

27th Sunday After Pentecost

The Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God

27 November / 10 December



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!

Troparion of the Mother of God of Kursk tone 4: Thou art an impregnable wall and a source of miracles/ enabling us to subdue enemy attacks, O Mother of God./ Wherefore we pray thee grant peace to the world and great mercy to our souls.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 2: Hell became afraid, O Almighty Saviour, seeing the miracle of Thy resurrection from the tomb! The dead arose! Creation, with Adam, beheld this and rejoiced with Thee! And the world, O My Saviour, praises Thee forever.

Kontakion of the Mother of God of Kursk tone 8: We celebrate the venerable Icon of the Sign, most holy Mother of God,/ whereby thou didst grant thy city a wonderful victory over its enemies./ Wherefore we cry to thee with faith: Rejoice, O Virgin, thou boast of Christians.

Matins Gospel V

EPISTLE: Ephesians 6:10-17

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD, THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO STAND AGAINST THE WILES OF THE DEVIL

He does not speak against the fighting, nor against the hostilities, but against the 'wiles.' For this enemy is at war with us, not simply, nor openly, but by 'wiles.' To use 'wiles' is to deceive and to take by artifice or contrivance ...and stratagems in the case of those who seduce us. I mean something like this. The Devil never proposes to us sins in their proper colours ...Our conflict is with one skilled in the arts of war ...'For you were once darkness' (Eph. 5:8); so naming that wickedness which is in this present life; for beyond it, it will have no place, not in Heaven, nor in the world to come ...By 'evil day' he means the present life, and also calls it 'this present evil world' (Gal. 1:4) ...How then, you may say, are we to wrestle with the darkness? By becoming light. How with the spiritual hosts of wickedness? By becoming good ...No, if we have a mind, neither will we wrestle at all, for it is because we choose it, that there is a struggle, since so great is the power of Him who dwells in us, as He said, 'Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:9). All power He has given us, both of wrestling and of not wrestling. It is because we are slothful, that we have to wrestle with them ...Then let us trample under foot the power of the devil; let us trample under foot our sins, I mean everything that pertains to this life: wrath, lust, vainglory, every passion.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXII on Ephesians IV. B#57, pp.159-162.

for the Icon: Heb. 9:1-7

GOSPEL: ST. LUKE 13:10-17

Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day." The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound--think of it--for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

OUGHT NOT THIS WOMAN ...WHOM SATAN HAS BOUND ...

FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS, BE LOOSED FROM THIS BOND ON THE SABBATH?

Mark, I pray, how variously and suitably in each case, He introduces His pleas for the breaking of the sabbath. So first in the case of the blind man, He does not so much as defend Himself to them when He made the clay: and yet then also they were blaming Him. But the manner of the creation was enough to indicate the Lord and Owner of the law. Next, in the case of the paralytic, when he carried his bed, and they were finding fault, He defends Himself, now as God, and now as man, as man, when He says, "If a man on the Sabbath day receives circumcision, that the law should not be broken' ...'are you angry at Me, because I have made a man completely well on the Sabbath day?' (John 7:23). As God again, when He says, 'My Father works hitherto, and I work' (John 5:17). But when blamed for His disciples, He said, 'Have you not read what David did' (Cf Matt. 12:3,4) ...He also brings forward the priests ...

And the other evangelist (Mark) says that He also looked about on them when asking these questions, so by His very eye He might win them over; but not even so did they become better ...None of these things made them meek, rather while the man was healed, they became worse by his health. For His desire was indeed to cure them before him, and He tried innumerable ways of healing, both by the things He did in their presence, and by His words, but since their malady was incurable after all, He proceeded to the work. They had received no injury, yet they went about to slay Him. So great an evil is envy. For it is ever warring, not only against strangers, but even against our own. And Mark says, they took this counsel with the Herodians.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XL on Matthew XII, 1,2. B#54, pp. 259-260.

