

The Meeting of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ / Forgiveness (Cheesefare) Sunday 1 / 14 February



The Sunday of Forgiveness is the last Sunday prior to the commencement of Great Lent. During the pre-Lenten period, the services of the Church include hymns from the Triodion, a liturgical book that contains the services from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the tenth before Pascha (Easter), through Great and Holy Saturday. On the Sunday of Forgiveness focus is placed on the exile of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, and event that shows us how far we have fallen in sin and separated ourselves from God. At the onset of Great Lent and a period of intense fasting, this Sunday reminds us of our need for God's forgiveness and guides our hearts, minds, and spiritual efforts on returning to Him in repentance.

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 3: Let the heavens rejoice / let the earth be glad / for the Lord has shown strength with His arm! / He has trampled down death by death! / He has become the first-born of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell / and has granted the world great mercy.

Troparion of the Meeting tone 1: Rejoice, thou who art full of grace,/ Mother of God and Virgin,/ for from thee arose the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God,/ to give light to those in darkness./ Rejoice thou also, righteous Elder, who didst take in thine arms the Redeemer of our souls,/ Who also gives us the grace of resurrection.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 3: On this day thou didst rise from the tomb, O Merciful One, / leading us from the gates of death / On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices. / With the prophets and the patriarchs they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Thy power.

Kontakion of the meeting tone 1: Thou Who didst sanctify the Virgin's womb by Thy birth/ and bless Simeon's hands as was fitting/ hast now come to us and saved us, O Christ our God./ But grant peace in the midst of wars to Thy community,/ and strengthen the Church which Thou hast loved,/ O only lover of mankind.

Kondak to Cheese-fare Sunday, Tone 6: O Thou guide unto wisdom, bestower of prudence, instructor of the foolish and defender of the poor: Establish and grant understanding unto my heart, O Master. Grant me speech, O Word of the Father; for behold, I shall not keep my lips from crying unto Thee: O Merciful One, have mercy on me who have fallen.

Epistle: St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans 13: 11 — 14: 4

11. And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in licentiousness and lewdness, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts.

Romans 14: 1 Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. 2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. 4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE ANOTHER'S SERVANT?

Why do we usurp God's right to judge? ...It is for God alone to judge, to justify or to condemn. He knows the state of each one of us and our capacities, our deviations and our gifts, our constitution, and our preparedness ...according to the knowledge that He alone has ...And how do you know what tears he has shed about it before God? You may well know about the sin, but you do not know about the repentance.

St. Dorotheos of Gaza. Discourse on Refusal to Judge our Neighbour. B#45, pp. 133,135.

Second Epistle Hebrews 7: 7-17

The Gospel According To St. Matthew 6: 14 -21

14 The Lord said: if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. 16 Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward. 17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face, 18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. 19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

This is the very beginning of Great Lent. For whatever we begin in life, we always compose some kind of plan of action, a program of what we have to accomplish and in what order. But here we don't have to do this; today's Gospel gives us this program. Earlier, the Holy Church was more often teaching us, but now she is requiring actions from us. Just let us examine the present Gospel attentively, and we will see how simple, how accessible for each of us, and at the same time, how comprehensive these rules are.

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mt. 6:14-15). Therefore, what is the real purpose of Great Lent? Here it is: so that our Heavenly Father will forgive us our sins. And how do we achieve this? Forgive people their sins. Let us start here with this. This is the very first thing.

Secondly, "moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast.... But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret" (Mt. 6:16-18). And so let us fast, but not for the sake of people, but before God, and not despondently, but in spiritual happiness.

And thirdly, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. . .but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Mt. 6:19-20). This determines all our activities, gives direction to our whole life.

And finally, the last thing: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mt. 6:21). Here is the purpose of our life! That our heart be in God, filled with God, so that God will become our treasure. But to learn this is possible only in the Church. And this is so important for us that it is worth the labour, and the fasting, and standing longer in church, and praying more at home. For only then will we be able to cry out with joy: "Christ is Risen!" and to answer those greeting us: "In Truth He is Risen!"

