



St Mary of Egypt /

The Fifth Sunday of Great Lent

8 / 21 March

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 8: Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One! / Thou didst endure the three-day burial / to free us from our sufferings! / O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee.

Tropar of St. Mary of Egypt, Tone 5: Enlightened by the grace of the Cross, thou wast shown forth as a radiant lamp of repentance, dispelling the darkness of the passions, O all-holy one. Wherefore, thou didst appear as an angel in the flesh unto the sacred Zosimas in the wilderness. O Mary, our righteous mother, do thou intercede with Christ for us.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 8: By rising from the tomb Thou didst raise the dead and resurrect Adam/ Eve exults in Thy Resurrection, / and the world celebrates Thy rising from the dead, O Greatly Merciful One.

Kondak of St. Mary of Egypt, Tone 3: Thou who once of old wast filled with all manner of fornication, art now seen today to be a bride of Christ by thy repentance. Thou didst love and emulate the life of the angels. By the Cross, thou didst annihilate the hordes of demons; for this cause thou art a bride now in the kingdom of the heavens, O Mary, thou all-modest one.

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, make 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.

Epistle - Hebrews 9: 11 - 14

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

HE ENTERED THE MOST HOLY PLACE ONCE FOR ALL, HAVING OBTAINED ETERNAL REDEMPTION

If the priesthood established by the law has come to an end, and the priest who is 'in the order of Melchizedek' has offered his sacrifice, and has made all other sacrifices unnecessary, why do the priests of the new covenant perform the mystical liturgy? Now it is clear to those instructed in divinity that we do not offer another sacrifice, but perform a memorial of that unique and saving offering. For this was the Lord's own command: 'Do this in remembrance of me' (1 Cor. 11:24). So that by contemplation we may recall what is symbolised, the sufferings endured on our behalf, and may kindle our love towards our benefactor, and look forward to the enjoyment of the blessings to come.

Theodoret of Cyprus. The Eucharist. interpr. in XIV ep. S. Paul in Heb.8.4. B#15, p. 276.

Second Reading: Galatians 3: 23-29

Gospel - Mark 10: 32 - 45

Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; And they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again." Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; But to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared." And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

"This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting (Mk. 9:29). So if you will remember, last Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Great Lent, the Gospel proclaimed to us: "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." What is "this kind"? If you will remember, brothers and sisters, we were told there about a youth who was possessed and sometimes fell into fire and sometimes into water, as his father said when he brought him to Christ. And Christ said, "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." This is what kind. The kind which possessed the youth and was casting him down. This unfortunate youth not only knew no rest, but not even life itself. And Christ said, "can come forth." This means that it was something separate. Now do we understand this or not?

Brothers, if you just open a newspaper, you will at once understand what "This kind" means. See how many people who, in a state of despair, jump into water in order to end their lives, thinking there is no eternal life. And into fire. Here you find so many who again, out of despair, throw themselves into fire, become human torches in order to burn themselves. It is the same thing: a state of insanity or despondency, or on the contrary, a state of mind which almost reaches madness—human pride. And how many people become victims of those terrible excesses of sex. How many terrible mental conditions there are in which a person commits robbery, murder, which are connected with the terrible greed for money, for power. What is this? It is precisely "this kind." We seem not to participate in it. Oh, if only we would not participate!

Now we are in the period of life which we call spiritual spring. If a farmer is late in sowing, then there will be no harvest and, therefore, no bread. Likewise, if a person is late in acquiring sobriety, attention to his inner man, his heart, then he will be left without spiritual nourishment, in spiritual hunger. And if there is some kind of passion in his heart and he realises it, then he will also understand that no one can drive out this passion except He Who created man. But for this to happen, preparation is needed. And this preparation is fasting and prayer.

We should have remained with such feelings during the past week. And if we possessed the state of mind which a Christian should possess, then during this fifth week, when the Church was crying: "O Lord, before I perish to the end, save me," when the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete was being read, which exposes and overturns our heart and reveals to us such passions; it would be possible for us to approach God and say: "O God, forgive me, heal me, give me Thine everlasting light; give me Life, because maybe I have only one year left to live, and maybe not even that; I might be going to Thee right now."

We are all going there into eternity; and the Church gives us this time for preparation, in order to look at ourselves, so that we might acquire the forces necessary for entering eternal existence.

