16th Sunday After Pentecost
Martyr Sozon &
Forefeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos
7 / 20 September

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 7: By Thy Cross, Thou didst destroy death / to the Thief, Thou didst open Paradise / for the myrrh-bearers, Thou didst change weeping into joy! / and Thou didst command Thy disciples, O Christ God / to proclaim that Thou art risen / granting the world great mercy.

Troparion of the Forefeast tone 4: From the root of Jesse and from David's loins the divine maiden Mary is born for us today,/ and all things are filled with God and renewed./ Rejoice together, heaven and earth: Praise her, you countries of the nations:/ Joachim rejoices and Anna keeps festival, crying:/ The barren woman gives birth to the Mother of God and the nurse of our life.

Troparion of St Sozon tone 1: O Martyr Sozon, thou didst pledge thy life to God,/ endure the contest and become a sharer in Christ's Passion./ Save from temptation those who cry to thee:/ Glory to Him Who strengthened thee;/ Glory to Him Who crowned thee;/ Glory to Him Who through thee works healings for all.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 7: The dominion of death can no longer hold men captive, / for Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers. / Hell is bound, while the prophets rejoice and cry: / The Saviour has come to those in faith, / enter, you faithful to the Resurrection.

Kontakion of the Forefeast tone 3: Today the bridal chamber of the heavenly Bridegroom,/ Mary the Virgin Mother of God,/ by God's will is born of a barren woman,/ and the chariot of the Word of God/ is beautifully adorned./ She is the gate and the Mother of life:/ for this God chose her.

Kontakion of St Sozon tone 2: Together let us praise with loud voices/ Sozon the Athlete of piety,/ vessel of grace and bestower of healings./ He prays to God for us all.

Vespers: Lord I have Cried, Tone 7, on 10: Octoechos 4; Forefeast: 3 (Noetic beams);

Martyr 3 (When He Who of His own will); G: Forefeast (As she was more exalted);

N: Sunday Dogmatic in the 7th tone .

Aposticha: Octoechos; G/N: Forefeast (Universal joy hath shone forth).

Matins Gospel V

<u>Epistle for Sunday before Exaltation: Galatians 6: 11-18</u>

Epistle 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. We give no offence in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in sleeplessness, in fastings; By purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

What is the 'acceptable time'?

The 'acceptable time', what is this? That of the Gift, that of the Grace, when it is appointed not that an account should be required of our sins, nor penalty exacted, but besides being delivered, that we should also enjoy ten thousand good things, righteousness, sanctification, and all the rest. For how much toil would it have behoved us to undergo in order to obtain this 'time!' But, behold, without our toiling at all it has come, bringing remission of all that was before. He also calls it 'acceptable,' because He accepted those who had transgressed in ten thousand things, and not merely accepted, but advanced them to the highest honour ...Let us, too, therefore strive for the mastery in the time of this gift. It is a day of grace, of grace divine; wherefore even we will obtain the crown with ease. For if, when laden with such great evils, He both received and delivered us, after being delivered from all and actually contributing our part, will He not accept us even more?...

He shows that afflictions are weapons which not only do not strike down, but do even fortify and make stronger ...And let us therefore, when we suffer anything for Christ's sake, not merely bear it nobly, but also rejoice. If we fast, let us leap for joy as if enjoying luxury; if we are insulted, let us dance as if praised; if we spend, let us feel as if gaining; if we bestow on the poor, let us count ourselves to receive: for he who does not give this way will not give readily. When therefore you have a mind to scatter abroad, do not look only at what you spend, but at the fact that you gain more. And not only in alms giving, but also in every kind of virtue, compute not just the severity of the toils, but also the sweetness of the prizes, and before all the subject of this struggle: our Lord Jesus. And if you will readily enter upon the contest, you will love the whole time with pleasure.

For nothing is so apt to cause pleasure as a good conscience. Therefore Paul, though wounded every day, rejoiced indeed and exulted. But the men of this day, although they do not endure a shadow even of what he did, grieve and make lamentations from no other cause than that they do not have a mind full of heavenly philosophy.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XII on II Corinthians VI, 1, 3, 5. B#56, pp. 336-338, 340.

