose about whether heretics could be anathematised after their deaths or not, he supported his belief that they could by citing III Kings (A.V. I Kings) 13:1-8, and IV Kings (A.V. II Kings) 23:16. He became greatly liked by both Emperor Justinian and Patriarch Menas. The Emperor very frequently turned to him for advice, and Menas (at that time very rich) designated him his heir and asked the Emperor to ensure that this happened.

And so it came to pass. Eutychius governed the Church in peace for twelve years. But then the devil raised a storm against him. This storm reached the Emperor Justinian himself. The Emperor was deluded and fell into the Monophysite heresy of Aphthartodocetism, which taught the falsehood that the Lord Jesus, before the Resurrection, had a divine and uncorrupting body, not feeling hunger or thirst or pain. Eutychius stood firmly against this heresy, for which the Emperor sent him into exile to his first monastery. There Eutychius lived for twelve years and eight months, being shown to be a great wonder-worker, healing people of various diseases by his prayers and by anointing with holy oil. Justinian repented and died, and his successor, Justin II, called Eutychius back to the patriarchal throne, on which this saint remained till his death, governing the Church of God in peace. In 582, at the age of seventy, he went to the Kingdom of Christ the Lord; the Lord whom he had served so faithfully and courageously all his life;

The One Hundred and Twenty Martyrs in Persia - When the Persian Emperor Sapor plundered the lands of Byzantium, he enslaved one-hundred twenty Christians. Since his attempts to persuade them to deny Christ and worship fire proved to be in vain, the emperor tossed them into the fire and burned them alive. Among those martyrs, were nine virgins dedicated to God. They all suffered honourably between the years 344 A.D. and 347 A.D. and took up habitation in the mansions of Christ the King; St. Govan of Cornwall.

7 / 20 April — St George the Confessor - For his great virtues, which he acquired through long asceticism, George was chosen and installed as Metropolitan of Mitylene. And this saint governed his flock with zeal and wisdom to old age. But when a persecution arose under Leo V, the Armenian, who destroyed the holy icons, this holy elder was summoned by the Emperor to Constantinople, to the Council of bishops which was summoned, at the Emperor's desire, to put a stop to the veneration of icons. But George not only refused to act according to the Emperor's desire; he, together with some other courageous bishops, stood up in defence of the holy icons. For this he was held in derision by the Emperor and exiled to the region of Cherson, where, in physical pain and every sort of need, he spent the remainder of his earthly life. He died and went to immortal life in about 816. He was a wonderworker both during his life and after his death, through his great righteousness and love for the Lord Jesus.

Our Holy Father Nil Sorsky - Nil is one of the great Fathers of the Russian Church. He was the founder of the Scete way of monastic life in Russia. He died peacefully in the year 1508 A.D. His relics repose in the Sorsky Monastery. His "Rule of Life" for the "Scete" way of monastic living represents a first-class work on the spiritual and practical life of a monk;

The Holy Martyr Calliopius - an only son granted by God to a senator from Perga in Pamphylia after the senator had shed many tears in prayer. From his early youth his devout mother, Theoclea, taught him to respect God and to live a chaste life. Calliopius was still a youngster when a terrible persecution began during the reign of Emperor Maximian. To spare him from death, his mother placed him in a boat, gave him an ample amount of money and saw him off to the city of Pompeiopolis. However, God in His Divine Providence, planned it otherwise. Landing in Pompeiopolis he fell into the midst of a tumultuous polytheistic celebration. When Calliopius refused to participate in this ridiculous feast, at the insistence of the crazed mob, he was pushed toward Maximus the commander, before whom Calliopius confessed that he was a Christian. The commander ordered that Calliopius be beaten with lead canes and burned by fire. Wounded throughout, they cast him into prison. Learning about the tortures of her son, Theoclea distributed her entire estate to the poor and needy and with a paltry sum of money hurried to her son in prison. Upon entering the prison, Theoclea bowed down before her son and dressed his wounds. Finally, the commander pronounced the ultimate sentence. Calliopius was to be crucified on a cross. Joy and pain intermingled in the heart of his mother. When they brought her son to the place of execution, she slipped five pieces of gold to the executioners to have her son crucified, not as the Lord was, but rather upside down. Theoclea did this out of humility before the Lord. Calliopius was crucified upside down on Holy Thursday. His mother stood beneath the cross-giving praise to God. One the second day when they removed his lifeless body from the cross, she fell upon her son and she, herself, died. Thus, these two went before the Throne of the King of Glory together. They honourably suffered in the year 304 A.D.;

Our Holy Father Daniel of Pereyaslavl - he had, as a unique form of mortification, that of caring for the dead. Whenever he heard that someone was found frozen to death or that had died in some other manner, Daniel would hasten to bury him decently and to offer prayers to God for him. He died peacefully in the year 1540 A.D. His relics remain intact.; Our Holy Father Gregory the Sinaite.