The Church said to us in the last Gospel that this kind is driven out by fasting and prayer. We think that fasting is when we do not have vegetable oil on the table. Yes, certainly limitation in food is also fasting. But fasting does not consist of this alone; this is only part of fasting. Fasting is when a person opens his heart in such a way that he sees what is unneeded

and rejects it, keeping only what is needed in order to preserve his heart. And prayer? Prayer is the state in which our soul, sensing Divine peace, unceasingly calls to the Lord; "Help me; don't let it happen. Don't allow the murder of the most important feeling within me—conscience."

And here at the end of this week, I don't know about you, but I still have a feeling of being unworthy. And for me today is a great comfort. In what sense? Here before us, before our spiritual eyes, stands Mary of Egypt. This was a sinner who became a classic type, a classic image of a Christian woman. She was an outrageous courtesan of Alexandria in Egypt. She was a harlot; she was a prostitute; she was a beauty; and her depravity knew no limits.

Once she chanced to see a crowd of people boarding a ship. And she, not in order to go to Palestine, but in order to be active in her profession among the pilgrims, she also boarded this ship. And so she sailed to Jerusalem. She went with the crowd to worship the Cross of the Lord. Why not? The whole crowd was going and so she went too. And here, when the crowd had entered the vestibule of the church; then here, no matter what Mary did, she could not enter the church. By now almost everyone had entered, but she was somehow nailed to the floor. It was as if a gust of wind or a wave threw her out and drove her away. No matter how she trembled, no matter how eager she was to enter, she could not; something would not let her. Finally, she understood that some kind of terrible force would not let her in. And here she looked up: before her was a face; it was the icon of the Mother of God with the Child. Immediately the curtain which covered up her conscience was opened. She had heard about Christ and she had heard that Christ called to chastity. And here her conscience revealed to her all her sin, and she fell before the Heavenly Queen with this cry: "Forgive me, help!"

And then she herself did not see or understand what happened. All at once, as if lifted by wind, she was brought into the church and she fell down before the Cross of the Lord. And here a miracle happened to her: there appeared in her the thirst for purity, for chastity. She wanted to feel the lightness of a clean conscience. And when she felt forgiveness, without looking around and without any provisions, she rushed to the Jordan, walked through it, and then disappeared into the desert.

And so for seventeen years she lived in a state of sobriety; and as she said later, she had to bite the ground in order to destroy lustful feelings, carnal longings, the demonic bodily movements of "this kind." And later on, for seventeen more years she praised God's Grace. She was like an angel.

Therefore, I say that for us this day which the Church puts before us is a comfort. There is no sinner whom the Lord would not forgive. Brothers and sisters, without doubt every one of us will be covered by the lid of a coffin. Every one of us will disappear into the grave. And the soul will pass over into eternity. What will be there? Do we ever think about what will be there? The Church is calling and calling us to repentance. But how do we start? Now pay attention to this: Mary could not enter the Church; somebody was not letting her in. Look at yourself, at your conscience. The same happens to you; somebody is not allowing you to surrender fully to Christ. Stop this. But how? In the same way Mary did—rush to the Mother of God.

This is what I am asking you to do. This is the greatest joy. And rush to the Lord and say, "Lord, help me to be Christian. Help me, so that the motion of my heart beats out just one feeling: surrender to the Lord, fulfilment of His commandments. Then a clear, bright spring will come. And approaching Pascha we will hear the words of Christ, "Peace be unto you!" (Lk. 24:36). May this peace rest in you.

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei

Second Reading: St. Luke 7: 36-50

Saints of the Week

8 / 21 March — St Theophylactus, Bishop of Nicomedia - When the emperor's advisor Tarasius, as a layman, was elected Patriarch of Constantinople, then with him and from him, many of his friends, admirers, and others of the laity received the monastic tonsure. Among them was Theophylactus. Tarasius appointed him Bishop of Nicomedia. As a bishop, Theophylactus was a good shepherd to his entrusted flock and proved to be exceptionally filled with compassion toward the less fortunate and indigent. After the death of St. Tarasius, the Patriarchal Throne was occupied by Nicephorus and shortly after that, the Imperial Throne was occupied by Leo the Armenian, who was an Iconoclast and, as such, raised up a absolute storm in the Church of Christ. Even though Iconoclasm had been anathematized by the Seventh Ecumenical Council [Nicaea, 783 A.D.], nevertheless, Emperor Leo re-instated it and by this wanted to supplant Orthodoxy. Saint Theophylactus opposed the emperor to his face and, when the emperor would not yield, Theophylactus said to him, "O emperor, violent injury will unexpectedly befall you, and you will not find anyone who will save you from it." Because of these words and by the order of the emperor, Theophylactus was ousted from his position and banished into exile, where he spent thirty years undergoing many hardships and insults and, where, in the end, he rendered his soul to the Lord about the year 845 A.D.; The Hieromartyr Theodoretus;