THE RITE OF FORGIVENESS

Brothers and sisters! What the Holy Church asks us to perform right now is no longer a thought or a feeling, but an action, a deed. Thoughts and feelings have been cultivated in us for the past weeks. In fact this is the way it always happens: thought gives birth to feeling, and feeling gives birth to action. And this action is of special importance. Listen: "If ye forgive not men...neither will your [Heavenly] Father forgive you" (Mt. 6:15). This means that our fasting and going to church and prostrations, in fact all our devotions, will be in vain.

That's how important this first step is. But it is not easy. To do it in words only, just for the sake of decency, for the sake of formality, might not be difficult. But what is the good of that? However, really to make this step, to recognise that we are worse than others, worse than everyone, truly guilty before everyone (and after all, this is how it is: each of us is guilty before everyone, in everything, and for everything), to come to this realisation is very, very difficult. And to consider the guilt of another before us as nothing, as if it did not exist, and maybe was even provoked by us—this is still more difficult. Even in the Lives of the

Saints we read examples of how great strivers and confessors were not able to do this, and thereby ruined everything. And even more for us sinners is the special help of God needed to forgive and to ask forgiveness sincerely, from our whole heart, to draw out of it our self-love, our self-justifying "I." But we have to do this, the Lord requires it of us, the Lord is waiting. Without this effort within ourselves we cannot begin Lent. So let us ask for forgiveness and forgive from our whole heart. And here, as the first one, I ask you: Forgive me!

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei.

