

Thomas Sunday

Second Sunday of Pascha

29 March / 11 April



Resurrection Tropar, Tone 1: When the stone had been sealed by the Jews; / while the soldiers were guarding Thy Most Pure Body; / Thou didst rise on the third day, O Saviour, / granting life to the world. / The Powers of Heaven therefore cried to Thee O Giver of Life: / glory to Thy Resurrection O Christ! / Glory to Thy Kingdom; / Glory to Thy Dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind.

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.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 1: As God, Thou didst rise from the tomb in glory, / Raising the world with Thyself. / Human nature praises Thee as God, for death has vanished. / Adam exults O Master, Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage, and cries to Thee; / Thou art the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ.

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.

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

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.

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, and 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. 1938 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 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 Hypatis, 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, 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.

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, renown 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 rejoicefully, 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.