St. Felix of Burgundy, bishop of Dunwich, and enlightener of East Anglia (c.648) - Monk. Priest, In Burgundy he met befriended, converted and baptised King Sigebert who was in exile from East Anglia. England. When Sigebert returned to East Anglia in 630, he invited Felix to bring Christianity to his people. Felix was ordained bishop by Saint Honoratus of Canterbury, and then sailed up the River Kent, apparently starting his work in the area now known as Felixstowe. Evangelized throughout East Anglia, building a cathedral and school at Dunwich, stone churches throughout the region, and the college that became the University of Cambridge. With Saint Sigebert he founded the Bury Saint Edmunds abbey c.637. Worked with Saint Fursey. Spiritual teacher of Saint Audrey.

The anniversary of the repose of Archbishop Vitaly (Maximenko) of Jordanville (1960) - the young Archmandrite Vitaly was assigned by his bishop to the Pochaev Monastery in 1902 as a printer and preacher. He turned the Pochaev print-shop into one of the biggest church printing operations in Russia, having St. Job of Pochaev - a champion of Orthodoxy against the Uniates - as his heavenly patron. His efforts were interrupted by the First World War and the Russian Revolution, however, as the print-shop was plundered by Ukrainian nationalists and the Bolsheviks. In 1924 Vladika Vitaly managed to re-establish the print-shop in Ladomirovo, situated just inside the Czechoslovakian border. In 1944 the brotherhood was forced to move again, this time because of the Second World War. Once again everything was lost, this time to advancing Soviet troops. Archimandrite Vitaly was ordained Bishop and appointed to North America. He asked the monks at the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville to accept him as one of the brethren which they did. He moved the print-shop of St. Job of Pochaev there in 1947, where it operates to this day. He was Abbot of the monastery from 1948 until his repose in 1960. One of the great figures of the Russian Diaspora, Vladika Vitaly was a great printer-missionary and stalwart of Orthodoxy in these times. May his memory be eternal!;

New Martyr Archpriest Michael Edklinsky - little is known of Father Michael. He was the parish priest of the Church of Sts. Boris & Gleb at Podol in Kiev from at least 1889 until the Revolution. He worked tirelessly for his parishioners. He was especially attentive to the problem of drunkenness, considering it to be the foremost reason for human depravation and spiritual fall. Through his prayers, many were healed from this terrible weakness. He was given much money by others for charitable purposes. He established a parish cafeteria which distributed food for the poor and also an orphanage and a day school for the children of working women. He, his Matushka, and their daughters dressed poorly so as to give everything they could to the poor. Once, when the people began to attack the local Jewish population, he proceeded together with his clergy in full vestments and admonished the rioters, who began to disperse. He had great faith, and prayed fervently with tears. His sermons greatly profited those who heard him, and all who confessed in his presence experienced spiritual joy and peace. He died in a Kiev prison in 1938. There have been many miracles worked through his prayers, both during his life and after his martyrdom. Holy New Hieromartyr Michael, pray for us!