8 / 21 April — The Holy Apostles Herodion, Agabus, Rufus, Asyncritus, Phlegon and Hermas - They were all among the Seventy, and are all mentioned by St Paul in his Epistles. Herodion was a kinsman of Paul's: 'Salute Herodion my kinsman', he writes to the Romans (16:11). Herodion suffered greatly at the hands of the Jews as Bishop of Neoparthia; he was beaten about the head, stoned on the mouth and stabbed in the legs. When they had left him for dead, St Herodion arose and continued to serve the apostles. He helped the Apostle Peter in Rome, and was beheaded along with many other Christians on the same day that Peter was crucified. St Agabus had a spirit of prophecy. Two of his prophecies are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. First, he prophesied a great famine throughout the world, which came to pass in the time of Claudius Caesar (Acts 11:2~). The second was when he met the Apostle Paul in Caesarea. Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, and Agabus took Paul's girdle and bound himself hand and foot, saying: 'Thus saith the Holy Spirit: so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle' (21:11). St Rufus was Bishop of Thebes in Greece. The Apostle Paul mentions him also: 'Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord' (Rom. 16:13). St Asyncritus (Rom. 16:14) was Bishop of Hyrcania in Asia. St Phlegon, who is mentioned in the same place as St Rufus, was bishop in the Thracian city of Marathon. St Hermas, mentioned with the others, was bishop in Dalmatia. All these, with bee-like industry, spread the Gospel, suffering greatly for the love of Christ. They all went to the eternal Kingdom of their beloved Christ;

St Niphon, Bishop of Novgorod - distinguished by his great enthusiasm in constructing and restoring the churches of God and by showing great courage in opposing the stances of the tyrannical princes. Thirteen days before his death, St. Theodosius appeared to Niphon and announced his imminent passing over to the other world. He died in the year 1156 A.D.; St Celestine, Bishop of Rome.

9 / 22 April — The Holy Martyr Euppsychius - He was of gentle birth and was reared in faith and devotion. In the time of the Emperor Julian the Apostate, when St Basil the Great was governing the Church in Caesarea, Euppsychius married a girl of good family. But he was not given even one day to live in wedlock, for, on his wedding day itself, there was a pagan festival with sacrifices to the idol of Fortune. Euppsychius went out with some others and smashed all the idols in the temple, then pulled down the temple itself. Julian was furious, and commanded that the culprits be beheaded, that many Christians be taken into the army, that an enormous levy be imposed on Christians, the proceeds of which were to be used to rebuild the Temple of Fortune, and that the town cease to be called Caesarea (as it had been named by Claudius Caesar), and revert to its former name, Maza. Euppsychius was first bound to a tree and cruelly tortured, and then beheaded, in 362. A little after this time, the wicked Emperor Julian visited that town on his way to Persia, against which he was waging war. St Basil went to meet him, bearing three barley loaves as a sign of honour and welcome. The Emperor ordered that, as a return gift, the saint be given a fistful of hay. Basil said to the Emperor: 'You ridicule us now, O King; we bring you bread, by which we are fed, and you give us miserable food which you, with all your power, are not able to turn into nourishment for men!' To this the Emperor replied: 'You can be sure that I will feed you with this hay when I return from Persia!' But the wicked apostate did not return alive from Persia, but perished there by a fitting and un-natural death;

Our Holy Father Vadim the Martyr - During the reign of the Persian Emperor Sapor, Vadim, the abbot of a certain monastery and a man famous for his generosity was cast into prison with seven of his disciples. With them in prison was a certain Prince Nirsan who was also a Christian. Everyday they were taken out and beaten. Prince Nirsan became terrified and promised to deny the Faith and worship the sun. This was gratifying to Sapor and he promised to give Nirsan, among other things, the entire estate of Vadim's monastery if he would behead Vadim by his own hand. Nirsan agrees to this. With a quivering hand and frightened by the majestic countenance of St. Vadim, he struck this holy man with the sword many times on the neck until he finally beheaded him. Shortly after that, Nirsan succumbed to despair and stabbed himself with the sword and received at his own hand, the due punishment for the murder of the righteous one. St. Vadim suffered in the year 376 A.D.; St. Woutruide.

10 / 23 April — The Holy Martyrs Terence, Africanus, Maximus; Pompeius and 36 others with them - They suffered for Christ and were crowned with wreaths of glory in the time of the Emperor Decius. By the Emperor's orders, the governor of Africa notified all the people that they must offer sacrifice to idols. In the case of opposition, the governor was to put the stubborn to harsh torture. Hearing this threat, many lapsed from the Faith and worshipped idols. But these forty martyrs remained steadfast, for which they were put to torture. St Terence encouraged his companions with these words: 'Let us, my brethren, keep ourselves from denying Christ our God; that He may not deny us before His heavenly Father and the holy angels.' The governor divided them into two groups; thirty-six of them, after flogging and having salt rubbed in their open wounds, he beheaded. But the first four he cast into prison with heavy chains round their necks and on their hands and feet. An angel of God appeared to them in the prison and touched their chains, which fell from them. Then the angel brought them a table abundantly heaped with food, and fed them. They were again taken out and tortured, and again shut up in the prison. Also, the governor ordered sorcerers to gather as many poisonous reptiles as possible, such as snakes and scorpions, and to shut them up with the martyrs. But the reptiles would not touch the men of God, but huddled together in one corner, where they remained for three days. When the prison was opened on the third day, the reptiles fell on the sorcerers and bit them. At last the governor passed sentence of death on these four martyrs. When they were taken to the scaffold, they joyfully sang psalms and hymns of thanksgiving to God, who had accounted them worthy of a martyr's death. They suffered with honour and attained to the Kingdom in the year 250.;

