

# Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

## Fifth Sunday of Pascha

4 / 17 May



**Resurrection Tropar, Tone 4:** When the women disciples of the Lord / learned from the Angel the joyous message of Thy Resurrection / they cast away the ancestral curse / and elatedly told the Apostles / death is overcome / Christ God is risen / granting the world great mercy.

**Resurrection Kondak, Tone 4:** My Saviour and Redeemer / as God rose from the tomb and delivered the earth-born from their chains / He has shattered the gates of hell, / and as Master, / He has risen on the third day.

**Kontakion of St. George Tone 4:** Thou wast cultivated by God/ and didst become a most wonderful cultivator of piety,/ and didst harvest for thyself the sheaves of virtue,/ for having sown in tears thou didst reap in joy/ and having withstood to death thou art garnered for Christ./ By thy intercessions, O Saint,/ thou dost obtain for us all remission of our sins.

**Kondak of the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, Tone 8:** Having come to the well in faith, the Samaritan woman saw Thee, the Water of Wisdom, whereof having drunk abundantly, she, the renowned one, inherited the kingdom on high forever.

### Matins Gospel VII

#### Epistle: The Acts of the Apostles 11: 19-26 & 29-30

Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

#### BARNABAS AND SAUL TO ANTIOCH

The persecution turned out to be no slight benefit, as 'to those who love God all things work together for good' (Rom.8:28). If they had made it their express study how best to establish the Church, they would have done nothing else but this: they dispersed the teachers ...When Stephen was slain, when Paul was twice in danger, when the Apostles were scourged, then the Gentiles received the word, and also the Samaritans. Paul declared: 'It was necessary that the Word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles' (ch.13:46) ... 'And the hand of the Lord', it says, 'was with them,' that is, they wrought miracles ...Even so, it is no small part of providential management for Paul to be there ...In this way that Voice of the Gospel, that Trumpet of Heaven is not shut up in Jerusalem ...Truly this is the reason why it was there they were appointed to be called Christians, because Paul spent so long a time in Antioch!

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXV on Acts XI. B#55, pp.162-163.*

#### The Gospel According To St. John 4: 5-42

So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" Jesus answered and said to her,

"Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' For you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?" The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Then they went out of the city and came to Him. In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not laboured; others have laboured, and you have entered into their labours." And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did." So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

### Homily

All four Gospels speak of the Lord's departure to Galilee. Sts Matthew and Mark note that this took place after John had been imprisoned, while St John adds that the reason for this was the rumor that Jesus was receiving and baptizing more disciples than John the Baptist, although the Evangelist explains that it was not He Himself Who was baptizing, but His disciples. After John's imprisonment, the Pharisees' entire hatred focused on Jesus, Who began to seem to them more dangerous than the Baptist. As the time of His suffering had not yet arrived, Jesus leaves Judea and goes to Galilee, in order to avoid persecution by His envious enemies. Only one Evangelist, St John, relates Christ's conversation with the Samaritan woman that took place on the way to Galilee.

The Lord's way lay through Samaria — the district located to the north of Judea and formerly belonging to three tribes of Israelites: Dan, Ephraim, and Manasseh. There was a city in this district called Samaria, the former capital of the Israelite government. The Assyrian king Salmanassar had conquered the Israelites and led them into captivity, replacing the population with heathens from Babylon and other places. It was from the mixing of these settlers with the remaining Jews that the Samaritans originated. They accepted the Five Books of Moses, worshipping Yahweh — but did not forget their own gods. When the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity and began to restore the temple of Jerusalem, the Samaritans also wanted to take part. However, the Jews rejected them, so they erected their own temple on Mount Gerizim. While accepting the Books of Moses, the Samaritans, however, rejected the writings of the Prophets and the entire tradition. Because of this, the Jews' attitude towards them was worse than to heathens, avoiding any contact with them whatsoever, loathing and despising them.

