



Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council, Seventh Sunday of Pascha, Sunday After Ascension

18 / 31 May

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 6: The angelic powers were at Thy tomb; / the guards became as dead men. / Mary stood by Thy grave, / seeking Thy most pure Body. / Thou didst capture hell, not being tempted by it. / Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life. / O Lord who didst rise from the Dead, / Glory to Thee!

Tropar of The Ascension Of The Lord, Tone 4: Thou hast ascended in glory, O Christ our God, having gladdened Thy disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit; and they were assured by the blessing that Thou art the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

Tropar of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council - Tone 8: Most glorified art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast established our holy fathers as stars upon the earth, and through them didst guide us all to the true Faith. O Most-merciful One, glory be to Thee.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 6: When Christ God the Giver of Life, / raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His Mighty Hand, / He bestowed resurrection on the human race. / He is the Saviour of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of All.

Kondak of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council - Tone 8: The preaching of the apostles and the doctrines of the fathers confirmed the one Faith of the Church. And wearing the garment of truth, woven from the theology on high, She rightly divideth and glorifieth the great mystery of piety.

Kondak of The Ascension Of The Lord, Tone 6: When Thou didst fulfill Thy dispensation for our sake, uniting things on earth with the heavens, Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God, departing not hence, but remaining inseparable from us, and crying unto them that love Thee: I am with you, and no one shall be against you.

Commemoration of the First Ecumenical Council

The Commemoration and eulogy of the holy fathers of the First Ecumenical Council, which was held in Nicaea in 325 in the reign of Constantine the Great—held during the week before Pentecost, or the seventh week after Easter. It was summoned to remove the confusion which Arius, an Alexandrian priest, had created by his false teaching. He had been spreading the teaching that Christ was created from God in time, and that He is not the pre-eternal Son of God, equal in being with God the Father. Three hundred and eighteen holy fathers took part in this Council. It condemned the Arian teaching, and anathematized Arius when he would not repent. This Council also definitively confirmed the Symbol of Faith (the Creed) which was later amplified at the Second Ecumenical Council. Many bishops were present at the First Ecumenical Council, among whom the following stood out: St Nicolas of Myra in Lycia, St Spiridon, St Athanasius, St Acillius, St Paphnutius, St James of Nisibis, Macarius of Jerusalem, Alexander of Alexandria, Eustathius of Antioch, Eusebius of Caesarea, Mitrophanes of Constantinople, John of Persia, Aristarchus of Armenia and many others from the East. And from the West: Hosius of Cordova, Theophilus the Goth, Cecilianus of Carthage, and others. The most important work of this Council was the confirmation of the Symbol of Faith. The Council also confirmed the time of the celebration of Easter, and prescribed twenty Canons. St. Nicolas in his zeal, struck Arius with his hand. For this act, he was removed from the Council and from his episcopal duties. That very night, several of the fathers had the selfsame vision: how the Lord stood on one side of Nicolas with the Gospels and the Mother of God on the other with a pallium, offering to the saint those marks of rank that had been stripped from him. Seeing this, the fathers were amazed, and quickly returned to Nicolas that which they had taken from him. They began from that time to respect him as a great man, and to interpret his action against Arius not as some senseless rage but as the expression of great zeal for God's truth.

Vespers: Gen. 14:14-20; Deut. 1:8-10, 1:15-17; Deut. 10:14-21

Matins Gospel X

EPISTLE: The Acts of St. Apostles 20: 16-18; 28-36

For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by labouring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' " And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

YOU MUST SUPPORT THE WEAK: IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE

It is to raise up their minds that he says all this, and to persuade them not only not to flee, but also to bear nobly. This is the reason he calls it a 'course' and a 'ministry' on the one hand, showing it to be glorious from its being a race, on the other, showing what was due from it, as being a ministry. I am a minister: nothing more. He had comforted them, so they would not grieve that he was treated in such a bad way ... For my anxiety is not that you should be saved through me as the means, but only that you should be saved: the person as the instrument is immaterial. You do not know the pangs of spiritual childbirth, how overpowering they are, how he who is in travail with this birth would rather be cut into ten thousand pieces, than see one of those to whom he has given birth perishing and undone.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XLIV on Acts XX. B#55, pp. 270-272.

