

# Sunday of the Myrrbearing Women

## Third Sunday of Pascha

5 / 18 April



**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.

### 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

**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.

**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 Aphantodocetism, 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."