The Six Thousand Martyrs in Georgia - In the wilderness of David-Garejeli in Georgia, there were twelve monasteries in which many monks practiced and lived the ascetical life for centuries. In 1615 A.D., the great king of Persia, Shah Abbas I, attacked Georgia, devastated it and beheaded many Christians. Once while hunting early in the morning on the Feast of the Resurrection, Shah Abbas noticed many lights in the mountains. They were the monks from the twelve monasteries in procession around the Church of the Resurrection with lighted tapers in hand. When the Shah discovered that they were monks, he asked in amazement: "Has not all of Georgia been given over to the sword?" He then ordered his soldiers to immediately go and behead all the monks. At that moment an angel of God appeared to Abbot Arsenius and informed him of impending death. Arsenius informed his brethren. They all received Communion of the All-Pure Mysteries and prepared themselves for death. Suddenly, the assailants arrived and hacked to pieces, first of all, the abbot, who came before the others and, after that, all the rest. They all suffered honourably and were crowned with incorruptible wreaths in the year 1615 A.D. Thus, ended the history of these famous monasteries which, for more than a thousand years, served as the spiritual hearth of enlightenment for the Georgians. Only two of the monasteries exist today: St. David and St. John the Forerunner. The Georgian Emperor Arcil gathered the relics of the monks and honourably interred them. Even today, these relics emit a sweet-smelling Chrism (oil) and heal the sick.

11 / 24 April — The Hieromartyr Antipas, Bishop of Pergamum - He is mentioned in the Book of Revelation as 'Antipas My faithful martyr, who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth'(Rev.2:13)—the city of Pergamum. The inhabitants of this town dwelt in the darkness of idolatry and in the depths of impurity: they were slaves to their passions, slanderers, bullies, incestuous; in brief, slaves of Satan. There among them lived Antipas 'as a light in the midst of darkness, as a rose among thorns, as gold in mud'. He who would seize and kill a Christian was regarded as good and just. The whole of their idolatrous faith consisted in soothsaying, the interpretation of dreams, the service of demons and the extreme excesses of debauchery. In terror of Antipas as of fire, the demons appeared to the pagan priests in their dreams and told them how greatly they were in fear of him, and how this fear was driving them from the city. The priests stirred up the multitude, and they began to torment him and to press him to deny Christ and worship idols. Antipas said to them: 'When your so-called gods and lords of the universe are afraid of me, a mortal man, and have to flee the city, why do you not learn from this that all your faith is in vain?' And the saint spoke further with them of the Christian faith as the only true and saving Faith. But they became incensed like wild beasts and dragged the aged Antipas before the temple of Artemis, where there stood an ox cast in bronze. They heated

the ox and threw the servant of God inside. St Antipas, inside the red-hot ox, glorified God with thanksgiving, like Jonah in the whale and the Three Children in the burning fiery furnace. Antipas prayed for his flock and for the whole world until his soul parted from his exhausted body and went to join the angels in the Kingdom of Christ. He died under torture and was crowned with unfading glory in the year 92: The Holy Martyrs Processus and Martinian.

St. Guthlac, hermit of Crowland (714) - as a young man Guthlac had been a soldier, fighting for Ethelred, the King of Mercia. At the age of twenty-four he renounced both violence and the life of the world and became a monk in an abbey (inhabited by men and women) at Repton and ruled by an abbess named Elfrida. Even in these early years his discipline was of an extraordinary kind. Some of the monks in fact disliked him for refusing any wine or cheering drink. After two years in the monastery it seemed to him far too agreeable a place. He found a wet, remote, unloved spot on a bed of the River Welland in the Fens, and there lived for the rest of his life as a hermit, seeking to imitate the rigours of the old desert saints. His temptations rivalled theirs. Wild men came out of the forest and beat him up. Even the ravens stole his few possessions. But Guthlac said we should be patient, even with wild creatures. Bit by bit the animals and birds came to trust him as their friend. A holy man named Wilfrid once visited Guthlac and was astonished when two swallows landed on his shoulders and then hopped all over him. Guthlac told him, "Those who choose to live apart from other humans become the friends of wild animals; and the angels visit them too - for those who are often visited by men and women are rarely visited by angels."