9 / 22 March — The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste - These were all soldiers in the Roman army, but believed firmly in the Lord Jesus. When a persecution arose in the time of Licinius, they were all taken for trial before the commander, who threatened to strip them of their military status. To this one of them, St Candidus, replied: 'Do not take only our military status, but also our bodies; nothing is dearer or of greater honour to us than Christ our God.' Then the commander ordered his servants to stone the holy martyrs to death. But when the servants threw the stones at the Christians, the stones turned back and fell on them themselves, causing them grievous injuries. One stone fell on the commander's face and smashed his teeth. The torturers, in bestial fury, bound the holy martyrs and threw them into a lake, setting a watch all round it to prevent any of them escaping. There was a terrible frost, and the lake froze around the bodies of the martyrs. To make the torture worse, the torturers built and lit baths by the lake, in the sight of the freezing sufferers, with the idea that one of them might deny Christ and acknowledge the idols of Rome. In fact, one of them did abjure, came out of the water and went into the baths. But lo, during the night a strange light appeared from heaven, which heated the water in the lake and the bodies of the martyrs, and with that light there descended from heaven thirty-nine wreaths for their heads. One of the sentries on the shore saw this, confessed the name of Christ and went into the lake to be worthy of the fortieth wreath in place of the traitor. And the fortieth wreath was seen to descend upon him. The next day, the whole town was amazed to see the martyrs still alive. Then the wicked judges commanded that their legs be broken and their bodies thrown into the water, so that the Christians should not be able to find them. On the third day the martyrs appeared to the local bishop, Peter, and told him to search beneath the water and bring out their relics. The bishop went out on a dark night with his clergy, and saw where the martyrs' relics were glowing in the water. Every bone that had been broken off from their bodies rose to the surface and burned there like a candle. They gathered them, and gave them burial, and the souls of these martyrs went to Him who was martyred for us all and rose with glory, the Lord Jesus. They suffered with honour and were crowned with unfading glory in 320. On this day it was a tradition in Russia to make cookies in the shape of swallows which were then arriving with the approaching spring. In our own times Blessed Father Seraphim (Rose), who always baked swallow cookies for the feast, would also make lizard cookies as spring in Platina, where his Monastery of St. Herman of Alaska was situated, brought lizards, and not swallows. Our Holy Father Philoromus the Confessor; St. Caesarius;

St. Bosa, bishop of York - Died 686. Saint Bosa was a Benedictine monk at Whitby, England, under Saint Hilda. In 678, he was consecrated bishop of Deira (the southern half of Northumbria, now Yorkshire) by Saint Theodore, with his see at York, when Saint Wilfrid was driven out by King Egfrid for refusing to accept the division of his see. Wilfrid returned in 686, but Bosa took over the diocese in 691 when Wilfrid was again exiled following a quarrel with King Aldfrid; Bosa ruled it with great holiness and ability until his death. Saint Bede praises Bosa as "a man beloved by God . . . of most unusual merit and sanctity." One of his disciples was Saint Acca, who later followed and succeeded Wilfrid at Hexham.

10 / 23 March — The Holy Martyr Codratus of Corinth, and others with him - In a time of persecution of Christians, many of the faithful fled to the mountains and caves. The mother of this Codratus did so. She was pregnant just at that time, and gave birth to Codratus in a forest, dying almost at once. He was kept safe and fed by the providence of God and his guardian angel. Codratus grew up in solitude with nature. He who gave manna from heaven to the Israelites in the wilderness released a sweet dew from a cloud onto the mouth of the child Codratus. When he was twelve years old, he went down to the town, and there some good people took a fancy to him and educated him. He studied medicine and then began to heal the sick, using both natural medicines and, more importantly, the spiritual power and prayer which had been with him from childhood. When a new persecution arose under Decius, Codratus was taken for trial and thrown into prison. Five of his friends stood beside him and confessed the name of Christ. They were: Cyprian, Dionysius, Anectus, Paul and Crescens. They were all dragged through the streets and struck with sticks and stones by the unbelievers, especially by the children, until they arrived at the scaffold. Here the martyrs prayed to God and were beheaded with the sword. A spring of water gushed out onto the

earth at the spot, which to this day is called by Codratus's name and commemorates the heroic death for Christ of the holy six. They suffered with honour for the truth in Corinth in the year 250, in the time of the Emperor Decius and his governor Jason. Martyr Codratus of Nicomedia; St. Anastasia, Patrician of Alexandria.