Second Gospel Luke 2: 22-40

Saints of the Week

1 / 14 February — The Holy Martyr Tryphon; The Holy Martyrs Perpetua, Felicitas and Satyrus; Our Holy Father Peter of Galateia; St. Cinnia of Ulster; St. Crewenna, who traveled with St. Breacca; St. Kinnia, virgin, veiled by St. Patrick; **St. Brigit (Brigid), abs & her disciple St. Darlugdach, nun** - St Brigit lived at the time when Christ's Holy Church was just being revealed in Ireland. In those days, the country was still wild and many of the kings and warriors were brutal and cruel. The power of God's Grace to change people and even whole lands, was shone forth in this holy saint. For, St Brigit is remembered above all else for her holy love, compassion and charity. By her Christ-like example, she taught kings to be merciful, the greedy to be charitable and the pagans to seek Christ. Brigit was born in the year of our Lord 436, at Tirconnell, Ireland. Her mother was a slave, her father, the master. Before St Brigit was born, her mother was sold to a different master, a pagan magician. Brigit's mother was a Christian, strong in faith, and she worked hard to raise her child according to the Gospel. Soon after St Brigit's birth, the magician (wizard) moved to the province of Connaught, taking his household with him. Here, Brigit's mother, whose name was Broiksech, became close to the Christian bishop, Mel. St Brigit herself was raised under the careful and loving eye of this holy bishop, and she grew strong in the Lord under the guidance of her elder. Very early in life, St Brigit showed special gifts of God's Grace, and several people were healed of illnesses through her pure prayers. Moreover, the saint was a hard worker, and she did every task to the glory of God. The people of the district had a special reverence for this blessed child, because of her open-hearted love for everyone and every creature. Now, in the old Irish law, if a master bought a slave woman who was expecting a child, he bought only the mother, and the child was born a free person. When the saint grew older, she wanted to go to visit her father, Dubthach, who lived in the province of Munster. The magician agreed to help her make the journey, and she went to her father's house. To her great joy, St Brigit soon brought her father to a true understanding of the Gospel. The blessed maiden worked on her father's estate, and continued to struggle in fasting and prayer. Once, the council of the bishops of Ireland was to be held in the town of Moy Liffey in nearby Leinster County. A woman in St Brigit's neighbourhood had some need to take her problems to the bishops for their advice and help, and she asked St Brigit to go with her on the journey. There was a certain holy bishop named Ibhair at the council, and it was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, that a blessed maiden was coming to the council. When St Brigit entered the council room, Bishop Ibhair rose to his feet and glorified God. "This is the maiden whom I foresaw," he said. Then, he blessed and consecrated the chosen virgin. Shortly after this, St Brigit went to visit her mother, who was still in slavery. The mother was very ill, but she still had to work hard in her master's dairy. The young saint took over her mother's duties, and with her hard work and prayers, the dairy soon began to produce more butter than ever before. St Brigit had a custom of always dividing the butter into thirteen portions, one each commemorating the twelve apostles, and a larger portion in honour of Christ the Saviour. This last portion, she always gave away to the poor people in the area. Soon, the magician and his wife heard of these things and they came to look over their dairy. They saw that it was now clean and well run. The calves were in good health, and there was much butter being sold every day. The magician's wife, however, out of greed, demanded of Brigit that she fill a large container with butter then and there, so the mistress could take it home with her. There was only a small quantity of butter left at that time, because the saint had given the extra butter away to poor people. The mistress became angry and began to scold and mock; the blessed one. At this, the saint brought what butter there was in the church, and began to pray to God, making the sign of the Cross upon herself and over the butter. The merciful Lord heard the prayers of his servant, and when she began to take the butter out of the churn, there was more than there had been. Indeed, by God's Grace, there was even more than was needed to fill the container. When the magician saw this, he was amazed. He asked to be taught about this Christ Whom St Brigit and her mother adored. Moreover, he set St Brigit's mother free. After he had been taught the Christian faith, the magician and his whole household were baptized into Christ's Holy Church, and he gave away not only butter, but also cows, to the poor, and completely changed his way of life. St Brigit returned to her father's house, and though he loved her, he was often angry with her. The saint was in the habit of giving away something to every beggar or poor person who asked for her help. In this way, Brigit was giving away all her father's food, property and wealth. In despair, St Brigit's father took her to the fortress of King Dunlaing of Leinster, and asked him to take her into his service as a worker. It was the law in those days, that no-one could carry his sword into the king's house. So, when Dubthach started to enter the king's house, he took off his sword and gave it to St Brigit to hold, until she was sent for. When the king asked why St Brigit's father wanted to be rid of her, Dubthach replied, "She is a good and hard worker, but she is giving everything of mine away to those who do not work, and soon I will be poor." The king told him to bring in Brigit, but when Dubthach came to St Brigit, he noticed that she no longer held his sword. "Where is my sword?" he asked in alarm? "Father, a poor leper came and asked help of me. I had no gold, so I gave him your sword, that he might sell it." St Brigit was brought before the king, and her father angrily told him what had happened with the sword. The king asked in surprise: "Why did you take your father's wealth, and even his sword, and give it away?" St Brigit replied: "The Virgin's Son knows. If I had your power and wealth and all of Leinster, I would give it all to the Lord of the poor." The king was amazed. Then Brigit boldly told him and all those present about the Gospel of Christ and the life God commands of all those who would obtain the Heavenly Kingdom. The king glorified Christ because of the love and compassion of His saint, and sent her away in peace. Not long after this, a certain man came and asked for the hand of Brigit in marriage. Her father was happy to give her away, and the family encouraged her to marry the man. He was wealthy and had a good reputation, and everyone thought he would be a good husband. The saint, however, had already decided to become a nun. She replied to all, "The Son of the Virgin knows. Nothing is good for us if it harms our souls." St Brigit soon went down to the cathedral of Telcha Mide, to Bishop Mel, her elder, with eight other virgins to be tonsured. When they came to church on the day of their tonsure, St Brigit, out of humility, stood at the end of the line, thinking to herself that the others were all more worthy than she. When Bishop Mel saw the merciful saint standing last of all, he called her forth, and said: "Blessed are the least, for they shall be first." He tonsured St Brigit first and set her over the rest as Abbess. She later founded the convent at Kildare. For many years, then, St Brigit struggled and guided her nuns. God granted her many gifts of Grace. People from across the whole country came to the saint for healing, comfort and for help. The saint knew and often helped the great apostle, St Patrick in his tireless labour of enlightening Ireland. St Brigit was renowned for her charity and mercifulness.