12 / 25 April — Our Holy Father Isaac II of Syria - St Gregory the Dialogist writes about this Isaac. He went to Italy in the time of the Goths and went into the church in the town of Spoleto to pray. He asked the verger to leave him locked in the church all night, and thus spent the night in prayer without moving from that place. He spent the next day and night in the same way. The verger called him a hypocrite and struck him a blow—and lost his reason at that same moment. Seeing how the verger was so fiercely tormented, Isaac bent over him and the evil spirit fled from him, leaving him whole. People came to hear of this happening, and the whole town thronged around this wonderful old man. They offered him money and goods, but he refused them all and would accept nothing. Instead, he withdrew to a forest, where he built himself a cell which quickly became transformed into a large monastery. Isaac became famous for his miracles, especially for his discernment. One evening he told the brethren to take all the hoes out to the vineyard and leave them there. The next day, the brethren set out for the vineyard, taking their lunch, as they had no workers. When they got there, they found as many people working as there were hoes to work with. It transpired that these people had come as thieves to steal the hoes, but, by the power of God, they were constrained to work all night. On another occasion, a couple of almost-naked men came seeking clothing from Isaac. He sent a monk to a hollow tree at the end of the road, to bring what he found there. The monk went off, found some clothing and brought it back to the monastery. The abbot took the clothing and gave it to the beggars. They were profoundly ashamed as they recognised their own clothing, which they had concealed in that tree. A man once sent two beehives to the monastery. A monk hid one of them on the way, and brought the other to the abbot. The saint said to him: 'Be careful when you go back to that beehive you hid on the way. It's been taken over by poisonous snakes. Take care they don't bite you!' St Basil the Confessor; Our Holy Father Acacius; Our Holy Mother Athanasia.

What is a Radonitsa?

"On this day, the Tuesday of St. Thomas week, according to the order instituted by our Holy Fathers, we call to remembrance, in Paschal joy, all those who have died from the beginning of the ages in faith and in the hope of resurrection and life eternal.

"Having previously celebrated the radiant feast of Christ's glorious Resurrection, the faithful commemorate the dead today with the pious intent to share the great joy of this Pascha feast with those who have departed this life in the hope of their own resurrection. This is the same blessed joy with which the dead heard our Lord announce His victory over death when He descended into Hades, thus leading forth by the hand the righteous souls of the Old Covenant into Paradise. This is the same un hoped-for joy the Holy Myrrhbearing Women experienced when discovering the empty tomb and the undisturbed grave clothes. In addition, this is the same bright joy the Holy Apostles encountered in the Upper Room where Christ appeared though the doors were closed. In short, this feast is a kindred joy, to celebrate the luminous Resurrection with our Orthodox forefathers who have fallen asleep.

"There is evidence of the commemoration of the dead today in the writings of the Church Fathers. St. John Chrysostom mentions the commemoration of the dead performed on Tuesday of St. Thomas week in his "Homily on the Cemetery and the Cross."

"Today, the faithful departed are remembered in Divine Liturgies, 'koliva' is prepared and blessed in the churches in memory of those who have fallen asleep, and the Orthodox graves in cemeteries are blessed by the priests and visited by the faithful. On this day alms are given to the poor. Furthermore, it should be noted that due to the great spiritual joy this jubilant commemoration bears, it is called in the Slavonic tongue, 'Radonitsa,' or Day of Rejoicing."

From the "Synaxarion of the Lenten Triodion and Penecostarion" (published in 1999 by HDM Press, Rives Junction, Michigan) on "Radonitsa"

Sunday of the Myrrbearing Women

Third Sunday of Pascha

13 / 26 April 2015



Resurrection Tropar, Tone 2: When Thou didst descend to death, O Life Immortal, Thou didst slay hell with the splendour of Thy Godhead! And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead, all the powers of Heaven cried out: O Giver of Life, Christ our God, Glory to Thee.

Tropar of the Sunday Of The Myrrh-bearing Women, Tone 2: The noble Joseph took Thine immaculate Body down from the Tree, / having wrapped It in pure linen and spices, laid in a new tomb. / But on the third day Thou didst rise, O Lord, // granting to the world great mercy.

Kondak of the Sunday Of The Myrrh-bearing Women, Tone 2: When Thou didst cry, Rejoice, unto the myrrh-bearers, / Thou didst make the lamentation of Eve the first mother to cease / by Thy Resurrection, O Christ God. / And Thou didst bid Thine apostles to preach: // The Saviour is risen from the grave.

Kondak of Pascha, Tone 8: Though Thou didst descend into the grave, O Immortal One, yet didst Thou destroy the power of Hades, and didst arise as

victor, O Christ God, calling to the myrrh-bearing women, Rejoice, and giving peace unto Thine Apostles, O Thou Who dost grant resurrection to the fallen.

Matins Gospel III

Epistle: St. Acts of the Apostles 6: 1-7

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, Whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

THE FIRST SEVEN DEACONS

He performs the office of a deacon, who anoints the mind for holy endeavours and drives out passionate thoughts; he performs the office of a priest, who enlightens the mind by knowledge of what is, and destroys false knowledge; he performs the office of a bishop, who completes the mind's perfection by the sacred unction of knowledge of the worshipful Holy Trinity.