11 / 24 March — St Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem - born in Damascus of eminent parents. Having acquired worldly wisdom, he was not content with this, and began also to acquire pure, spiritual wisdom. In the monastery of St Theodosius he found himself with the monk John Moschus, whom he took as his teacher; then, together with him, set out to visit the monasteries and ascetics of Egypt. Their motto was to glean more spiritual wisdom each day. They wrote down all that they discovered, and later published it in two books entitled 'The Spiritual Meadow'. They later went to Rome, where Moschus died, leaving Sophronius with the pledge to take him either to Sinai or to the Monastery of St Theodosius. Sophronius fulfilled the desire of his teacher and took his body to the monastery, after which he was delayed in Jerusalem, which by that time had been freed from the Persians. He witnessed the return of the Precious Cross from Persia, which the Emperor Heraclius carried into the Holy City on his back. The old Patriarch, Zacharias, who also returned from slavery, did not live long and, when he went to the other world, was followed first by Modestus, who died in 634, and then by blessed Sophronius. He governed the Church with outstanding wisdom and zeal for four years, standing in defence of Orthodoxy against the Monothelite heresy, which he condemned at his Council in Jerusalem before it was condemned at the 6th Ecumenical Council. He wrote the life of St Mary of Egypt, compiled the rite of the Great Blessing of Water and introduced various new hymns and songs into different services. When the Arabian Caliph Omar captured Jerusalem, Sophronius begged him to spare the Christians, which Omar hypocritically promised. When Omar quickly began to plunder and ill-treat the Christians in Jerusalem, Sophronius, with many lamentations, begged God to take him from among the living upon earth, that he should not see the desecration of the holy places. And God heard his prayer, and took him to Himself in His heavenly courts in 644. St. Pionius; St. George the Sinaite;

St. Angus (Oengus) of Culdees, compiler of first Irish martyrology - Born in Ireland; died c. 830. The appellation "Culdee," Ceile De, or Kele-De means "worship of God," which became the name of a monastic movement otherwise known as the "Companions of God." Oengus was of the race of the Dalaradians, kings of Ulster. In his youth, renouncing all earthly pretensions, he chose Christ for his inheritance by embracing the religious life in the monastery of Cluain-Edneach (Clonenagh) in East Meath (County Laois). Here he became so great a proficient both in learning and sanctity, that no one in his time could be found in Ireland that equalled him in reputation for every kind of virtue, and for sacred knowledge. To shun the esteem of the world, he disguised himself and entered the monastery of Tamlacht (Tallaght Hill), three miles from Dublin, where he lived for seven years as an anonymous lay brother. There he performed all the drudgery of the house, appearing fit for nothing but the vilest tasks, while interiorly he was being perfected in love and contemplation absorbed in God. After his identity was discovered when he tried to coach an unsuccessful student, he returned to Cluain-Edneach, where the continual austerity of his life, and his constant application to God in prayer, may be more easily admired than imitated. For example, he would daily recite one-third of the psalter (50 Psalms) while immersed in cold water. He was chosen abbot, and at length raised to the episcopal dignity: for it was usual then in Ireland for eminent abbots in the chief monasteries to be bishops. He was known for his devotion to the saints. He left both a longer and a shorter Irish Martyrology, and five other books concerning the saints of his country, contained in what the Irish call *Saltair-na-Rann*. The short martyrology was a celebrated metrical hymn called *Felire* or *Festilogium*. The longer, *Martyrology of Tallaght* was composed in collaboration with Saint Maelruain of Tallaght. He died at Disertbeagh (now Desert Aenguis or Dysert Enos), which became also a famous monastery, and took its name from him.

12 / 25 March - St Gregory the Dialogist, Pope of Rome - son of the senator Gordianus, he himself became a senator and governor of the city of Rome, but, as soon as his father died, he gave himself to the spiritual life. He built six monasteries in Sicily and a seventh in Rome itself, out of his great wealth, being tonsured in this last, which he dedicated to the Apostle Andrew. His mother, Sylvia, also received the monastic habit in a women's monastery. After the death of Pope Pelagius, Gregory was chosen as Pope. He fled from this honour and power and hid himself in the mountains and ravines, but God showed people where to find him by making a fiery column, reaching from earth to heaven, appear at the place where Gregory was hiding. He had a rare compassion, using all his income for the housing of the poor and on hospitality. He frequently brought the poor in and fed them from his own table. He occupied himself with the writing of instructive books. 'The Dialogist', or 'the one who converses' was the name he was known by, having written a book entitled 'The Dialogues' in which he brought to light the virtues and miracles of the Italian saints. He also compiled the service of the Presanctified Gifts that is used on Wednesdays and Fridays in the Great Fast. His archdeacon, Peter, often saw a dove hovering over his head when he was writing. He went to the Lord in 604. St. Theophanes the Confessor; Our St. Simeon the New Theologian;

St. Alphege the Bald, bishop of Winchester, England (951) - (also known as Elphege the Elder or Elphege the Bald) Before he was raised to the dignity of bishop of Winchester in 935, Alphege was a monk or hermit. He persuaded many others to enter monastic life, including his kinsman Saint Dunstan and Saint Ethelwold, both of whom he ordained to the priesthood on the same day. His feast is still kept at Winchester and Saint Albans