for the Icon: Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28

Saints of the week

27 November / 10 December — Nativity Fast - Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God, Protectress of the Russian Diaspora. On 8 September, 1295, on the day of the Nativity of the Most-Holy Mother of God, a small force of hunters from Rylsk came to hunt at the Tuskora river, 27 versts from Kursk. One of the hunters, an honorable and pious man, seeking prey in the woods, found a small icon lying face down on the root of a tree. He had barely lifted it to inspect it when the spot upon which the icon lay burst out with a strong spring of pure water. The icon turned out to be of the type referred to as the "Sign" of the Mother of God. The hunter who found the icon knew that this was no ordinary occurrence. He called his companions and together they built a small wooden chapel, into which they placed this icon. The residents of Rylsk, hearing of the newly-appeared icon of the Mother of God, began to visit it for veneration, and many miracles began to appear from it. In 1385 the Kursk region was again swept by the Tatars. They tried to burn down the chapel and its Icon, but the wooden structure would not burn. The priest who lived by the chapel, Fr. Bogolep, explained to them that the reason for this miracle was the Icon itself. The incensed Tatars hacked the Icon in half and tossed the pieces in different directions, then burned the chapel.

They took the priest prisoner and was forced to tend to Tatar flocks. Some time later he was ransomed by emissaries of the Muscovite Grand Duke who were on their way to the Golden Horde, and he returned to the place where the chapel had stood. After a long search, while praying and fasting, he found both halves of the holy Icon, placed them side by side, and they grew together seamlessly, exhibiting only something "like dew".

In 1676 the holy Icon traveled to the Don River for blessing the Don Cossack troops. In 1684 Tsars Ivan and Petr Alekseevich sent a copy of this Icon with the order that it accompany Orthodox troops into battle. In 1687 the holy Icon was sent to the "Great Army." In 1689 copies of the holy Icon were given to

the armies in the Crimean campaign. In 1812 a copy of the holy Icon was sent to Prince Kutuzov and the battling troops. Before his icon St. Seraphim of Sarov prayed and was healed.

On the night of 7-8 March, 1898, conspirator revolutionaries-atheists tried to blow up the Miracle-working Icon with a hellish bomb, but the Lord Jesus Christ glorified His Most-Pure Mother yet more, for despite the terrifying destruction in the cathedral surrounding the Icon, it remained untouched.

On 12 April 1918, the holy Icon was stolen from the cathedral of the Monastery of the Sign of the Mother of God and stripped of its ornamentation, but on 2 May it was found and returned to its place.

Finally, in 1919, while accompanying Bishop Feofan of Kursk and Oboyan' and some monks of the Monastery of the Sign, the holy Icon crossed the border to the neighborly Serbia. In 1920 it again, at the behest of General Wrangel, visited Russia at the Crimea and remained there until the final evacuation of the Russian Army in the first days of November, 1920. The holy Icon returned to Serbia, where it remained until 1944, when, together with the Synod of Bishops, it went abroad, to Munich (Bavaria) with Metropolitan Anastassy. In 1951 Metropolitan Anastassy moved from Munich to America. Since 1957 the Icon had resided in the main cathedral dedicated to it in the Synod of Bishops in New York. The holy Icon regularly travels to all the dioceses of the Russian diaspora

The Holy Martyr James the Persian - Born in the Persian town of Elapa, or Vilat, of Christian parents, he was brought up in the Christian faith and married a Christian wife. The Persian king, Yezdegeherd, loved James for his gifts and for his skill, and made him a noble at his court. Flattered by the king, James was deluded and offered sacrifice to idols, which the king also worshipped. His mother and wife, hearing of this, wrote him a reproachful letter in which they grieved over him as an apostate and one spiritually dead, begging him at the end of the letter to repent and return to Christ. Moved by this letter, James repented bitterly, and courageously confessed his faith in Christ the Lord before the king. The furious king condemned him to death, and added that his body was to be cut to pieces, little by little, until he breathed his last. The executioners fulfilled this command of the accursed king to the letter, and first cut off James's fingers, then his toes, his legs and arms, his shoulders and finally his head. During the entire process, the repentant martyr gave thanks to God. A fragrance came from his wounds as of cypress. Thus this wonderful man repented of his sin, and his soul went to Christ his God in the heavenly Kingdom. He suffered in about 400. His head is to be found in Rome, and a part of his relics in Portugal, where he is commemorated on May 22nd. St. Congar, bishop of Somerset; St. Fergus, bishop of Glamis; The Seventeen Holy Fathers Martyred in India; Our Holy Father Romanus the Wonderworker; Our Holy Father Pinuphrius; Our Holy Father Nathanael.