TO SHEPHERD THE CHURCH OF GOD

There is no ministry in the Church other than Christ's ministry ... This identification of the Church's ministry with that of Christ has gone beyond the theology of the Fathers and entered the liturgical life of the ancient Church in a decisive way: in the Eucharist, Christ is not only the one who is offered and who receives but also the one who offers ...

The ministry of the Church ... exists as an expression of the totality of the Economy. We cannot, therefore, understand the nature of the ministry by seeing it simply in terms of the past (Christ's ministry in Palestine) or a present (ministry as service to the needs of today) but of the future as well, namely as sustaining for creation the hope of the eschata, of sharing God's very life ...

Just as the Church becomes through the ministry a relational entity both in itself and in its relation to the world, so also the ordained man becomes, through his ordination, a relational entity. In this context, looking at the ordained person as an individual defeats the very end of ordination. For ordination ... aims precisely at making man not an individual but a person, i.e. an ek-static being, that can be looked upon not from the angle of his "limits" but of his overcoming his "selfhood" and becoming a related being ... In the light of the koinonia of the Holy Spirit, ordination relates the ordained man so profoundly and so existentially to the community that in his new state after ordination he cannot be any longer, as a minister, conceived in himself ... Only in terms of love can one understand the mystery of charismatic life and therefore of ministry.

Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamos. Being as Communion, B#82, pp. 210, 211, 226, 227 (note).

GOSPEL: JOHN 17:1-13

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, As You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.

THE GREAT INTERCESSORY PRAYER OF CHRIST

'Seeing He ever lives to make intercession for us' (Heb.7:25). O how beautiful and mystical and kind! For to intercede ...is to plead for us by reason of his mediatorship, just as the Spirit also is said to make intercession for us. For 'there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus' (Rom.8:26, I Tim.2:5). He still pleads even now as man for my salvation; for He continues to wear the body which He assumed, until He shall make me god by the power of His incarnation ...Thus, too, we have an advocate, Jesus Christ, not indeed prostrating Himself for us before the Father ...but by what He suffered as man, He as the Word and the counsellor persuades Him to be patient. I think this is the meaning of His advocacy.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus. Fourth Theological Oration, 14. B#7, p. 187.

THE STATUS OF CHRIST

Many statements in the Scriptures imply, or even openly assert that the Father is greater than the Son; and men have erred because they have not been careful enough to examine the whole tenor of the Scriptures and thus have sought to transfer what is said of Christ Jesus as man to His mode of being before His incarnation, which was and is eternal. And they allege that the Son is inferior to the Father because the Lord Himself is quoted as saying, 'The Father is greater than I'. But it is demonstrable that in this respect the Son is also inferior to Himself. For if 'He emptied Himself, receiving the form of a servant,' He must surely have become inferior to Himself. For this taking of the form of a servant did not entail His losing the form of God ...In both forms He was the same Only-begotten Son of God the Father, in the form of God equal to the Father, in the form of a servant, 'the mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus' (I Tim. 2:5) ...He is equal to the Father in nature, inferior to Him in condition ... Godhead is not changed into a creature, so as to cease to be godhead.

St. Augustine of Hippo. On the Trinity 1.14. B#15, p. 214.

Today, between the Ascension and Pentecost, we remember the fathers of the First Ecumenical Council. These "fathers" who made up the council were all bishops who gathered together at the request of the Byzantine Emperor to provide a definition of the Orthodox belief concerning the nature of Jesus Christ. These bishops, in response to the heretical ideas of Arius, confirmed that Jesus Christ is indeed the uncreated God incarnate and, as God, shares the same essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Who gave these bishops the right to make this decision? How could they know the truth of the nature of Jesus Christ? What made them wise? The answer, of course, is in the role of the bishop for the bishop is given the grace and indeed the duty by God, through ordination, to "rightly divide the Word of Truth" – that is, he is guided by the Holy Spirit to recognize the Truth and to explain it to his spiritual flock.