Passing through Samaria, the Lord and His disciples stopped to rest near a well that, according to tradition, had been dug by Jacob near a town named Sychem, which Saint John calls Sychera. It is possible that the Evangelist employed this name in mockery, restructuring it from the word "shikar" — "ply with wine," into "sheker" — "lie." Saint John points out that it was "about the sixth hour" (noon, according to our time), the time of the maximum heat, which was most likely necessitated taking a rest. "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water." While the disciples of Jesus had gone to town to buy food, He turned to the Samaritan woman with a request: "Give Me to drink." Seeing, probably, by clothing or manner of speech that the one addressing her was a Jew, the Samaritan woman expressed her surprise that He, being a Jew, would ask her, a Samaritan, for water, having in mind the hatred and contempt the Jews had towards the Samaritans. But Jesus, having come to the world to save all, and not only the Jews, explains to the woman that she would not have posed such questions if she had known with Whom she was speaking and what good fortune ("the gift of God") God had sent her through this meeting. If she only had known Who was asking her for a drink, then she herself would be asking Him to quench her spiritual thirst and to reveal to her the truth that all people seek to know; and He would have given her "living water," which should be understood as the grace of the Holy Spirit (c.f., Jn 7:38).

The Samaritan woman did not understand the Lord: she thought the living water meant the water found at the bottom of the well. That was why she asked Jesus how He could get the living water if He did not have anything to draw it up with, for the well was deep. "Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?" (Jn 4:12). She recalls the Patriarch Jacob with pride and love, as the one who left use of this well to his offspring. Then the Lord raises her mind to the highest understanding of His words: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (Jn 4:13-14). In the spiritual life, the grace-filled water

has a different effect than that of physical water in earthly life. He who is filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit will never experience spiritual thirst, inasmuch as all his spiritual needs have already been satisfied; meanwhile, he who drinks physical water, just as when he satisfies some other earthly needs, quenches his thirst for some time only, and soon after "shall thirst again."

Moreover, the grace-filled water will remain in man, establishing a source within him, springing up (skipping — the literal translation from Greek) into eternal life, that is, making that person a communicant of eternal life. Still not understanding the Lord, thinking that He is speaking about ordinary water — only some special type that quenches thirst forever — she asks the Lord for some of this water, so as to avoid the need of coming to the well for water. In order to make her realize, finally, that she is speaking with no ordinary man, the Lord initially orders her to call her husband, and then directly accuses her that, while she had had five husbands, she was now, too, living in an adulterous union.

Seeing that before her was a Prophet Who knows everything that is concealed, the Samaritan woman turns to Him for the resolution of the problem that greatly troubled the Samaritans in their relations with the Jews: who is correct in the argument about the place for worshipping God? The Samaritans who, following their fathers, built a temple on Mount Gerizim, and worshiped God there? Or the Jews, who affirmed that one could worship God only in Jerusalem? Basing themselves on Moses' order to deliver a blessing on this mountain, the Samaritans chose Mount Gerizim for their worship. Although John Hyrcanus destroyed their temple that was erected there in the year 130 BC, they continued to offer their sacrifices on the location of the ruined temple. Responding to the woman's question, the Lord explains that it would be wrong to think that one can worship God only in one specific place, and that the disputed question between the Samaritans and the Jews will soon lose its meaning by itself, because both types of Divine service — both the Jewish and the Samaritan — will cease in the nearest future. This prophecy was fulfilled when the Samaritans, decimated by soldiers, became disillusioned with the importance of their mountain, while the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple was burnt in the year 70 AD.

Nonetheless, the Lord gives His preference for Jewish worship, having in mind, of course, the fact that the Samaritans accepted only the Five Books of Moses, rejecting the Prophetic writings, which contained the detailed description of the Person and Kingdom of the Messiah. For "salvation is of (will come from) the Jews," inasmuch as the Redeemer of mankind will come from the Jewish people. Further, the Lord, elaborating His previous thought, points out that the "hour cometh, and now is" (since the Messiah had already appeared), the time of the new, highest worship of God, which will not be limited to any one location, but will be everywhere, for it will be in spirit and in truth. Only this type of worship is genuine, inasmuch as it corresponds to the nature of God Himself, Who is Spirit. To worship God in spirit and in truth means to strive to please God, not in outward form alone, but by the means of true and openhearted striving for God as Spirit with all the strength of one's spiritual being; that is, not by means of sacrificial offerings, which both the Jews and Samaritans made, supposing that this was the only way to honor God, but to know and love God, genuinely and un-hypocritically wishing to please Him through the fulfillment of His commandments. Worshiping God in "in Spirit and in truth" by no means excludes the outward, ritual side of honoring God, like some false teachers and sectarians attempt to affirm, but the main force is not contained in this outward side of honoring God. The actual order of honoring God should not be seen as anything prejudicial: it is both essential and unavoidable, for a human consists not only of the soul, but of the body. Jesus Christ Himself worshiped God the Father physically, kneeling and prostrating Himself to the ground, not rejecting similar worshiping of Himself from various people during His earthly life (c.f., for example: Mt 2:11, 14:33, 15:25; Jn 11:32, 12:3; and many other examples in the Gospels).