28 November / 11 December — Nativity Fast — Our Holy Father, the Martyr Stephen the New - As aforetime Hannah the mother of Samuel, so Anna the mother of Stephen prayed God to give her a son. Praying thus at one time in the Blachernae church in front of the icon of the most holy Mother of God, a light sleep fell on her, in which she saw the holy Virgin, radiant like the sun, and heard her voice: 'Woman, go in peace; in fulfilment of your prayer, you have a son in your womb.' Anna indeed conceived and bore a son, this holy Stephen. He received the monastic habit at the age of sixteen on Mount St Auxentius near Constantinople, at the hands of the elder John, from whom he learned divine wisdom and asceticism. When John entered into rest in the Lord, Stephen remained on that mountain in strict asceticism, taking on himself labour upon labour. His holiness drew many disciples to him. When the Emperor Constantine Copronymos began to persecute the icons even more ferociously than his foul father, Leo the Isaurian, Stephen showed himself to be a zealous defender of the veneration of the holy icons. The demented Emperor listened to various slanders against Stephen, and himself devised a number of intrigues, solely to break Stephen and get him out of the way. Stephen was exiled to the island of Proconnesus, and then taken to Constantinople, put in chains and cast into prison. There he met three hundred and forty-two captive monks, brought from all sides and thrown into prison for their veneration of icons. In the prison, they followed the whole order of church services as in a monastery. The wicked Emperor condemned Stephen to death. The saint foresaw his death forty days before, and took his leave of the brethren. The Emperor's servants took him from the prison and, beating and buffeting him, dragged him through the streets of Constantinople, calling on all who were on the Emperor's side to stone this 'enemy of the Emperor'. One of the heretics aimed a blow at the saint's head with a piece of wood, and the saint breathed his last. As Stephen the Protomartyr suffered at the hands of the Jews, so this Stephen suffered at the hands of the iconoclast heretics. This glorious soldier of Christ suffered in the year 767, at the age of fifty- three, and was crowned with unfading glory. The Holy New Martyr Christos; Our Holy Mother Anna; The Holy and Devout Emperor Maurice.

‡ **Scripture Readings - 2 Timothy 2:20-26; Luke 19:37-44** ‡

29 November / 12 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Martyr Paramon, and 370 others - In Asian Bithynia, the governor, Aquilinus, was ferociously persecuting Christians. He once seized three hundred and seventy Christians and took them with him in bonds to some place where there was a temple to the god Poseidon. Here, the wicked governor tried to force them to offer sacrifice to idols.

Although he threatened with death any who refused to obey his command, not a single one of the Christians submitted to it. At that time, there passed along the road running beside the temple a respected man called Paramon. He stopped beside the group of bound men and learned what was happening, then cried out: 'Oh how many innocent and righteous men does this foul governor desire to slaughter because they will not bow down to his dumb and dead idols? Paramon then continued on his way, and the furious governor sent servants to kill him. They caught up with him and seized him, first piercing his tongue with a thorn and then stripping him and stabbing him all over. Holy Paramon, with prayer in his heart, gave his soul into God's hands. After that, these three hundred and seventy martyrs, great sons of God and innocent lambs, were beheaded with the sword and thus entered into the immortal Kingdom of Christ the Lord. They suffered in the year 250. Our Holy Father Acacius of Sinai; The Holy Martyr Dionysius Bishop of Corinth; St Tiridates King of Armenia; The Holy Martyr Apollonius.

St. Brendan of Birr - Friend and brother monk with Saint Brendan the Navigator at Clonard abbey. Spiritual student of Saint Finian. Founded the monastery at Birr in central Ireland c.540, and served as its abbot. Friend and advisor of Saint Columba. At Brendan's death, Columba had a vision of the abbot's soul being carried away by angels.