St. Maximos the Confessor. Second Century on Love. Text 21. B#9. p. 302.

The Gospel According To St. Mark 15: 43 - 16: 8

Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marvelled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James observed where He was laid. Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away--for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples--and Peter--that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN

Mark how great the women's assiduity. They had followed Him, ministering to Him, and were present even to the time of the dangers. This is why they also saw all; how He cried, how He gave up the ghost; how the rocks were rent and all the rest. These women were the first to see Jesus; and the sex that was most condemned first enjoys the sight of the blessings; this sex shows its courage the most. And when the disciples had fled, these were present. Joseph, who had been concealing his discipleship of late, now became very bold after the death of Christ. He was by no means an obscure person ...but one of the council ...He exposed himself to death, taking great enmity upon him from all by his affection for Jesus ...Do you see the women's courage? Do you see their affection? Do you see their noble spirit in matters of money? their noble spirit even unto death? Let the men imitate the women; let us not forsake Jesus in temptation ...But we neither feed Him when hungry, nor clothe Him when naked (Cf. Matt.25), but seeing Him go begging, we pass Him by. And yet if we saw Him in fact, everyone would strip himself of all his goods.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily LXXXVIII on Matthew XXVII, 1. B#54, p. 522.

"And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" (Mk. 16:1-3).

Brothers and sisters! Can you imagine the state of mind these Myrrh-bearing women were in? For those who lived through Soviet times in Russia and through the persecution of the Church, it is so understandable. In some churches, as in the outskirts of Kiev, this service (the Burial of the Saviour) was performed at night. People made their way to such a church through dark streets. Anything could happen, you had to be careful of everything. Neighbours might hear that you went somewhere at night; and you could be stopped on the street. And the service itself in church and the carrying of the Shroud around the church could be interrupted by the authorities. One did not know if tomorrow, on Holy Saturday, this already semi-Easter Liturgy would be performed, because the priest might be arrested.

The Myrrh-bearers were in such a state of mind. They themselves were in danger of being arrested at any moment. Even in their homes they locked the doors from inside; they were afraid of any knock, any little sound. Two days before, Peter had denied that he too was with Jesus, meaning that he was one of His disciples. And before whom? Before a servant girl, and only because she might report him.

Such was the situation. Their Teacher had been condemned and sentenced to the most terrible death, had been executed. And now it was their turn: as the disciples of the executed Teacher they were outside the law. More than that—they were probably being sought already. The most sensible thing would have been to flee somewhere, to hide. But instead of that, they decided to go while it was still night to the sepulchre which was not far from the place of execution. They knew well that the entrance to the sepulchre was blocked by a stone, which as the Gospel says, was "very great" (Mk. 16:4), that it bore a seal, that Roman guards were guarding the tomb, and that these guards were armed and especially vigilant because they had been warned that the disciples might steal His body.

Actually, in terms of reason, what these weak women wanted to do was not only impossible, but was just a mad risk. And yet they went anyway. How? Why? What powerful force was drawing them? This force was the Word of God expressed in the Law of Moses. And fulfilling what was for them a holy law, they bought perfumes and went to anoint Him. This required their conscience. And this strength of faith in the Word of God, strength of love toward their tortured Teacher, and strength of hope that God would help—proved to be stronger than fear, stronger than reason, stronger than everything else.

And what happened? When they arrived, the guards had run away in fear. And when they entered the tomb, they saw a youth sitting on the right side, clad in white clothes; and they were terrified. But he said: "Be not afraid: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified; He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him" (Mk. 16:6).

Doesn't the same thing happen in our life? The Myrrh-bearers, fulfilling the Old Testament Law, the Law of Moses, bought perfumes and went to anoint His body, the body of Christ. And we, fulfilling the Law of the New Testament, the Law of Christ, must also acquire spiritual perfumes—His commandments: humility, meekness, peaceloving—and we must anoint His body with spiritual oil (that is, with love and mercy). And His Body is the Church of Christ. This is all our brothers and sisters in Christ; and more—this is even our enemies. How often in doing this, we subject ourselves to discomfort, losses, mockery, and sometimes even dangers. And what insurmountable obstacles are raised by our cold mind, our egotism! Not infrequently we yield, we retreat, we are afraid to express ourselves loudly and openly as His disciples.

But if we throw off this shameful fear and only begin to fulfil His teaching, only begin to follow in His footsteps, the same will happen to us that happened to the Myrrh-bearers: the obstacles will disperse of themselves, will fall away, like the stone from the door of the tomb. All those who would disturb us will run away; we will not even find them. Before us will be one thing—the illuminated sepulchre of Christ. And there will be such a clearness that all doubts will vanish. We will know what to do, how to act; and that which seemed impossible will become possible.

Let us from this day imitate the Myrrh-bearers and not fear to fulfil the will of Christ, not fear to be His disciples. Christ always conquered, always conquers, and always will conquer.