Now we are all sealed with the grace of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of Chrismation, however, the bishop is endowed with a special grace to lead the flock of Christ and to care for the spiritual and physical needs of the various members of that flock. The bishops were originally ordained by the apostles and became their successors, ordaining others as needed by the Church. Each bishop was selected on the basis of his spiritual life as well as his faithfulness to the teaching of the apostles. Even today, a man selected for ordination to the episcopacy must confess his faith first in a formal manner by reciting the Nicene Creed (as we, or our sponsors on our behalf, all do at our baptism) but then he is also expected to confess his faith more in depth, explaining and describing in his own words the meaning of the creed, how he understands it, how he applies it and how he interprets it. Only then, when his explanation meets the approval of the bishops who will ordain him, is he accepted as a candidate for the episcopacy. The bishop is ordained during the course of the Divine Liturgy, just before the reading of the Gospel in order to emphasize his role as the one who "rightly divides the Word of Truth" and who is given the responsibility for teaching the people. No one else has the right to teach in the Church, only the bishop and those to whom he gives a blessing to teach on his behalf.

The bishop is the one appointed as the shepherd of the flock of Christ, but he does not perform this task alone. He has assistants who help him in this task, the priests, deacons and other members of the clergy. St Ignatius the God bearer speaks of the place of the members of the clergy thusly: "the bishop presides in the place of God, and ... presbyters (priests) in the place of the assembly of the apostles, along with ... deacons, who are ... entrusted with the ministry..." It is necessary that all the clergy are in the closest harmony with one another, and the bishop is the key and origin of that harmony: "(the) presbytery, being worthy of God, is fitted as exactly to the bishop as the strings are to the harp." He says again that we should "reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father and the presbyters as the Sanhedrin of God, and assembly of the apostles." If the bishop separates himself from the Body of Christ, that is, from the Church, then he is no longer a bishop and if a priest or deacon separates himself from his bishop, he is likewise no longer a priest or a deacon. The spiritual rank and gift of grace that is the essence of the sacrament of ordination is inextricably tied to Christ, to His Church, and cannot exist in any way in separation from it.

The bishop is the one who holds, by the grace of his ordination, all of the sacraments of the Church. Those who are ordained by him receive from him the grace to administer those sacraments as appropriate to his rank and situation. A priest, as the extension of the bishop to the local community, is generally given the blessing to administer all the sacraments, except that of ordination which is held solely by the bishop. The deacon does not generally administer any of the sacraments but functions as the right hand of the priest and the bishop. These three ranks: bishop, priest, and deacon all work together to provide for the needs of the members of the Body of Christ, that is, the Church.

The primary spiritual work of the bishop is to teach – to continue the work of the apostles to bear witness to the Truth revealed to them by Jesus Christ who as God revealed Himself to us. It is the bishop who instructs us and guides us in

the path of salvation as the shepherd of the flock who stands in the place of Christ. He bestows upon us the dogma, doctrine and teaching of the Church which is the expression of the Truth revealed by Christ. He bestows upon us as well the sacraments by which we receive the grace of the Holy Spirit which enlightens us.

The primary task of the priest is to take all the the bishop provides and apply it to each member of his own flock in the manner that will be most effective and helpful. The priest then is the one who is given the responsibility to care for the spiritual lives of the flock and so not only administers the sacraments, but also teaches with the voice and authority of the bishop. The priest is the one who lifts up each of his spiritual children before the throne of God and it is his duty (a duty joyfully undertaken) to pray for each and every one in the parish. We see this clearly in the services of the Church when the priest stands either before the Holy Table in the Altar or directly before the Royal doors when outside the Altar and lifts up his prayer for us.