Second Reading: Eph. 6: 10-17

Gospel or the Sunday before Exaltation: John 3: 13-17

GOSPEL: ST. MATTHEW 25:14-30

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man travelling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

The reading of the Gospel, dearly beloved, would have us consider that those of us who receive more gifts than others in this world will be judged more strictly by its Creator. For according as the gifts increase, the account demanded will be more exacting; therefore a man should be more humble and use his gift more diligently in God's service ...Who is this man who sets out on a journey, but our Redeemer, who ascended into heaven in that same flesh which He had assumed? The earth is the proper home of the flesh, but it travels, as it were, to foreign lands, when our Redeemer ascends with it to heaven ...He left spiritual gifts to the faithful who believed in Him ...There are five senses of the body ...so the five talents represent the gift of the five senses: that is to say, external knowledge.

The gifts of understanding and action are signified by the two talents, and the single talent represents the understanding alone. But he who received the five talents gained another five, for there are some people who, although they cannot understand interior and mystical things, nevertheless, by their desire for their heavenly home, teach sound doctrine to all whom they meet, doctrine concerning those exterior matters which they can understand ...Likewise, there are some who ...have a good grasp of what refers to intellect and action: they understand the subtleties of the interior life ...When they teach others by their learning and example they derive, as it were, a double profit from their trading...

To hide one's talent in the earth is to occupy the intelligence God gives us in purely earthly matters, not to seek spiritual profit, never to lift our heart above worldly considerations. For there are some who received the gift of understanding, but who, nevertheless, understand only the flesh. Of these the prophet says, 'They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge' (Jer.4:22)...

Paltry are the goods of this world, however great they may seem in comparison with that reward of eternal life. But the faithful servant ...is taken to that everlasting dwelling, to mingle with the assembly of the angels and to relish that joy in such a way that he can never more suffer the external pains of temporal distress ...The worthless servant ...is a figure of many in the church, who are afraid to lead a better life, but not afraid to continue in the quagmire of their inertia; because they consider themselves to be sinners, they tremble to approach the way of sanctity, but they are not afraid to persist in their vices ...

It will be given to him who already has and he shall abound, for everyone who has the gift of charity receives other gifts besides. But he who has not the gift of charity will lose even those gifts which he seemed to have. So it is necessary, brethren, that charity should be the motive of all your actions ...No idler is completely

deprived of talent...One receives the gift of intelligence ...Another receives worldly wealth ...another ...the craft with which he learns his livelihood ...a fourth the friendship of a rich man.

St. Gregory the Great. Parables of the Gospel, IX. B#48, pp. 59-65.

Second Gospel: John 15:17 – 16:2

Saints of the week

7 / 20 September - Forefeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos - The Holy Martyr Sozon - Born in Lycaonia, Sozon was a shepherd and lived by the Law of God, teaching his brothers and sisters, and his friends, his devout faith. He learned in a vision that he would suffer martyrdom for Christ. At that time, there was a great persecution of Christians near the city of Pompeiopolis on the part of Maximian, the governor of Silicia. In the city, there was a golden idol which was worshipped by the pagans. Sozon left his sheep, went to the city, entered the pagan temple and knocked an arm off the golden idol, melting it down and giving the gold to the poor. There was a great outcry in the city because of this, and the pagans began to search for the guilty man. That no-one else should suffer for his action, Sozon went to the governor and declared himself to be a Christian and the performer of that act. The torturers first beat him, then chained him to a tree and flogged him with iron flails. When he was at his last breath, they cast him into the flames, where holy Sozon gave his soul to God. He suffered in about 304. His relics were found to be wonderworking, and a church dedicated to him was built over them.