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei

Saints of the Week

13 / 26 April — The Hieromartyr Artemon - He was a priest in Laodicea in the time of the Emperor Diocletian. He spoke thus of himself before the torturers' tribunal: 'I am called Artemon, a servant of Christ my God. Sixteen years I was a reader, and read the services in the Church of my God; twenty-eight years a deacon, and read the Holy Gospel; and have now completed thirty years as a priest, teaching the people and setting them on the way of salvation with the help of Christ.' The judge took him to the temple of Aesculapius, where the priests kept great snakes, regarding them as gods. They meant the snakes to bite Artemon, but he made the sign of the Cross, and by its power riveted the snakes to the ground so that they could not bite him. He then brought them out to the courtyard and breathed on them, and they died instantly. All who saw this were filled with amazement. But the chief of the pagan priests of that temple, Vitalis, seeing this marvel, fell to his knees before Artemon and cried: 'Great is the Christian God!' The martyr baptised him, along with several of his friends. But the evil judge stood firm in his wickedness and tortured the aged Artemon in various ways. He intended at one time to cast him into burning pitch, but fell off his horse into it himself and was burned. Two eagles were seen to descend on him, lift him from his horse and cast him into the pitch. St Artemon remained free for a certain time and went about teaching the people, accompanied always by two tame deer. But he was arrested afresh and beheaded in the year 303. And his soul went to the Kingdom of Christ our God, whom he had served so faithfully; The Holy Martyr Crescens; The Holy Martyr Thomais.

14 / 27 April — St Martin the Confessor, Pope of Rome - He became Pope on July 5th, 649, at the time of a furious quarrel between the Orthodox and the Monothelite heretics. Constans the Second, Heraclius' grandson, was on the throne at the time, and Paul was Patriarch of Constantinople. To restore peace in the Church, the Emperor himself wrote a dogmatic decree, the Typos, which leaned heavily towards heresy. Pope Martin summoned a Council of 105 bishops, at which the Emperor's statement was condemned. At the same time, the Pope wrote a letter to Patriarch Paul, begging him to uphold the purity of the Orthodox faith and to counsel the Emperor to reject the theories of the heretics. This letter infuriated both the Patriarch and the Emperor. The Emperor sent one of his generals, Olympius, to take the Pope to Constantinople in bonds. The general did not dare to bind the Pope with his own hands, but instructed one of his soldiers to kill him with the sword in church. But, when the soldier entered the church with his sword concealed, he was instantly blinded. So, by the providence of God, Martin escaped death. At that time, the Saracens fell upon Sicily, and Olympius went off there, where he died. Then, by the intrigues of the heretic Patriarch Paul, the Emperor sent a second general, Theodore, to bind and take the Pope on the charge that he, the Pope, was in collusion with the Saracens and that he did not reverence the most holy Mother of God. When the general arrived in Rome and read the accusation against the Pope, he replied that it was libel; that he had no contact of any sort with the Saracens, the opponents of Christianity, 'and whoever does not confess the most holy Mother of God and do her reverence, let him be damned in this age and in that which is to come'. But this did not affect the general's decision. The Pope was bound and taken to Constantinople, where he lay long in prison in great sickness, tortured by both anxiety and hunger, until he was finally sentenced to exile in Cherson, where he lived for two years before his death. He gave his soul into the hands of the Lord, for whom he had suffered so greatly, in 655. The evil Patriarch, Paul, died two years before him and, when the Emperor visited him on his deathbed, he smote his head against the wall, confessing with tears that he had greatly sinned against Pope Martin and asking the Emperor to set Martin free. The Holy Martyrs Antony, John and Eustace; The Holy Martyr Ardalion the Actor; New Martyr Sergius (Trofimov) of Nizhni-Novgorod and one with him. **15 / 28 April — The Holy Apostles Aristarchus, Pudens and Trophimus** - These were all numbered among the Seventy. Aristarchus was Bishop of Apamea in Syria. The Apostle Paul mentions him several times (Acts 19:29; Col. 4:10; Philem. v.24). He was seized in Ephesus, together with Gaius, by a mob that had risen up against Paul. The Apostle wrote to the Colossians: 'Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you', and, in the Epistle to Philemon, Paul calls Aristarchus 'my fellow-labourer', together with Mark, Demas and Lucas. Pudens was an eminent Roman citizen. The Apostle Paul mentions him once (II Tim. 4:21). Pudens' house was first the refuge of the chief apostles and was then turned into a church dedicated to the Good Shepherd. Trophimus was an Asian (Acts 20:4), and accompanied St Paul on his journeys. In one place, Paul writes: 'Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick (II Tim. 4:21). During Nero's persecution, when the Apostle Paul was beheaded, these glorious martyrs were also beheaded. The Holy Martyr Sabbas the Goth; The Holy Martyrs Vasilissa and Anastasia; St. Ruadhan, founder and abbot of Lothra, Ireland (c.584).