The role of the deacon is that of a servant. The apostles appointed deacons to care for the needs of the widows and orphans in the Church and to distribute the charity of the Church to all who were in need. It is the deacon, even now, who is the one who is nearest the people. His ministry is to know who in the flock is in need and to bring that need to the attention of the priest. Again, we see this in the service, for while the priest stands within the Altar, symbolically before the throne of God, to offer his prayers, the deacon stands outside the Altar in the midst of the people where he symbolically, through the litanies, gathers the prayers of the people and offers them to the priest who then lifts them up before the throne of God.

There are many other lesser orders of clergy that have roles in the work of the Church. The “sub-deacon” is a kind of “manager” tasked with making the services all run smoothly and so allowing the bishop, priest and the deacon to focus on their prayers. The most common rank of the lesser clergy that is seen in the parish is that of “reader”. The reader is tasked with chanting and singing the service. He is the one who has the responsibility to learn the structure of the services and to make sure that the proper hymns are sung in a beautiful and worshipful manner and to chant the proper sections of the scripture appointed for each service. The rank of “reader” was at one time called a “taper bearer” for he would also carry the candles in the service, however, this duty has largely been given to the laymen who serve in the altar. It is obvious that these “lesser” clergy have a large responsibility and are key to the external beauty and spirituality of the services.

Other lesser clergy which are not seen as much (or at all) in modern times are the ranks of deaconess and bell ringer. Their duties are fulfilled mostly now by laymen and women. The deaconess would see to the personal needs of the women in the parish and assist in the baptism of women. The bell ringer, quite obviously, was responsible for ringing the Church bells at the proper time and in the proper fashion. These duties have not disappeared but are apportioned out among the laity of the Church according to the interest and skill of each person.

All of the clergy, from the bishop on down to the reader, are in the end the servants of the people (recall the words of our Lord Who said that whoever would be greatest in the Kingdom of God must be the servant of all) The loving care of the people in the Church is the primary focus of the ministry of every member of the clergy. While the bishop or priest is necessary to serve the liturgy or to celebrate any of the sacraments, he cannot do any of these things without also the people present. It is necessary for the clergy to function within the whole parish and Church community and outside that community it is impossible for any clergyman to function properly. In the hierarchal service, the bishop stands in the middle of the temple – in the midst of the whole congregation. He is accompanied by his other clergy who also stand with the people. All together we stand in unity before the throne of God and the bishop speaks with the voice of all the people, offering up all our prayer to God our Creator, our Lord and Master, and our Beloved Father.

Archpriest David Moser
<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/propoved/info>

Saints of the Week

18 / 31 May — The Holy Martyr Theodotus, and the seven maiden martyrs: Tecusa, Alexandra, Claudia, Favina, Euphrasia, Matrona and Julia. Theodotus was a married man and an innkeeper in Ancyra in the time of the Emperor Diocletian. Although he was married, he lived according to the words of the Apostle: 'Let them who have wives be as though they had not' (I Cor. 7:29). But he kept the inn on, in order to be able unsuspectedly to help Christians, and his inn was a refuge for persecuted Christians. Theodotus secretly sent help to the Christian refugees in the mountains, and secretly gathered the bodies of those who had been killed, giving them burial. At that time, seven maidens were taken for trial and tortured for Christ. They were tortured, mocked and then thrown into a lake. One of them, St Tecusa, appeared to St Theodotus and told him to take her body out of the lake and bury it. Under cover of night, Theodotus set off with a companion to carry out the martyr's wishes, and, led by an angel of God, succeeded in finding all seven bodies and burying them. But this friend betrayed him to the authorities and the judge put him to harsh torture. Theodotus endured all the tortures as though not in his own body, having his whole mind steeped in God. When the torturers had made his body one great wound and broken his teeth with stones, it was ordered that he be beheaded. When he was taken to the scaffold, many Christians wept for him, but St Theodotus said to them: 'Don't weep for me, my brethren, but glorify our Lord Jesus Christ, by whose aid I am finishing my course and overcoming the enemy.' Saying this, he laid his head on the block under the sword and was beheaded, in the year 303. A priest buried the martyr's body on a hill outside the city and a church dedicated to St Theodotus was later

built on the site; The Holy Martyrs Peter, Dionysius, Andrew, Paul and Christina; The Holy Martyrs Heraclius, Paulinus and Benedimus.