Tropar of Saint Brendan of Birr, Tone 8: Most glorious ascetic and chief of Ireland's Prophets, O Father Brendan, thou wast a bright beacon in the western isle guiding many to salvation. At thy heavenly birthday the Angels rejoiced and miraculously announced their joy to our Father Columba. The prayers of the righteous avail much for us sinners. Wherefore O Saint, pray to God for us that He will find us a place in the Mansions of the Blest.

Saint Sadwen of Wales - Brother of Saint Illtyd. Disciple of Saint Cadfan. Sixth century hermit. Several Welsh churches are dedicated to him.

Tropar of St Sadwen, tone 8: The remoteness of the Welsh mountains was thy desert, O Father Sadwen, where thou didst serve God in fasting and humility./ May thy continual intercession avail for us sinners that our souls may be saved.

‡ **Scripture Readings - 2 Timothy 3:16-4:4; Luke 19:45-48** ‡

30 November / 13 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Apostle Andrew, the First-Called - He was the son of Jonah and brother of Peter, born in Bethsaida and a fisherman by profession. He was first a disciple of St John the Baptist, but, when John pointed to the Lord Jesus and said: 'Behold the Lamb of God' (Jn. 1:36), St Andrew left his first teacher and followed Christ. After that, Andrew brought his brother Peter to the Lord. After the descent of the Holy Spirit, it fell to the lot of the first of Christ's apostles, St Andrew, to preach the Gospel in Byzantium and Thrace, then in the lands along the Danube, in Russia and around the Black Sea, and finally in Epirus, Greece and the Peloponnese, where he suffered. In Byzantium, he installed St Stachys as its first bishop; in Kiev he raised the Cross on high and prophesied a Christian future for the Russian people; in Thrace, Epirus, Greece and the Peloponnese, he brought many people to the Faith and gave them bishops and priests. In the city of Patras he performed many wonders in the name of Christ and brought many to the Lord, among whom were the brother and wife of the imperial governor, Aegeatus. Aegeatus, infuriated by this, put Andrew to torture and then crucified him. While he was still alive on the cross, the Apostle of Christ taught the Christians who were gathered round him. The people wanted to take him down from the cross, but he would not let them. Finally, the Apostle prayed to God and a strange radiance surrounded him. This light lasted for half an hour and, when it disappeared, the Apostle gave his holy soul into God's hands. Thus the first-called Apostle, who first of the twelve Great Apostles came to know the Lord and followed Him, finished his earthly course. St Andrew suffered for his Lord in the year 62. His relics were translated to Constantinople, but his head was later taken to Rome and one hand to Moscow. In the 3rd century some of his relics were taken by a monk, Regulus, to Scotland and given to Oengus, King of the Picts on the eve of a mighty battle in 747 and that night the king and his army saw a huge St. Andrew's Cross blazed in fire across the face of the heavens; so they went forth to battle and triumphed. After this St. Andrew became the Patron Saint of Scotland. His remains were taken to the ancient Pictish city of Muckross and deposited there. That city is the modern St. Andrews. St. Frumentius, Enlightener of Abyssinia;

St Tudwal, bishop in Wales & Brittany - A Welsh monk Saint Tudwal (died c. 564) was one of the seven founder Saints of Brittany. He travelled to Ireland to learn the scriptures, then became a hermit on what is now called Saint Tudwal's Island East. St Tudwal later emigrated to Brittany, settling in Lan Pabu with 72 followers, where he established a large monastery. Tudwal was made Bishop of Tréguier on the insistence of Childebert I, king of the Franks. Tudwal is shown in iconography as a bishop holding a dragon.

Tropar of St Tudwal, tone 1: Having left thy native Wales/ thou didst serve God in Brittany, O Father Tudwal,/ and both by thy zealous preaching and thy piety thou didst win souls for Christ./ Wherefore we hasten to thee, O radiant Hierarch,/ that thou wouldst intercede for us that our souls may be saved.