16 / 29 April — The Holy Martyrs Agapia, Chionia and Irene - They were sisters from the region of Aquileia. When the Emperor Diocletian was staying in Aquileia, he ordered that the famous spiritual guide, Chrysogonus, be executed. An old priest named Zoilus received a vision in which he was shown where the body of Chrysogonus lay unburied. The old man hurried off, found the body of the martyr, placed it in a coffin and carried it to his home. On the thirtieth day after that, St Chrysogonus appeared to him and told him that the three maidens would be martyred in the next nine days, and that he, Zoilus, would himself enter into rest during that time. Anastasia the Seer also received the same tidings in a vision sent by Chrysogonus, who had been her teacher. The elder Zoilus did indeed find his rest after nine days, and the three sisters were brought to trial before the Emperor. The Emperor urged the holy maidens to worship idols, but they all refused, confessing their firm faith in Christ. Irene told the Emperor that it was ridiculous to bow down to things made of wood and stone, made to order at an agreed price by the hands of a mortal man. The furious Emperor flung them into prison. Now, when the Emperor travelled to Macedonia, he took all his slaves and servants with him, including the three sisters. He gave them to Dulcitus, a general, for torture. Inflamed with a dark passion, he desired to defile the maidens, but, when he tried to go into the prison, he lost his mind and fell upon the pots and cauldrons in front of the gate, embracing and kissing them, and was completely blackened with soot. When the Emperor heard of this happening, he ordered another general to undertake the trial of the sisters. After terrible torture, the judge condemned the first two sisters to death by fire, but kept Irene for a time, hoping to defile her. But, when he sent Irene to the brothel along with some soldiers, an angel of God turned the soldiers back and led her out onto a high hill. The next day the general went out to the hill with his soldiers and, being unable to climb it,

ordered that Irene be shot at with arrows. St Anastasia gathered all three bodies together in one place and gave them burial. They suffered for Christ their King and Lord in about 304; The Holy Martyr

17 / 30 April — The Hieromartyr Simeon, Bishop in Persia - In the time of the wicked King Savori, or Sapor, Simeon was tortured for Christ together with two of his priests, Audel and Ananias. The King's eunuch, Ustazan, who had first denied Christ but then, moved by the reprimand of St Simeon, again confessed the true Faith before the King, was executed before they were. A thousand other Christians were also led to execution with St Simeon, who purposely stood a little back so that he should be the last to die, and so be able to encourage the other Christians right to the end and keep them from wavering through fear of death. When the priest Ananias laid his head on the block, he was trembling all over. But the King's clerk, Fusik, who was himself secretly a Christian, began to encourage him, saying: 'Don't be frightened, old man. Shut your eyes and be a man, and you'll see the divine light.' As soon as he had said this, it was seen that he was a Christian and he was denounced to the King. The King wore him down with harsh tortures, and also his daughter, the maiden Askitria. St Simeon was eventually beheaded, after having seen his flock into the other world. The following year, on Great Friday, the King's beloved eunuch, Azat, was slain for Christ, along with another thousand of the faithful. Then the King grieved for his eunuch and gave up killing any more Christians. They all suffered with honour for Christ their King and Lord in about 341.

St Acacius, Bishop of Melitene - lived the ascetical life in the place where he was born, i.e., in Melitene, Armenia. Blessed Otreius, bishop of that city, who participated at the Second Ecumenical Council [Constantinople 381 A.D.], ordained him a presbyter. Following the death of Otreius, Acacius became a bishop. He participated at the Third Ecumenical Council [Ephesus 431 A.D.], which condemned the evil blasphemy of Nestorius against the Mother of God. Here, together with St. Cyril of Alexandria, Acacius zealously fought for the purity of the Orthodox Faith. St. Acacius possessed much Grace from God and worked many miracles. After long and zealous service to God, Acacius died peacefully in the year 435 A.D.; St Agapetus, Pope of Rome; Our Holy Fathers Sabbatius and Zossima.

Holy Martyr Donan, an Irish monk of Iona under Columba & 52 monks with him at his monastery on the Isle of Eigg - Inner Hebrides, Scotland - while the monks were celebrating Liturgy on Easter night 618 a gang of robbers, possibly Vikings, arrived on the island and herded the monks into the refectory and set fire to it. Those who tried to escape were killed by the sword. At least eleven Scottish churches bear his name.

18 April / 1 May — Our Holy Father John - He was a disciple of St Gregory of Decapolis. In the time of the iconoclast heresy, the Emperor Leo the Armenian put John to torture, together with his teacher, Gregory, and Joseph the Hymnographer. When Gregory finished his earthly course, John became abbot of the Decapolite monastery in Constantinople. Becoming abbot, he intensified his asceticism for the sake of the Kingdom of God. He died peacefully in about 820. After his death, St Joseph buried him near the grave of St Gregory.