19 May / 1 June — The Hieromartyr Patrick, Bishop of Brussa with three priests: Acacius, Menander and Polyenus - they suffered for the Christian faith in the time of Julian the Apostate in Asian Brussa. The imperial governor, Junius, brought Patrick to a hot water spring and asked him: 'Who created this healing water, if not our gods, Aesculapius and the others, whom we worship?' St Patrick answered: 'Your gods are demons; and this water, like all other water, was created by Christ, our Lord and God.' Then the governor asked: 'And will this Christ of yours save you if I throw you into this boiling water?' The saint replied: 'If He wills, He can keep me whole and uninjured, although I would wish, in this water, to be parted from this temporal life, that I may live eternally with Christ; but let His holy will be done, without which not a hair of a man's head can fall.' Hearing this, the governor ordered that Patrick be thrown into the water. The boiling drops fell on all sides, and scalded many of the onlookers, but the saint remained untouched, as though he were standing in cold water. Seeing this, the governor was wild with shame and commanded that Patrick and three of his priests be beheaded with axes. So these goodly followers of Christ said their prayers and laid their heads under the executioner's axe. When they had been beheaded, their souls were taken merrily to Christ's Kingdom of light, to reign eternally. St John, Bishop of the Goths; The Holy Prince Ivan of Vologda. **St. Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury (988)** - nephew of the Archbishop of Canterbury, spent a privileged youth at the court of King Athelstan and eventually became abbot of Glastonbury. English monastic life had almost totally disappeared as a result of the Viking invasions. Dunstan set about vigorously reviving it. He founded monasteries at Bath, Exeter, Malmesbury, and elsewhere, drawing up new rules for their good order. He installed monks in Winchester, in Chertsey, Surrey, and Milton Abbas, Dorset and restored the old abbey of Abingdon. After a period of exile King Edgar recalled him to be Archbishop of Canterbury in the year 960. There he founded an abbey to the east of the city, along with three churches dedicated to St Mary, Saints Peter and Paul, and St Pancras. As a skilled metalworker, scribe and bell-founder himself, he stimulated the revival of church art and illuminated manuscripts. He also loved to play the harp and wrote several fine hymns

20 May / 2 June — The Holy Martyr Thaleleus - born in Lebanon, his father's name being Berucius and his mother's Romylia, he was an eighteen-year-old youth, handsome and well-grown and with ginger hair. A doctor by profession, he suffered for Christ in the reign of Numerian. When he courageously confessed his faith in Christ the Lord before the judge, the latter commanded the two executioners, Alexander and Asterius, to bore through his knees, pass a rope through the pierced bone and hang him from a tree. But the executioners, as though the unseen power of God had deprived them of sight, bored through a plank and hung it on the tree. When the judge discovered this, he thought that the executioners had done it deliberately, and ordered that they be flogged. Then Alexander and Asterius cried out under the flogging: 'The Lord is alive to us; from now on, we are become Christians. We believe in Christ, and suffer for Him.' Hearing this, the judge ordered that they be beheaded. Then the judge took the awl, to bore through Thaleleus's knees himself, but his hand was paralysed and he had to ask Thaleleus to heal him, which the kindly martyr, with Christ's aid, did by his prayers. Then he was thrown into water, but showed himself alive to the judge (for Thaleleus was praying within himself that God would not have him die at once, but would let his tortures continue). When he was thrown to the wild beasts, they licked his feet and rubbed tamely round him. He was finally beheaded and entered into eternal life in 284