The Samaritan woman begins as it were to understand the meaning of Jesus' words, saying in her deliberation: "I know that Messiah cometh, Which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things." The Samaritans were also awaiting the Messiah, calling Him, in their own way, Gashageb, basing this expectation on the words of Genesis 49:10, and especially on Moses' words in Deuteronomy 18:18. The Samaritans' understanding of the Messiah was not as corrupted as that of the Jews, inasmuch as they awaited Him as a prophet and not as a political leader. That was why Jesus, not calling Himself the Messiah among the Jews for a long time, says directly to this simple Samaritan woman that He is the Messiah-Christ promised by Moses: "I that speak unto thee am He" [the Messiah]. Elated with joy from having seeing the Messiah, the woman drops her water-pot at the well and hurries to the city to announce to everybody about the coming of the Messiah, Who, as the Seer-of-hearts, revealed to her everything she had done. His disciples, arriving just then, were surprised that their Teacher was talking to a woman, inasmuch as this was condemned by the rules of the Jewish rabbis, who instructed: "Do not speak for long with a woman" and "nobody should converse with a woman on the road, even with one's lawful wife" and likewise: "It is better to burn the words of the law, than to teach them to a woman." However, being reverent before their Teacher, the disciples did not in any way express their amazement and simply asked Him to try the food they had brought.

Although Jesus the Man's natural feeling of hunger stifled His joy about the Samaritan people's conversion to Him and their salvation, He was joyful that the seeds sown by Him had begun to produce a crop. Therefore He refused to satisfy His hunger, replying to His disciples that the true food for Him was fulfilling the task of people's salvation conferred upon Him by God the Father. The Samaritan inhabitants that came to Him seemed to Jesus like a cornfield, ripe for the harvest — while in the fields, the harvest is ready only in four months. Ordinarily, the one who sows the seeds reaps the harvest; with the sowing of seeds into souls, the spiritual harvest more often than not is left to others, but together with that, the sower himself rejoices with the harvester, inasmuch as he did not sow for himself but for others. Therefore Christ says that He is sending the Apostles to reap the harvest in the spiritual field, which initially was not prepared and sown by them, but by the others — the Old Testament Prophets and by He Himself. During these explanations, the Samaritans approached the Lord. While many believed in Him "for the saying of the woman," many more of them believed "because of His own word," when, by their invitation, He stayed with them in the city for two days. Listening to the Lord's teachings, they were convinced, according to their own acknowledgment, that "this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