13 / 26 March — St Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople. (c. 758-829) - he governed the holy Church with wisdom and zeal as the greatest arch-pastor of Constantinople. When Leo the Armenian made his stand against icons, he opposed the Emperor; first counselling him and then denouncing him. For this the accursed Emperor exiled him to the island of Prochonis. There was a monastery on that island, which Nicephorus himself had built in honour of St Theodore. And this confessor of the Orthodox faith spent thirteen years there, then died and went to the Lord in 827. Then all the iconoclast Emperors perished, and Michael, with his mother Theodora, came to the imperial throne in 842, and Methodius became Patriarch. Then, in 846, the relics of St Nicephorus were translated from Prochonnesus to Constantinople and placed first in the Church of St Sophia, from which he had been driven in his lifetime, and then in the Church of the Holy Apostles. The main commemoration of this great hierarch is on June 2nd, but on March 13th is commemorated the finding and translation of his uncorrupt relics. St

Nicephorus was driven from Constantinople on March 13th, and on March 13th, nineteen years later, his relics were brought back to his patriarchal seat.

Martyr Christina of Persia - For her unwavering confession of faith in Christ, she was cruelly tortured in Persia in the fourth century. So much did they torture her, flogging her with a whip, that she became weak and died. Her soul then departed from her tortured body and entered into the joy of Christ, the King and Lord.;

Hieromartyr Publius - This priestly-martyr was successor to the episcopal throne of the glorious Dionysius the Areopagite in Athens. As a bishop, he was tortured by the pagans and beheaded in the second century. After a brief period of torture, he inherited life eternal.

14 / 27 March — St. Benedict - born in Nursia in Italy in 480, of rich and eminent parents, he did not persevere long with his schooling, for he realised himself that he could, through book-learning, lose 'the great understanding of my soul'. And he left school 'an untaught sage and an understanding ignoramus'. He fled to a monastery where a monk, Romanus, gave him the habit, after which he withdrew to a craggy mountain, where he lived for more than three years in a cave in great struggles with his soul. Romanus brought him bread and dropped it over the wall of the crag on a rope to the mouth of the cave. When he became known in the neighbourhood, he, to flee the praise of men, moved away from that cave. He was very brutal with himself. Once, when an impure rage of fleshly lust fell on him, he stripped bare and rolled among nettles and thorns until he had driven out of himself every thought of a woman. God endowed him with many spiritual gifts: insight, healing and the driving out of evil spirits, the raising of the dead and the ability to appear to others from a distance in a dream or vision. He once discerned that he had been given a glass of poisoned wine. He made the sign of the Cross over the glass and it broke into pieces. He founded twelve monasteries, each having twelve monks at first. He later compiled the specifically 'Benedictine' rule, which is today followed in the Roman Church. On the sixth day before his death he commanded that his grave, already prepared as the saint had foreseen that his end was near, should be opened. He gathered all the monks together, gave them counsel and gave his soul to the Lord whom he had faithfully served in poverty and purity. His sister, Scholastica, lived in a women's monastery, where, guided by her brother and herself practising great asceticism, she came to great spiritual perfection. When St Benedict set his soul free, two monks, one on the road and one at prayer in a distant cell, had at the same moment the same vision: a path from earth to heaven, curtained with precious cloth and illuminated at the sides by ranks of people. At the top of that path stood a man of indescribable beauty and light, who told them that the path was prepared for Benedict, the beloved of God. After that vision, the two brethren discovered that their beloved abbot had gone from this world. He died peacefully in about 550 and went to the eternal Kingdom of Christ the King. St. Eusebius, Bishop of Lampsacus;

St. Theognostus, Metropolitan of Kiev - he was a Greek by origin and a successor to St. Peter of Kiev. He suffered much from the Mongol hordes, especially at the hands of Janibeg Khan. Theognostus was slandered by his own Russian people before the Mongolian emperor because he did not render the emperor any tribute for his episcopal rank. When the emperor summoned and questioned him concerning this, Theognostus replied: "Christ our God has redeemed this Church from paganism by His Precious Blood. For what and on what should I pay tribute to the pagans?" In the end he was released and returned home. He governed the Church for twenty-five years. He died to the Lord in the year 1353 A.D.