The Holy Martyr Asclas - Asclas suffered in the town of Antioch in Egypt during the reign of Diocletian. He was flogged, scraped, burned with candles but he remained unwavering in the Faith to the end. When the tormentor Arrian was crossing the Nile by boat Asclas, through prayer, stopped the boat in the middle of the river and would not allow it to move until Arrian wrote that he believes in Christ as the One and Almighty God. But, ascribing this miracle to a magical skill of Asclas, the tormentor forgot what he wrote and continued to torment the man of God. Finally, they tied a stone around his neck and tossed him into the Nile river. On the third day Christians found the body of Asclas along the shore with the stone around his neck (as the martyr foretold them before his death) and honourably buried him in the year 287 A.D. Leonides, the holy martyr, also suffered with him. Arrian, their tormentor, later repented, believed in Christ with his whole heart and openly began to express his faith before the pagans. The pagans also killed him and so Arrian, a one-time tormentor of Christians, was made worthy of the martyr's wreath for Christ; Our Holy Father Stephen of Paphos; St. Ethelbert, king and martyr (c793)

21 May / 3 June — Fast Day - The Holy Emperor Constantine and the Empress Helena - Constantine's parents were the Emperor Constantius Chlorus and the Empress Helena. Chlorus had further children by another wife, but by Helena he had only the one, Constantine. Constantine fought two great battles when he came to the throne: one against Maxentius, a tyrant in Rome, and the other against Licinius not far from Byzantium. At the battle against Maxentius, when Constantine was in great anxiety and uncertainty about his chances of success, a shining cross, surrounded by stars, appeared to him in the sky in full daylight. On the cross were written the words: 'In this sign, conquer!' The wondering Emperor ordered that a great cross be put together, like the one that had appeared, and be carried before the army. By the power of the Cross, he gained a glorious victory over enemies greatly superior in number. Maxentius drowned himself in the Tiber. Immediately after this, Constantine issued the famous Edict of Milan, in 313, to put an end to the persecution of Christians. Conquering Byzantium, he built a beautiful capital city on the Bosphorus, which from that time was named Constantinople. At this time, Constantine fell ill with leprosy. The pagan priests and doctors advised him to bathe in the blood of slaughtered children, which he refused to do. Then the Apostles Peter and Paul appeared to him and told him to seek out a bishop, Sylvester, who would heal him of the disease. The bishop instructed him in the Christian faith and baptised him, and the leprosy vanished from the Emperor's body. When there was discord in the Church about the troublesome heretic Arius, the Emperor summoned the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, in 325, where the heresy was condemned and Orthodoxy confirmed. St Helena, the Emperor's devout mother, was very zealous for the Christian faith. She visited Jerusalem and found the Precious Cross of the Lord, and built the Church of the Resurrection over Golgotha and many other churches in the Holy Land. This holy woman went to the Lord in 327, at the age of eighty. The Emperor Constantine outlived his mother by ten years and entered into rest at the age of about sixty in 337, in the

city of Nicomedia. His body was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople; Our Holy Father, the Martyr Pachomius.

22 May / 4 June — The Holy Martyr Basiliscus - a kinsman of St Theodore the Tyro, he was martyred together with Eutropius and Cleonimus (March 3rd). When these two were crucified and gave up the ghost, Basiliscus was taken back to prison. A change of governors occurring at this time, Basiliscus remained a long time confined in prison. He besought God with tears that He would not deprive him of a martyr's death for His sake. After he had prayed at length, the Lord Jesus appeared to him and promised to fulfil his desire, sending him to his village to say farewell to his mother and brothers. Thereupon the new governor, Agrippa, arrived and sent to have Basiliscus brought from the village immediately. On the way to the city of Amasea, the Lord worked great wonders through His martyr, bringing many of the people to faith in Christ. Agrippa ordered the martyr to offer sacrifice to Apollyon. "Apollyon" means "Destroyer", said Basiliscus, and, with fervent prayer, he knocked the idol to dust and burned the temple with fire from heaven. The terrified Agrippa attributed this all to magic, and ordered that Basiliscus be beheaded with the sword. Agrippa immediately became insane and, in his madness, went to the place of execution, found a little of the martyr's blood in the dust and smeared it on himself under his belt, being restored to health by it. Having come to his senses, he was baptised. Later, a certain Marinus, a citizen of Comana (the place of Basiliscus's execution) built a church over the martyr's relics, and many of the sick found healing there.