## Saints of the Week

**4 / 17 May — The Holy Martyr Pelagia of Tarsus** - born in the town of Tarsus of pagan but noble and wealthy parents, she heard about Christ and the salvation of the soul from Christians, became inflamed with love for the Saviour and was a Christian in her soul. There was at that time a terrible persecution of Christians. It happened that the Emperor Diocletian himself stopped in Tarsus and that, during the time of his stay in the town, his son, the heir, fell deeply in love with Pelagia and wanted to make her his wife. Pelagia replied through her mother—a wicked woman—that she was already promised to her betrothed husband, Christ the Lord. Fleeing from the foul heir and her wicked mother, Pelagia sought and found Bishop Linus, a man renowned for his holiness. He instructed her in the Faith and baptised her. Then Pelagia gave away her luxurious clothing and great wealth, returned home and confessed to her mother that she was already baptised. Hearing of this, the Emperor's son, losing all hope of getting this holy maiden as his wife, ran himself through with a sword and died. Then the wicked mother denounced her daughter to the Emperor and she was taken for trial. The Emperor marvelled at the girl's beauty and, forgetting his son, burned with an impure passion for her. But when Pelagia remained unfaltering in her faith, the Emperor condemned her to be burned in a metal ox heated by fire. When they stripped the martyr, she signed herself with the sign of the Cross and, with prayers of thanksgiving to God on her lips, went into the ox, where, in the twinkling of an eye, she melted like wax. She suffered with honour in 287. Bishop Linus hunted for the remains of her bones and buried them on a hill under a stone. In the time of the Emperor Constantine Copronymos (741-775), a beautiful church was built on that site in honour of this holy virgin and martyr Pelagia, who was sacrificed for Christ to reign eternally with Him; The Hieromartyr Silvanus, Bishop of Gaza; Our Holy Father Nicephorus the Hesychast;

**St. Ethelred, king of Mercia and monk in England (716)** - abdicated to become a monk at Bardney, where he was later elected abbot (Benedictines). Saint Ethelred is depicted as a Benedictine abbot with royal regalia at his feet. He is venerated at Leominster.

**5 / 18 May — The Holy and Great Martyr Irene** - She lived in the Balkans in apostolic times, in the town of Magedon where her father Licinius was governor of a small region. Some think that she was a Slav. She was born a pagan of pagan parents. Penelope—for that was her pagan name—learned the Christian faith from her teacher, Appelianus. St Timothy, the disciple of the Apostle Paul, baptised her and her lady-in-waiting, and brought her a letter from the Apostle Paul to read. She infuriated her father by her refusal to marry, and he intended to torture her, but she brought him to Christianity in a miraculous way. She was tortured in different ways by four kings, other than her father, but God saved her through His angels. King Sedechias buried her up to the neck in a pit full of snakes and scorpions, but an angel of God neutralised the poison of the reptiles and preserved the holy maiden untouched. Then the same king attempted to saw her in two, but the sword broke against her body as against stone. This same king once again bound her to the wheel of a water-mill, then let the water in to drown her, but the water would not flow, but stood still, and the maiden remained whole and alive. King Sapor, Sedechias's son, shod her with nails, loaded a sack of sand onto her, put a bridle on her and commanded that she be led like an animal far outside the city. 'Truly I am as a beast before Thee, O Lord!', said the holy martyr as she ran bridled behind her torturers. But an angel of God caused an earthquake, and the earth opened and swallowed up her tormentors. Surviving all these tortures, by which an enormous number of pagans were brought to Christianity, Irene went to the city of Kallinikos, where she preached the Christian faith. The local king, Numerian, tried to kill her, throwing her into three burning metal oxen one after the other. But the maiden was preserved and remained alive, and many saw and believed. The Eparch, Vaudon, took her to the city of Constantina, where he thought to kill her by putting her onto a burning grid. But this did not harm St Irene, and many were brought to the true Faith. Finally, Irene came to the city of Mesemhria, where the king killed her but God restored her to life. And the king, seeing this, together with many of the people, believed in Christ and was baptised. And thus St Irene, by her sufferings and miracles, brought over 100,000 pagans to faith in Christ. At last she laid herself in a grave and commanded Appelianus to close it. After four days, when the grave was opened, her body was not in it. Thus God glorified forever the maiden and martyr Irene, who had sacrificed all and endured all, that God should be the more greatly glorified among men; Ss Martin and Heraclius.

**6 / 19 May — Holy, Righteous and Longsuffering Job** - a descendant of Esau, the grandson of Abraham, and lived in Arabia about 2,000 years before Christ. His father's name was Zareth and his mother's Bosora; his full name was Jobab. He was an honourable and God-fearing man, and was very rich. But when he reached the age of seventy-nine, God permitted heavy temptation from Satan to fall on him, as is written in detail in the Book of Job. In one day, Job lost all his great possessions and his sons and daughters. Then a great sickness fell on him, from which his whole body was covered with sores from top to toe, and Job lay on a rubbish heap outside the town and scoured his boils with sherds of broken pottery. But Job did not complain of God, but patiently endured all his sufferings to the end. Therefore the Lord restored his health and gave him riches greater than he had had before, and there were born to him seven sons and three daughters; as many as he had had before. And Job lived for 248 years, glorifying and praising God. Job is regarded as the model of patient endurance of every suffering that God sends us, and is a type of the suffering Christ;