The number of the poor that she fed is known only to God, and she saved many from prison and death. St Brigit lived for eighty-eight God-pleasing years. As the time of her repose drew near, Bishop Nin, called by the people, "The Pure-Hand," arrived from Rome. He came to visit St Brigit, and found her near death. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy and gave her the Holy Communion. Soon after, the saint gave up her holy soul into the hands of Christ the Saviour, to Whom be all glory and adoration, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen! The great St Columba (Colum-cille), who was the apostle to the Scots in Scotland, when he was sailing to his monastery on the Isle of Iona, was caught in a great storm. He called upon Christ and His saint Brigit to calm the storm, and his prayers were answered. After that, he wrote an ode to the saint, from which the following troparion is composed: Pure virgin and flame of the Lord, / O Brigit, guide to the Eternal Kingdom, / deliver us, by thy prayers, from the throngs of demons and the storms of life, / and pray to Christ God that our souls be saved.

2 / 15 February — The Meeting of Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ (transferred to February 1/14 in 2010) — On the fortieth day after His birth, the most holy Virgin brought her divine Son to the Temple in Jerusalem, to consecrate Him to the Lord and to purify herself according to the Law (Lev. 12:2-7, Exod. 12:2). And though neither the one nor the other was necessary, nevertheless the Lawgiver would not in any way transgress the Law which He had given through His servant and prophet Moses. At that time Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was serving his turn as high priest in the Temple. He stood the Virgin Mary in the place for maidens, not that for married women. On this occasion, there were two very special people present: the elder, Simeon, and Anna the daughter of Phanuel. The righteous elder took his Messiah up in his arms and said: 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.' Simeon also spoke the following words of the Christ Child: 'Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.' Then Anna, who had from her youth served God in the Temple in fasting and prayer, and who herself recognised the Messiah, praised the Lord and made known to the inhabitants of Jerusalem the coming of the awaited One. But the Pharisees, present in the Temple and seeing and hearing all that passed, and being vexed with Zacharias for having stood the Virgin Mary in the place for maidens, made this known to King Herod. Believing this to be the new King of whom the star-followers from the East had spoken, Herod quickly sent to have Jesus killed.

But in the meantime the holy family had already escaped from the city and set out for Egypt, under the direction of an angel of God. This day has been celebrated from the very earliest times, but its solemn celebration dates from 544, in the time of the Emperor Justinian. The Holy New Martyr Jordan — Candlemas — Blessing of Fruit

3 / 16 February — Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — St Simeon the Host of God; The Holy Martyrs Adrian and Eubulus.

Saint Nicholas of Japan - In the world Ivan Dmitryevich Kasatkin, Saint Nicholas was born on 1 August 1836 in Smolensk province, the son of a deacon. His mother died when he was very young. Ivan Dmitryevich was always very serious in church. He attended the Smolensk Theological Seminary where he excelled in his studies, particularly in languages. As he approached the end of his studies he offered fervent prayer to God seeking to know what path his life should take. At that time the priest serving the Russian Consulate in Hakodate, Japan, took ill and was forced to return to Russia. A notice was posted at the Academy seeking candidates for the position. Filled with a strong desire to preach the Gospel to those who had not heard it, Ivan asked to be sent to Japan. His superiors were hesitant to send the talented Ivan to the Consulate position feeling that it would be a waste of his skills, but Ivan convinced them that he would not simply carry out his duties at the Consulate but would devote much time to missionary work. Thus was tonsured with the name Nicholas in 1860, ordained, and left for Japan. What labours awaited the saint in Japan! Eight long years he studied the Japanese language, literature, history, customs, philosophy. He laboured at translating the Gospel into Japanese, the services, the catechism, and only after eight years did he acquire his first disciple, a pagan priest who at first wanted to kill him. Facing his assailant, Father Nicholas asked the priest - a man named Sawabe - if he was acquainted with Christian doctrine. Mr Sawabe replied that he was not, but that he knew the doctrines to be evil. Father Nicholas questioned him again: "How can you be sure of that? Before making such an assertion, ought you not to examine my religion to see whether or not it is so hateful as you suppose?" Mr Sawabe agreed, and Father Nicholas began to explain the tenets of the Christian faith. Mr Sawabe became interested, took notes, and asked if he could return for daily instruction. He was later baptised with the name Paul. Then there began the struggle for each Japanese soul, amidst constant danger of being killed by pagan fanatics. There was joy over the first small Japanese Orthodox community, then joy over the first Japanese priest, then the construction of the cathedral, the school for catechists, and finally - recognition as a diocese, in essence, a local church. It was in fact Paul Sawabe who became the first Japanese priest, ordained in 1875. In 1878 five more priests were ordained to minister to the Japanese flock which by then numbered about 4,000. Then, in 1880, Father Nicholas was summoned to Russia and on March 30 he was consecrated bishop in the Holy Trinity Cathedral of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra. On his return to Japan Bishop Nicholas began to devote even more time to liturgical translations. He considered the holding of the divine services in Japanese as one of the conditions for the successful spreading of Orthodoxy since the entire majesty, wealth and depth of Christian thought was contained in the Orthodox divine services and had to be revealed to the members of the Japanese Church. To this end he faithfully spent four hours a night over the last thirty years of his life. Bishop Nicholas reposed on February 3, 1912. His funeral was the largest ever of a foreigner to be held in Tokyo. By the time of his repose, there were 35,000 native believers, 32 priests, 7 deacons, 15 choir directors, 121 lay preachers, a cathedral, 96 churches, and 265 chapels. To think that there had been no native believers when the young Father Nicholas arrived in Japan in 1860! There are no accounts of miracles attributed to Saint Nicholas. His "miracle" is evident in his efforts as a modern apostle who brought Orthodoxy to Japan and established a Church which continues to prosper to this day with some 30,000 Japanese Orthodox faithful, over forty parishes, and between two to three hundred converts made every year. For these labours in May 1993 the Synod of Bishops of the ROCA resolved to recognise Archbishop Nicholas as a saint, along with Metropolitan Innocent of Moscow and Archbishop John of Shanghai and San Francisco. The service of glorification of Saints Innocent and Nicholas took place on 17/30 January 1994; at Chester, St. Werburga, virgin; in Cornwall, St. Ila (Ives),