The Holy Martyr John Vladimir, King of Serbia - John Vladimir was of princely lineage from Zahumlje. His grandfather was called Hvalimir and his father Petrislav. As a ruler, he was wise, merciful, meek, chaste and brave. He fervently prayed to God and voluntarily built churches and supported them. However, he had difficult struggles both internally and externally. Internally, from heretics and the Bogomils and externally from Tsar Samuel and Tsar Basil who wanted to conquer him. Samuel deceitfully captured him and cast him into prison. While he languished in prison an angel of God appeared to him and foretold that he would shortly be freed, but that he would die a martyr's death. Getting to know him better, Samuel grew to like him and gave his daughter Kosara to be his wife. When Samuel died, his son Radomir was crowned Tsar. But Vladislav, his twin brother, slew Radomir and deceitfully summoned Vladimir and beheaded him in the year 1015 A.D. The relics of this saintly king repose uncorrupt in his monastery near Elbasan and over his relics, throughout the ages and even today, numerous miracles occur. In 1925, a church was built to honor this crowned martyr adjacent to the monastery of St. Nahum since John Vladimir was the benefactor of this glorious monastery.

The Second Ecumenical Council - This Council was called during the reign of Emperor Theodosius the Great in Constantinople in the year 381 A.D. Its goal was to confirm the Orthodox teaching concerning the Holy Spirit about Whom the Patriarch Macedonius of Constantinople erroneously taught. He erroneously taught that the Holy Spirit is God's creature and not a divine person [Hypostasis] equal to the Father and Son and One in essence with Them in the Holy Trinity. Macedonius was condemned by this Council and the teaching about the Holy Spirit was added to the Nicæan Symbol of Faith [the Nicene Creed].

Holy and Righteous Melchisedek, King of Salem - Melchisedek was a contemporary of our forefather Abraham. According to the words of the Apostle Paul he was a king, priest and proto-type of the Lord Jesus Christ ([Hebrews 7](#)).

23 May / 5 June — Fast Day - St Michael, Bishop of Synnada - from his childhood, this wise and holy hierarch consecrated himself to the service of Christ. He laboured in asceticism together with Saint Theophylact of Nicomedia. Once, in a time of drought, these two holy men caused an abundance of rain to fall on the earth by their prayers. Because of the life of asceticism and chastity that Michael had led from his early youth, he was chosen and consecrated by Patriarch Tarasius as Bishop of Synnada. He took part in the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787. At the wish of the Emperor, he visited Caliph Harun al-Rashid to conduct peace negotiations. In the time of the wicked Emperor Leo the Armenian, he was deposed from his episcopal throne for his veneration of the holy icons and sent into exile, where he died in want and poverty, faithful to Orthodoxy to the end. He entered into the Kingdom of Christ the King in 818.

Our Holy Father, the Martyr Michael - After the death of his parents, Michael distributed all of his goods to the poor and went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Following that, he entered the monastery of St. Sabas the Sanctified where he was tonsured a monk. Michael was quite young and of a handsome countenance but, from much fasting, he appeared withered and pale. At that time, the Arabs ruled Jerusalem. One day Michael was sent by his spiritual father to the city to sell his handiworks. He was met on the streets by the eunuch of the Arabian queen who brought him to her to display his handiworks. When the queen saw this handsome monk she became inflamed with unclean passion and proposed carnal sin to the monk as once did the wife of Potiphar to the chaste Joseph. When Michael rejected the impure offer and began to flee, the angry queen ordered that he be beaten with canes and after that brought him to the king with the charge that he blasphemed the faith of Muhammad. The king proposed that Michael embrace the Islamic faith, but he refused. He was then given a potent poison to drink. Michael drank the poison but nothing happened to him. Then the king ordered Michael to be beheaded in the centre of Jerusalem. Monks discovered his body and removed it to the monastery of St. Sabas where they honourably buried him. St. Michael suffered for Christ and was glorified in the ninth century