**The Holy Martyr Barbarus** - a soldier during the reign of Julian the Apostate. When the emperor's commander Bacchus led the Roman army against the Franks, Barbarus, who was secretly a Christian, was serving in the army. In battle there appeared a certain hero on the side of the Franks, similar to Goliath of old and he challenged the Romans to send one of their men to come out to do battle. Commander Bacchus advised Barbarus to go. Barbarus prayed in his heart to the Living Lord, went out and defeated that giant. As a result, the Frankish army became confused and fled. Then the commander prepared a great celebration and ordered that sacrifices be offered to the idols. During the sacrificial offerings, the commander learned that Barbarus kept himself apart. When he was asked about that, Barbarus declared that he is a Christian. The commander

informed the emperor and the emperor ordered that Barbarus be subjected to the most severe tortures. But Barbarus endured all with rare courage and composure. During his tortures, many miracles were manifested and many soldiers, witnessing this, accepted the Faith of Christ. Among them was the Commander Bacchus along with Callimachus and Dionysius. All three were beheaded for the Name of Christ and, after them, Barbarus was also beheaded in the year 362 A.D. Their souls took up habitation in the kingdom of Christ the Immortal King; St Barbarus the Robber; Martyrdom of Father John (Karastamatis) of Santa Cruz (1985); St. Edbert, bishop of Lindisfarne (698).

**7 / 20 May — Fast Day - Commemoration of the Appearing of the Precious Cross over Jerusalem** - In the time of the Emperor Constantius, St Constantine's son, and Patriarch Cyril of Jerusalem, the Precious Cross appeared one day at nine o'clock in the morning above Golgotha, and spread as far as the Mount of Olives. This Cross was brighter than the sun and more beautiful than the loveliest rainbow. The whole people—believers and unbelievers—left their work and watched this heavenly sign in fear and wonder. Many unbelievers were converted to faith in Christ, and also many Arians abandoned their wicked heresy and returned to Orthodoxy. Patriarch Cyril wrote a letter to the Emperor Constantius about this sign, the Emperor himself being inclined towards Arianism. This took place on May 7th, 357. Thus was it demonstrated by this means that the Christian faith does not lie in the worldly theorising of the sensual understanding of men, but in the power of God, shown forth through wonders and signs without number; The Holy Martyr Acacius; Our Holy Fathers of Georgia;  
**St. John of Beverley, bishop of York (721)** - Born in Harpham (Humberside), Yorkshire, England; died at Beverley, England, May 7, 721; canonized in 1037; feast of translation, October 25. Saint John trained for the priesthood and monastic life in Kent under the direction of SS. Adrian and Theodore, but returned to Yorkshire upon completing his studies to become a monk at Whitby Abbey, which was then under the rule of Saint Hilda. John founded a monastery in Humberside, England, on the site of a small church dedicated to Saint John the Evangelist, where he asked to be buried. In 687, after the death of Saint Eata, John he was consecrated bishop of Hexham. He is said to have shown special care for the poor and the handicapped. Whatever time he could spare from his episcopal duties he spent in contemplation. At regular seasons, especially during Lent, he retired to pray in a cell by the church of Saint Michael beyond the Tyne, near Hexham. He would take with him some poor person, whom he would serve during his retirement. He was transferred York as archbishop upon the death of Saint Bosa in 705, and Saint Wilfrid succeeded him at Hexham as part of the final settlement of the latter's long dispute with the Northumbrian kings. He continued his practice of periodic retirement for spiritual refreshment. His chosen retreat was an abbey that he had built at Beverley, then a forest. Not until old age had worn him out did he resign his office to Saint Wilfrid the Younger in order to spend the last four years of his life in the peace of his beloved abbey at Beverley.