virgin & martyr; in Ireland, St. Caellainn, virgin; St., Werburga of Mercia, widow, abbess (ca700); St. Colman MacDuach, bishop of Connaught; St. Laurence of Canterbury, bishop (619).

4 / 17 February — Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — Our Holy Father Isidore of Pelusium - He was an Egyptian, the son of eminent parents and a kinsman of the Patriarchs of Alexandria Theophilus and Cyril. Completing his secular studies, he renounced his riches and worldly standing and gave himself wholly to the spiritual life for the love of Christ. He was a great and ardent interpreter and defender of the Orthodox faith. The historian Nicephorus states that St Isidore wrote more than 10,000 letters to various people, in which he reprimanded one, advised another, consoled a third, instructed a fourth. 'It is more important to be proficient in good works than in golden-tongued preaching', he writes in one letter. In another, he says: 'If a man wishes his virtues to appear great, let him regard them as small and then they will be truly shown to be great.' The first and fundamental rule for Isidore was first do and then teach, after the example of the Lord Jesus. At a time when St John Chrysostom was undergoing persecution and the whole world was divided into two camps, one for and one against this great pillar of Orthodoxy, St Isidore stood on the side of Chrysostom. He wrote to Patriarch Theophilus, saying what a great light Chrysostom was in the Church and begging that the hatred of him should cease. He lived long and laboured greatly, glorifying Christ the Lord in his life and his writings, and entered into the Kingdom of Christ in about 450; Our Holy Father Nicolas the Confessor; The Holy New Martyr Joseph; St. Aldate, hieromartyr of Gloucester, England (6th c) ; in Scotland, St. Modan, ab of Melrose.