Our Holy Mother Euphrosyne, Princess of Polotsk - the daughter of Prince Vseslav of Polotsk. When her parents wanted to betroth her, she fled to a convent and was tonsured a nun. An angel of the Lord appeared to her three times and revealed to her where she must establish a new convent for virgins. She even attracted her sister Eudocia to the monastic life and many other maidens from the ranks of the aristocracy. Her cousin, Zvenislava, by birth Princess Borisov, brought all of her riches, clothes and precious stones and said: "All the beauty of this world, I consider vanity and these adornments prepared for my marriage, I give to the Church of the Savior and I, myself, wish to be betrothed to Him in a spiritual marriage and place my head beneath His good and easy yoke." Euphrosyne also tonsured her a nun and gave her the name Eupraxia. In her old age, Euphrosyne desired to die in Jerusalem and for that she prayed to God. God heard her prayers and, indeed, when she visited Jerusalem she died there. Euphrosyne was buried in the monastery of St. Theodosius on May 23, 1173 A.D.

24 May / 6 June — Our Holy Father Simeon Stylites of the Wonderful Mountain - This wonderful and holy man was born in Antioch in 522, in the reign of the Emperor Justin I the Elder. His father perished in an earthquake and he was left alone with his mother, Martha. When he was six years old, he went away into the desert to John, a spiritual teacher there and, under his guidance, gave himself to a strict asceticism of fasting and prayer, to the wonderment of all who saw him. Whilst enduring fearful demonic trials, he received great comfort and grace from the Lord and His angels. Christ the Lord appeared to him in the form of a handsome youth, and, after this vision, Simeon's heart was inflamed with great love for Christ. He spent many years on a pillar, praying and singing psalms. Led by God, he took himself off to the mountain called 'Wonderful' by the Lord Himself, and is known as 'of the Wonderful Mountain' because of this. The measure of his love for God was such that rare grace was given him, by the help of which he was able to heal every sort of illness, tame wild beasts and perceive the most distant regions of the earth and the hearts of men. He was taken out of the body and saw the heavens, conversed with angels, harried the demons, prophesied, spent thirty days at a time without sleep and even longer without food, receiving nourishment at the hands of angels. The words of the Saviour: 'He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do' (Jn 14:12), were completely fulfilled in him. In the year 596, at the age of seventy-five, Simeon went to the Lord, to the eternal enjoyment of the vision of the face of God in the company of the angels.

The Holy Martyr Meletius Stratelates along with 1218 Soldiers and their wives and children - Meletius was accused of demolishing a pagan temple during the reign of Emperor Antoninus. Nailed to a tree, Meletius gave up his holy soul. Many soldiers under his the command, who refused to deny Christ their Lord, suffered with him. They all honourably suffered in the eleventh century and took up habitation in the kingdom of Christ the God;

Our Holy Father Nikita Stylites - As a youth, Nicetas lived an unrestrained and sinful life. Entering into church by chance, he heard the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "*Wash yourselves (from sin) and you will be clean*" ([Isaiah 1:16](#)). These words entered deeply into his heart and caused a complete turnabout in his life. Nicetas left his home, wife, property and entered a monastery near Pereyaslavl, where he lived an ascetical life of difficult mortifications until his death. He wrapped chains around himself and enclosed himself in a pillar for which reason he was called a Stylite. God endowed him with abundant grace so that he healed men of various tribulations. He cured Prince Michael Chernigov of palsy. Certain evil doers spotted the chains on him and, because of their brightness, thought they were made of silver. They killed him one night, removed the chains and carried them away. This occurred on May 16, 1186 A.D. After his death, he appeared to the Elder Simeon and ordered that his discovered chains be placed next to his body in the tombs;

St. Vincent of Lerins - + c 445. Perhaps of a noble family in Gaul, in early life he followed a military career but abandoned it to become a monk at Lérins in southern France. He is best known as the writer of the Commonitorium, where he formulates the Orthodox principle that the only true teachings are those which have been held 'everywhere, always and by all the faithful' (Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus). It is the Church which interprets the Scriptures and is the source of the Faith.