**8 / 21 May — The Holy Apostle and Evangelist John** - The main commemoration of this great Apostle and Evangelist is on September 26th, but on May 8th is commemorated a wonderful revelation about his grave. When St John was more than a hundred years old, he took seven of his disciples, went outside the city of Ephesus and told the disciples to dig a grave in the form of a cross. Then the old man went down alive into the grave and was buried. When the faithful later opened John's grave, they did not find the body in it. And on May 8th each year a dust arose from the grave, from which those suffering from many diseases were healed;

**Our Holy Father Arsenius the Great** - This glorious saint was born of a patrician family in Rome and was well educated in the secular sciences and philosophy as well as in spiritual wisdom. Abandoning all the vanity of the world, he dedicated himself to the service of the Church and was a deacon of the great church in Rome. Unmarried, withdrawn, quiet and devout, Arsenius thought to live that way his entire life. But the Providence of God directed his path in life otherwise. Emperor Theodosius took him as a tutor and teacher of his sons Arcadius and Honorius, and installed him as a senator surrounding him with great wealth, honours and luxury. But all of this burdened Arsenius' heart rather than pleasing him. It happened that Arcadius committed a wrong and for that Arsenius punished him. The offended Arcadius conceived a terrible revenge against his teacher and when Arsenius found out he changed into the clothes of a beggar, left for the seashore, boarded a boat and sailed to Egypt. When he arrived at the renowned Scete, he became a disciple of the glorious John Colobus [The Short] and dedicated himself to a life of asceticism. He considered himself dead and when someone informed him that a wealthy relative died and willed his entire estate to him, Arsenius replied: "But I died before him, how is it therefore that I could be his heir?" Withdrawn in a hermit's cell as in a tomb, throughout the entire day, he wove baskets of palm leaves, and at night, he prayed to God. He avoided men and all conversations with them. Only on feast days did he leave his cell and attend church to receive Holy Communion. In order not to become lazy, he often asked himself the question: "Arsenius, why did you come to the wilderness?" He remained in the wilderness for fifty-five years as a "desert dweller" and for that entire time was a model to the monks and a glory to monastics in general. In all, Arsenius lived one hundred years and died peacefully in the year 448 A.D. after prolonged labour and voluntarily imposing hardships upon himself and took up habitation in the kingdom of Christ the Lord, Whom he loved with all his heart, all his mind and all his soul;

**St Emilia** - the mother of Saint Basil the Great. In her youth she desired to remain a virgin for life but was forced into marriage. Emilia gave birth to nine children and so inspired them with the Spirit of Christ that five of them became Christian saints: Basil the Great, Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, Peter, Bishop of Sebaste, Macrina and Theosevia. In her old age Emilia established a convent where she lived with Macrina her daughter and where she died in the Lord on May 8, 375 A.D.; Our Holy Father Arsenius the Lover of Labour; St. Wiros, monk-missionary of the Netherlands (c.753).

**9 / 22 May — Fast Day - St Nicolas the Wonderworker of Myra in Lycia** - on this day is commemorated the translation of his relics. In the time of the Emperor Alexius I Comnenus and Patriarch Nicolas Grammaticus, in 1087, the body of this saint was taken from Myra in Lycia to the town of Bari in Italy. This came to pass because of a Moslem attack on Lycia. The saint appeared to a priest in Bari and commanded that his relics be taken there. At that time, the town of Bari was Orthodox and under the administration of an Orthodox patriarch. At the translation of the saint's relics, many miracles were wrought on those who touched them, and a healing myrrh flowed in abundance from them. Also on this day is commemorated the miracle worked by St Nicolas on Stefan of Decani, King of Serbia. This was when the saint restored the sight of the blind King Stefan.