‡ **Scripture Readings - Matthew 4:18-23 (Matins Gospel); 2 Timothy 4:9-22; Luke 20:1-8; 1 Corinthians 4:9-16 (Apostle); John 1:35-51 (Apostle)** ‡

1 / 14 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Prophet Nahum - Born of the tribe of Simeon in a place called Elkosh, on the further side of the Jordan, he lived seven hundred years before Christ and foretold the fall of Nineveh two hundred years after the Prophet Jonah. The people of Nineveh had repented after hearing Jonah's preaching, and God had protected them and not destroyed them. But, with the passage of time, they came to forget God's mercy and turned again to evil. Nahum foretold their doom, warning them that, if they showed no repentance, they would receive no protection. The entire city was so utterly destroyed by earthquake, flood and fire that its location is no longer known. Holy Nahum lived for forty-five years before going to his rest in the Lord, leaving us a small book of his true and genuine prophecies. St. Philaret the Merciful.

Saint Philaret the Almsgiver - Philaret was from the village of Amnia in Paphlagonia. Early in life, Philaret was a very wealthy man, but by distributing abundant alms to the poor he himself became extremely poor. However, he was not afraid of poverty, and, not heeding the complaints of his wife and children, he continued his charitable works with hope in God, Who said: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7). Once, while he was plowing in the field, a man came to him and complained that one of his oxen had died in the harness and that he was unable to plow with only one ox. Philaret then unharnessed one of his oxen and gave it to him. He even gave his remaining horse to a man who was summoned to go to war. He gave away the calf of his last cow, and when he saw how the cow pined for her missing calf, and the calf for the cow, he called the man and gave him the cow too. And thus the aged Philaret was left without food in an empty house. But he prayed to God and placed his hope in Him. And God did not abandon the righteous one to be put to shame in his hope. At that time the Empress Irene reigned with her young son, Constantine. According to the custom of that time, the empress sent men throughout the whole empire to seek the best and most distinguished maiden to whom she could wed her son, the emperor. By God's providence, these men happened to stay overnight in Philaret's house, and they saw his most beautiful and modest granddaughter Maria, the daughter of his daughter Hypatia, and took her to Constantinople. The emperor was well pleased with her, married her, and moved Philaret and all his family to the capital, giving him great honors and riches. Philaret did not become proud as a result of this unexpected good fortune, but, thankful to God, he continued to perform good works even more than he had before, and thus he continued until his death. At the age of ninety he summoned his children, blessed them, and instructed them to cleave to God and to God's law, and with his clairvoyant spirit he prophesied to all of them how they would live out this life, as once had Jacob. After that he went to the Rodolfia Monastery and gave up his soul to God. At his death his face shone like the sun, and after his death an unusual, sweet fragrance came forth from his body and miracles took place at his relics. This righteous man entered into rest in the year 797. His wife, Theosevia, and all his children and grandchildren lived a God-pleasing life and reposed in the Lord.

‡ **Scripture Readings - Titus 1:5-2:1; Luke 20:9-18** ‡

2 / 15 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Prophet Habakkuk - The son of Sappan, of the tribe of Simeon, he prophesied six hundred years before Christ, in the time of King Manasseh, and foretold the devastation of Jerusalem. When Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, attacked Jerusalem, Habakkuk went into the land of the Ishmaelites, whence he returned to Jerusalem and made his living working on the land. One day, when he was carrying lunch to the workers in the fields, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him and said: 'Go, carry the meal that thou hast into Babylon, unto Daniel who is in the lion's den.' Habakkuk replied: 'Lord, I never saw Babylon, neither do I know where the den is' (Daniel 14:33 in the Greek text. It is omitted in the Hebrew Bible, and is to be found in the Apocrypha under Bel and the Dragon). Then the angel seized him by the hair and carried him straight to Babylon, over an immense distance, to the lion's den where Daniel had been cast by King Cyrus because he would not worship idols. 'O Daniel, Daniel,' cried Habakkuk, 'take the dinner which God hath sent thee!' And Daniel took it and ate. Then the angel of God again took hold of Habakkuk and carried him back to his field in Judea. Habakkuk preached and prophesied about the liberation of Jerusalem and the coming of Christ. He entered into rest in great old age and was buried at Keilah. His relics were discovered during the reign of Theodosius the Great. The Holy Martyr Myrope; St Uros, King of Serbia; Our Holy Father Athanasius, Recluse of the Kiev Caves; St Jesse.