5 / 18 February — Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — The Holy Martyr Agatha - This glorious virgin and martyr for Christ was born in the Sicilian town of Palermo of noble and prosperous parents. When the Emperor Decius launched a persecution of Christians, St Agatha was arrested and brought to judgement before Quintian the judge. He saw Agatha's beauty and desired her for his wife. When he suggested this to her, she replied that she was the bride of Christ and could not be faithless to her Betrothed. The judge condemned her to cruel torture: Agatha was flogged, mocked, bound to a tree and beaten till the blood flowed. After that, the judge again urged her to deny Christ and so escape further torture, to which Christ's bride replied: 'These tortures are of great help to me. As wheat cannot come to the granary until it is cleansed of its chaff, so my soul cannot enter Paradise unless my body has first been broken by torture.' Then the torturer ordered that her breasts be cut off and then she be thrown into prison. The holy Apostle Peter appeared to her in the prison and restored her to physical wholeness and health. She was once again taken out for torture and again cast back into prison, where she gave her soul to God in the town of Catania in the year 251. After her death, her torturer Quintian set out to appropriate her lands, but on the way the horses became maddened under him and his soldiers. They were savaged on the face, thrown onto the ground and trampled to death. Thus God's punishment came swiftly upon him for his ferocious crime against St Agatha; The Holy Martyr Theodula; St Polyuctus, Patriarch of Constantinople; in England at Glastonbury, St. Indractus, hermit, his sister Dominica and 9 others, Martyrs.

6 / 19 February — Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — St Bucolus, Bishop of Smyrna - He was a disciple of St John the Theologian, who consecrated him bishop of the city of Smyrna. There were few baptised Christians in Smyrna, and St Bucolus shone like a lamp in the pagan darkness. He was adorned with all the virtues, especially gentleness and meekness. Before his death, Bucolus named the famous Polycarp as his successor in the episcopate, then he peacefully departed this life and went to the Lord.

Tropar of St. Bucolus, Tone 4: Thou didst shine with the rays of virtue/ received from him who leaned on the Master's breast./ Resplendent, God-inspired Hierarch,/ thou didst lead thy flock to the pastures of Truth./ O Father Bucolus, entreat Christ our God for those who honour thee.

Kondak of St. Bucolus, Tone 2: He who was beloved of Christ/ saw the purity of thy life and made thee a shepherd of the Church/ and a radiant lamp of godliness;/ holy Father Bucolus,/ thou didst emulate his virtues. The Holy Martyr Fausta; The Holy Martyr Dorothea; St Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople; Our Holy Fathers Barsanuphius and John ; The Holy Martyrs Martha and Mary and their brother Lycarion;

Repose of Archbishop Theophan of Poltava (1940) - In the world Basil Dimitryevich Bystrov, Archbishop Theophan was born on 1 January 1872 in Podmosh, St Petersburg province. He was the son of a village priest. A outstanding student, Basil Dimitryevich was tonsured in 1898, and ordained a hieromonk soon after. He was raised to the rank of Archimandrite in 1901 and became the Inspector of the St Petersburg Theological Academy. In 1909 he became the Director of the same institution and then, on February 22, he was consecrated Bishop of Yamburg, fourth vicar-bishop of St Petersburg & Ladoga. During his tenure at the Academy, he was responsible for a great revival in the religious & moral atmosphere. This was all the more remarkable as liberal & revolutionary ideas were widespread at the time. Throughout his service and life as an archpastor, right up to his (regrettably) relatively early repose, Vladika Theophan was a decisive & uncompromising opponent of every kind of modernism, liberalism, and free-thinking, the things which undermine genuine Orthodox teachings about faith and piety and which shake the foundations of the Christian philosophy. An archpastor and an ascetic - that is what Vladika Theophan was in his life! His labours in prayer were astounding. Not only did he unfailingly perform his daily monastic rule and often spend the night in prayer, but he always attended all the services which were held in the nearby church and, if he were unable to do so, he read all of the services for the entire day in his cell, standing at the lectern in front of the icons using the service books in his possession. He did this even when he was travelling. He always had his priest's prayer book with him, from which in such circumstances he always read all the services of the day. This devotion to prayer shone brightly in his face, one glance at which inspired reverence in the faithful, and it raised him to great spiritual heights, endowing him with amazing spiritual foreknowledge. While Vladika Theophan was still a young Archimandrite, all Petersburg knew of his lofty intellectual and spiritual abilities, and all considered him a true man of prayer and an ascetic, one who had completely renounced worldly life and who lived only in God and for God. The Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna herself took notice of him, for she constantly sought men of God, both for herself and for her family, and for the spiritual guidance of the Russian nation. Bishop Theophan