**The Holy Prophet Isaiah** - This great prophet was of royal birth. He was born in Jerusalem of Amoz the brother of Amaziah, King of the Jews. By the great grace of God that was within him, Isaiah was made worthy to see the Lord of Sabaoth on His heavenly throne, surrounded by six-winged seraphim which cried unceasingly: 'Holy, holy, holy Lord of Sabaoth' (Is. 6). Isaiah prophesied many things, both to individuals and to nations. Once he walked for three days naked through the streets of Jerusalem, prophesying the imminent fall of the city to the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, and warning the King and the leaders of the people not to seek help from Egypt and Ethiopia, because they too would shortly be over-run by the same Sennacherib, but to seek the aid of the all-seeing God. And this prophecy, like all the rest, was literally fulfilled (37:31-35). But his most important prophecies were on the incarnation of God, on the conception of the most pure Mother of God, on John the Baptist and on many events in the life of Christ. This seer, because of his pure heart and zeal for God, also received the gift of working miracles. Thus, when the besieged city of Jerusalem was suffering from thirst, he prayed to God and water flowed out from beneath the hill of Sion. This water was named Siloam (Sent), and it was to that water that, later, the Lord sent the man born blind, to wash himself and receive his sight (Is. 8:6; Jn 9:7). In the time of King Manasseh, when Isaiah thundered against the pagan practices of the king and the leaders of the people, comparing that generation with Sodom and Gomorrah, the anger of the leaders and the people was lifted up against this great prophet, and he was seized, taken out of Jerusalem and sawn in half. He lived and prophesied seven hundred years before Christ;

**The Holy Martyr Christopher** - Third century martyr in the persecutions of Decius. His fame derives from the pious legend of him being a "Christ-bearer" (= Christopher). He was a powerfully built man who wandered the world in search of novelty and adventure. He came upon a hermit who lived beside a dangerous stream and served others by guiding them to safe places to cross. He gave Offero instruction in the truth of God. Offero took the hermit's place, but instead of guiding travellers, he carried them safely across the stream. One day he carried a small child across the stream; the child's weight nearly crushed him. When they arrived on the other side, the child revealed himself as Christ, and he was so heavy because he bore the weight of the world on himself. He then baptised Offero with water from the stream. Christopher's service at the stream led to his patronage of things related to travel and travellers, people who carry things.

**10 / 23 May — The Holy Apostle Simon the Zealot** - One of the twelve Great Apostles, he was born in Cana of Galilee. The Lord Jesus came to his wedding with His Mother and His disciples, and, when the wine ran out, the Lord changed water into wine. Seeing this wonder, the newly-married Simon left his home and parents and bride, to go after Christ. Simon was called the Zealot because of his great and burning zeal for the Saviour and His Gospel. After receiving the Holy Spirit, he went off to preach the Gospel in Mauretania in Africa. As a result of his success in bringing many to the Faith of Christ, he was tortured and finally crucified like his Lord, who had prepared a crown of glory for him in His immortal Kingdom. The Holy Martyrs Alphaeus, Philadelphus and Cyprinus;

**Our Holy Mother Isidora the Fool for Christ** - Isidora lived in the fourth century and was a nun in a convent in Tabennisi. She pretended insanity in order to conceal her virtues and her mortification. Isidora performed the most menial tasks, fed on the leftovers on the dishes, served all and everyone and was despised by all and everyone. At that time, an angel of God revealed to the great ascetic Pitirim about Isidora's secret. Pitirim came to the convent and when he saw Isidora he bowed down to the ground before her. And so, she to him. Then the sisters informed Pitirim that she was insane. "All of you are insane" replied Pitirim, "and this one is greater before the Lord than I and all of you; I only pray that God will render to me that which is intended for her at the Dreadful Judgment!" Then the sisters became ashamed and begged both Pitirim and Isidora for forgiveness. From then on, everyone began to show respect for Isidora. And she, to escape the honours of men, fled the convent to a place unknown and died about the year 365 A.D.; Blessed Thais;

**St. Conleth, hermit and bishop of Kildare (c.520) - Skilled** worker in gold and silver, and manuscript illuminator. Hermit in a cell in Old Connell, Ireland near the Liffey river. His reputation for holiness attracted would-be disciples. Friend and co-worker with Saint Brigid; they ran first double monastery together. First bishop of Kildare, Ireland c.490. Baptised Saint Tigernach of Clogher Died while on pilgrimage to Rome.

Born c.450 in Ireland Died attacked by wolves on 3 May 519 in the forests of Leinster, Ireland; buried nearby; relics translated to the Kildare cathedral in 799; relics taken to Connell in 835 to protect them from Danish invaders.