‡ **Scripture Readings - Titus 1:15-2:1-10; Luke 20:19-26** ‡

3 / 16 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Prophet Zephaniah (Sophonias) - Born on the mountain of Savarat and of the tribe of Simeon, he lived and prophesied in the seventh century before Christ, in the time of Josiah the pious King of Judah, and was a contemporary of the Prophet Jeremiah. With his great humility, pure mind and constant striving after God, he was found worthy of seeing into the future. He foretold the day of the wrath of God and the punishment of Gaza, Ashkalon, Ashdod, Ekron, Nineveh, Jerusalem and Egypt. He looked upon Jerusalem as 'a filthy, polluted and oppressing city ... her princes within her are like roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves ... her prophets are light and treacherous persons; her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the Law (Zeph. 3:1-4). Foreseeing the coming of the Messiah, he cried out with rapture: 'Sing, O daughter of Sion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!' (3:14). This seer of secrets and mysteries went to his rest in the place where he was born, there to await the general

Resurrection and his reward from God. St John the Silent (the Hesychast); The Hieromartyr Theodore, Archbishop of Alexandria; Our Holy Father Theodulus; Our Holy Father Sava of Storozhev;

St. Lucius -in the days of Good King Lucius came a revival. Llewrug Mawr, Llewrug the Great (grandson of Saint Cyllinus and great-grandson of Caractacus), nicknamed Llever Mawr or the great luminary (hence his latinised name of Lux or Lucius), was king in Britain in the middle and towards the end of the 2nd century. He increased the Light that the first missionaries, the disciples of Christ, had brought, by sending emissaries to Eleutherius, Bishop of Rome, requesting him to send missionaries to Britain. The Welsh Triads tell us that Eleutherius, in response, sent Dyfan and Fagan, Medwy and Elfan, all of them British names, in AD 167. These missionaries journeyed through Britain and came to Glastonbury. There, God leading them (wrote William of Malmesbury), they found an old church built, as 'twas said, by the hands of Christ's disciples, and prepared by God Himself for the salvation of souls, which Church the Heavenly Builder Himself showed to be consecrated by many miraculous deeds, and many Mysteries of healing.... And they afterwards pondered the Heavenly message that the Lord had specially chosen this spot before all the rest of Britain as the place where His Mother's name might be invoked. They also found the whole story in ancient writings, how the Holy Apostles, having been scattered throughout the world, St. Philip coming into France with a host of disciples sent twelve of them into Britain to preach, and that there, taught by revelation they constructed the said chapel which the Son of God afterwards dedicated to the honour of His Mother; and, that to these same twelve, three kings, pagan though they were, gave twelve portions of land for their sustenance. Moreover, they found a written record of their doings, and on that account they loved this spot above all others, and they also, in memory of the first twelve, chose twelve of their own, and made them live on the island with the approval of King Lucius. These twelve thereafter abode there in divers spots as anchorites - in the same spots, indeed, which the first twelve inhabited (traditionally in huts round the wonderful Chalice Well at the foot of St. Michael's Tor). Yet they used to meet together continuously in the Old Church in order to celebrate Divine worship more devoutly; just as the three pagan kings had long ago granted the said island with its surroundings to the twelve former disciples of Christ, so the said Phagan and Deruvian (Dyfan) obtained it from King Lucius for these their twelve companions and for others to follow thereafter. And thus, many succeeding these, but always twelve in number, abode in the said island during many years up to the coming of St. Patrick, the apostle of the Irish.

St. Birinus, (600-50) - Ordained in Rome. Bishop in Genoa, Italy. Sent by Pope Honorius I as a missionary to Britain in 634. Preached with the pagan West Saxons where he had great success, converting King Cynegils and many of his subjects. Bishop of Dorchester, England. Founded many churches in the region. Known for a great devotion to the Eucharist.