soon became her secret confessor and consultant in matters of religion, morality, & philosophy. One would expect, in view of his outstanding abilities, and given his position at the Imperial Palace, that Vladika Theophan would soon become one of the leading figures in the Russian Church. When he was abroad later on, Vladika Theophan often recalled with great compunction how he as archimandrite used to perform the Divine Liturgy in the Palace church on weekdays and how the Empress and her four daughters, the Grand Princesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria, & Anastasia always stood in the kliros and sang the entire Liturgy. "They always confessed with tears", he said with compunction. Later, these memories caused Vladika Theophan to suffer all the more due to the events which befell the Royal Family and Russia as a whole. In 1912, Vladika was transferred to Astrakhan and then, in 1913, to Poltava. It was here that he was raised to the rank of Archbishop. Following the revolution, he left Russia for Constantinople in 1920, participating in the first council of Russian Bishops Outside Russia in Sremski-Karlovtsi in 1921. He was later to sit on the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, substituting on occasions for Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), the chief hierarch at that time. We have every reason to consider Vladika Theophan as one of the most important, consistent, and strongly principled ideologues the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. His ideology was based on strict & uncompromising preservation of the Holy Orthodox Faith; unconditional rejection not only of obvious heresies, but also of every type of modernism, free-thinking and liberalism which undermine our Holy Faith and which strive to make of it "salt which has lost its savour"; and refusal to accept the God-hating regime which enslaved the Russian land and which endeavoured to uproot Christian Faith and morality from Orthodox Russians. Vladika Theophan made a deep impression as a man of genuinely saintly life on all foreigners who came into contact with him. The enemy, however, takes up arms against such saintly people and makes a special effort to pour out on them all his diabolical malice with the help of malevolent and depraved individuals who are devoted to his service. Thus, due to various unfortunate events in the local Russian Church, Vladika Theophan had to suffer much grief simply because he was such a strict ascetic and an uncompromising Archpastor. Consequently, he withdrew more and more from the world and its raging passions and began to retire into himself, leading what was already virtually the life of a recluse. Soon, though, it became clear that he could not remain "in the world" and that he would have to follow the example of the great ascetic and pastor whose name he had received in tonsure, His Grace Theophan the Recluse of Vishenki. In 1931 Vladika moved to France. He began to live as a complete recluse, having utterly severed all ties with the outside world. He served the Liturgy each day in a house church built for him by his spiritual children. Those who cared for him died before him and so little is known of the last years of his life. He reposed on February 6/19 1940 and was buried in a cemetery close by. He had lived in chalk caves high amongst the hills overlooking the Loire river. In one cave was his cell & church; others had been used as storerooms. His cell contained a Bible with dried flowers gathered at the ditch surrounding Diveyevo and other sacred things between the pages; a box with relics in little gold vessels; and many other holy things. His memory is eternal in the hearts of all true Orthodox Russian believers who knew & honoured him; in Ireland, Saints Mel of Armagh Melchus & Munis of Lough Ree, Bishops & Rioch, abbot nephews of St. Patrick; and St. Finian, abbot; St. Ina, king of West Saxons.

7 / 20 February — Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — St Parthenius, Bishop of Lampsacus - He was the son of a deacon from the city of Melitopolis. He knew the words of the Gospel by heart from his early youth, and strove to fulfil them. Settling beside a lake, he caught fish, sold them and shared the proceeds with the poor. By God's providence, he was chosen as bishop of Lampsacus. He cleansed the city of paganism, closed the temples dedicated to idol-worship, built many churches and strengthened the faithful. He healed all manner of sickness through prayer, and was especially powerful over spirits. At one time when he was about to drive the evil spirit out of a madman, the evil spirit begged him not to. 'I will give you another man, into whom you can enter and in whom you can dwell', Parthenius told him. 'And who is that man?' 'I am he', replied the saint, 'come and make your abode in me'. Hearing this, the evil spirit fled as though burned by fire, crying out: 'How can I enter into the house of God?' St Parthenius lived long and showed in his deeds the greatness of his love for God and man. He entered into the eternal peace of Christ in the 4th century; Our Holy Father Luke of Hellas; Our Holy Mother Mastridia; The Thousand and Three Martyrs of Nicomedia; at London, St. Augulus, bishop, martyr; at Lucca, St. Ricgard of Wessex, confessor.