The Holy Martyr John the New of Ioannina - born in Ioannina, once the capitol city of the Emperor Pyrrhus. When his impoverished parents died, the young John moved to Constantinople and there continued his occupation, for he was a craftsman. Not long before that, the Turks surrounded Constantinople and many Christians, out of fear, denied Christ and embraced the Islamic faith. St. John had his workshop in the midst of these converts to Islam. The more the young John burned with love for Christ the Lord, the more openly he exposed himself as a Christian before these traitors of Christ. He began to argue with them about faith and, finally, rebuked them for their betrayal of Christ. They dragged him before the judge and falsely accused John, alleging that he had earlier embraced Islam, and that he again reverted to Christianity. After he was tortured and beaten with rods and iron ramrods, they cast him into prison. The next day was the Feast of the Resurrection of Christ and, again, they brought him out for further torture and John emerged singing: "Christ is risen from the dead!" To his torturers, he bravely said: "Do what you want in order to send me as soon as possible from this transient life to eternal life. I am Christ's slave, I follow Christ, for Christ I die that I may live with Him!" After that, John was bound in chains and brought to the place of burning. Upon seeing a large fire prepared for him, John ran and leaped into the flames. His torturers seeing how he loved death in the fire removed him from the fire and sentenced him to be beheaded. After they beheaded him, they threw his head and body into the fire. Later on, Christians leafed through the ashes and gathered some of the remains of his honourable and wonder-working relics and interred them in the Great Church [Agia Sophia - Church of the Holy Wisdom] in Constantinople. Thus, St. John of Ioannina died a martyr's death and received the glorious martyr's wreath on April 18, 1526 A. D.; The Holy Martyrs Victor, Zoticus, Zeno, Acyndinus and Severian; New Martyr Priests Nicholas (1937) and Basil (Derzhavin) (1930) and lay people of the city of Gorodets, Nizhni-Novgorod.

19 April / 2 May — Our Holy Father John of the Ancient Caves - lived a life of asceticism in the so-called "old caves," the "old Lavra" of Chariton the Great in Palestine. Having loved Christ the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his mind, John, at an early age, began to travel to the holy places and to listen to the instructions and counsels of the holy men. Finally, he settled in the Caves of Chariton, where he gave himself to rigorous asceticism spending days and years in fasting, prayer, vigils, continuously meditating on death, and teaching himself humility. As a good ripened fruit, he was plucked by death and took up habitation in Paradise. He lived and died in the eighth century;

The Holy Martyrs Christopher, Theonas and Antoninus - young officers serving under Emperor Diocletian. When St. George the Great Martyr was being tortured, they witnessed his sufferings as well as the miracles which occurred at that time. Seeing all of this, they came before the emperor, laid down their arms, removed their military belts and bravely confessed the Name of the Lord Jesus. For that, they were subjected to great torture and finally were tossed into the fire, where their bodies were consumed while their souls went to God into eternal joy. They honourably suffered in Nicomedia in the year 303 A.D.;

St Tryphun, Patriarch of Constantinople - The Emperor Romanus, who reigned over Byzantium at the beginning of the tenth century had a son, Theophylact, who was sixteen years old when Patriarch Stephen died. The emperor wanted his son to be elevated as patriarch for he had promised him [his son] this spiritual calling from his youth. Because his son was a minor, the emperor was ashamed to do this. The patriarchal throne was assumed by Tryphun a simple but chaste and pious old man.

Tryphun remained on the throne for three years. When the son of the emperor reached his twentieth year, the emperor thought, to remove Tryphun at any price and to install his son as patriarch. The saint of God, Tryphun, did not want to relinquish his throne voluntarily, for no other reason, because he considered it to be a great scandal that such a young man be elevated to such a responsible and burdensome position as that of being patriarch. Through the intrigue of a nefarious bishop, the signature of the innocent Tryphun was extracted on a blank sheet of paper. Later on, in the imperial court, above that signature, the alleged resignation of the patriarch was written which the emperor decreed. As a result of this, there arose a great confusion in the Church, for the laity and the clergy stood by Tryphun, the godly man. The emperor then forcibly removed the aged patriarch and sent him to a monastery and, his son, Theophylact, was elevated as patriarch. St. Tryphun lived as an ascetic in this monastery for two years and five months and presented himself before the Lord in the year 933 A.D.. Our Holy Father, the Martyr Agathangelos; Our Holy Father Simeon the Barefoot;

Hieromartyr Alphege, archbishop of Canterbury (1012) - he became a monk at Deerhurst but after some years retired to be a hermit in Somerset. In 984 he became bishop of Winchester and he became known for his personal austerity and lavish almsgiving. In 994 King Ethelred sent him to parley with the Danes Anlaf and Swein, who had raided both London and Wessex. The Anglo-Saxons paid tribute but Anlaf became a Christian and promised he would never again come to England 'with warlike intent.' This promise was kept. In 1006 he succeeded Aelfric as archbishop of Canterbury. Meanwhile the Danes continued to overrun southern England. They besieged Canterbury and imprisoned Alphege and others and demanded a ransom of 3000 pounds. Alphege refused to pay and forbade his people to do so. The Danes were so infuriated that, after a feast at which they got drunk, and killed him with the bones of oxen: an axeman delivered the final blow. His was originally buried in St. Paul's Cathedral, London however in 1023 his body was translated to Canterbury Cathedral. In 1105 his body was found to be incorrupt.