‡ Scripture Readings - Ephesians 1:16-23; Luke 12:32-40 ‡

REFLECTION

When the executioners severed the thumb of St. James's right hand, he said: ``Even a vine is pruned in this manner, so that in time a young branch may grow." At the severing of his second finger, he said: ``Receive also, O Lord, the second branch of Thy sowing." At the severing of his third finger, he said: ``I bless the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." At the severing of his fourth finger, he said: ``O Thou who acceptest the praise of the four beasts [symbols of the four evangelists], accept the suffering of the fourth finger." At the severing of the fifth finger, he said: ``May my rejoicing be fulfilled as that of the five wise virgins at the wedding feast." During the severing of the sixth finger, he said: ``Thanks be to Thee, O Lord, Who at the sixth hour stretched out Thy most pure arms on the Cross, that Thou hast made me worthy to offer Thee my sixth finger." At the severing of the seventh finger, he said: ``Like David who praised Thee seven times daily, I praise Thee through the seventh finger severed for Thy sake." At the severing of the eighth finger, he said: ``On the eighth day Thou Thyself, O Lord, wast circumcised." At the severing of the ninth finger, he said: ``At the ninth hour, Thou didst commend Thy spirit into the hands of Thy Father, O my Christ, and I offer Thee thanks during the suffering of my ninth finger." At the severing of the tenth finger, he said: ``On a ten-stringed harp I sing to Thee, O God, and thank Thee that Thou hast made me worthy to endure the severing of the ten fingers of my two hands, for the Ten Commandments written on two tablets." Oh, what wonderful faith and love! Oh, the noble soul of this knight of Christ!

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the wonderful Paradise of God (Genesis 2): 1. How most beautiful was Paradise, both within and without; 2. How all living things in Paradise were unconditionally submissive to man and man to God; 3. How most beautiful were the first man and woman in Paradise, conscious of God's presence and of God's authority.

HOMILY on the perfect man

... Till we all come in the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).

The unity of the Faith, brethren, and the knowledge of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ the Savior, unites two men into one man, a thousand people into one man, and many millions of people into one man. The unity of Faith in Christ the Lord, and the true Orthodox knowledge of Christ the Lord, unites men more strongly than blood, more strongly than language, more strongly than all external circumstances and material bonds. When many souls think as one and the same, will as one and the same, and desire as one and the same, then these many souls are as one soul, one great and mighty soul. Physical differences in this case mean little, and are hardly to be taken into consideration. Thus, the same souls are built up into a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The parts of the perfect whole are themselves perfect. Every Christian soul is a part of the perfect man. Christ is the Perfect Man of Whom the Church is the Mystical Body. He fills everyone who believes in Him with Himself, according to the measure of the stature of each. He is the fullness beyond all fullness, the living fount that flows and fills every worthy space. Inasmuch as a man empties himself of everything that is not of Christ, Christ will enter into him and fill him accordingly.

O my brethren, deep humility is needed in addition to strong faith, so that the Living Water may be poured into us. Even in nature, we see that water easily irrigates the lowlands. So, the more lowly our humiliation is before the Lord Jesus, the more willingly He pours Himself into us, irrigates us with His life-giving Self, and fills us as His vessel with the fullness of His immortality.

O Lord Jesus, Thou fullness of life, wisdom, beauty and sweetness, help us to humble ourselves before Thy Divine Majesty, that we may be made worthy of Thy visitation.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Words of Wisdom

The Most Pure Mother of God was glorified with special honor in heaven and on earth, and She, even in the days of the mocking of the holy Icons, manifested through them so many wondrous miracles that even today we remember them with contrition. The hymn "In Thee All Creation Rejoices, O Thou Who Art Full of Grace," and the Icon of the Three Hands remind us of the healing of St. John Damascene before this Icon; the depiction of the Iveron Icon of the Mother of God reminds us of the miraculous deliverance from enemies by this Icon, which had been thrown in the sea by a widow who was unable to save it.

No persecutions against those who venerated the Mother of God and all that is bound up with the memory of Her could lessen the love of Christians for their Intercessor. The rule was established that every series of hymns in the Divine services should end with a hymn or verse in honor of the Mother of God (the so-called "Theotokia"). Many times in the year Christians in all corners of the world gather together in church, as before they gathered together, to praise Her, to thank Her for the benefactions She has shown, and to beg mercy.

St. John Maximovitch

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