Our Holy Father John, Archbishop of Novgorod - He was first a married priest and then, from 1163, bishop in Novgorod, building seven churches during his lifetime. He had a vision of the holy Mother of God and a rare power over demons, making them obey him, and he once miraculously preserved Novgorod from an attack by seventy-two princes. He suffered from diabolical temptations, but overcame them all by the power of the Cross and by prayer. Retiring to a monastery in old age, he received the Great Habit and entered peacefully into rest in the Lord on September 7th, 1185.

St Kassia (Kassiani) the Hymnographer - She was born in Constantinople to a noble family, and grew to be unusually beautiful and learned — so much so that she was chosen to participate in a 'bride show', at which the Emperor Theophilos was to choose a wife. Struck by Kassia's beauty, the Emperor approached her and said 'Through a woman came forth the baser things,' referring to Eve's transgression. Kassia responded, 'Through a woman came forth the better things', referring to the Incarnation of Christ through His Most Pure Mother. Stung by her reply, the Emperor rejected her and chose Theodora as his wife. Kassia entered monastic life and founded a women's monastery in Constantinople, closely allied with the Stoudion Monastery. Serving as abbess of the monastery, she wrote many liturgical hymns, at least twenty of which are included in the services of the Church. Best-known (or at least most closely associated with her) is the Hymn of Kassiani, sung at Matins on Holy Wednesday. She reposed in peace.

Apostles Evodus and Onesiphorus of the Seventy - Euodus and Onesiphorus were apostles of the Seventy. St Ignatius the God-bearer mentions Euodus with great praise in his Epistle to the Antiochians. Euodus was a disciple of the Apostle Peter, and his successor as Bishop of Antioch. The Apostle Peter himself consecrated him. Euodus wrote a work on the Holy Theotokos, in which he
related how the Holy Virgin Mary was brought to the Temple at the age of three, and remained in the Temple for eleven years; how, on entering her fifteenth year, she was entrusted to St. Joseph for protection; and how, at age fifteen, she gave birth to the Lord. Euodus also wrote another work entitled ``The Beacon.'' However, both of these works were destroyed during the persecution of Christians. He was slain for Christ during Emperor Vespasian's persecutions in Antioch. The Apostle Paul mentions St. Onesiphorus as his sincere friend and helper (II Timothy 1:16-18). St. Onesiphorus suffered for Christ in Colophon, where he was bishop. It is said that he was tied to wild horses and pulled apart. Thus, these faithful soldiers of Christ honorably served on earth, and entered into the joy of their Lord.

Also commemorated on this day: Righteous Judith (7th C. BC); Martyr Eupsychius of Caesarea in Cappadocia; Venerable Cloud (Clodoald) the Confessor, prince of France (†560); Venerable Luke, abbot (†after 975); St. Prochorus, (Tryphon in schema), bishop of Rostov (†1328); Monk-martyr Alexander (Peresvet) and Andrew (Oslyabya) Great-Russian warrior schemamonks (†1380); Venerable Serapion of Spaso-Eleazar Monastery

in Pskov (†1480); Monk-martyr Macarius of Kanev (†1678); Venerable Macarius of Optina (†1860); New Hieromartyrs Peter Sneznitsky and Michael Tikhonitsky, priests (†1918); New Hieromartyr John Maslovsky, priest (†1921); New Martyrs of the Asia Minor Catastrophe: Hieromartyrs Chrysostomos, metropolitan of Smyrna, Ambrose, metropolitan of Moschonisia, Procopius, metropolitan of Iconium, Gregory of Kydonia, and Euthymius, bishop of Zilon (†1921-22); New Hieromartyrs Eugene (Zernov), metropolitan of Nizhni-Novgorod, and with him: Stephen (Kreidich), priest, Monk-martyrs Eugene (Vyzhva), Nicholas (Ashchepev), and Pachomius (Ionov) (†1937); New Hieromartyrs Basil Sungurov, Gregory Averin, and Leo (Yegorov), priests (†1937). Movable feast on the first Sunday after September 3rd: Synaxis of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Kazakhstan; Movable feast on the first Sunday after September 7th: Synaxis of the Saints of Altai.

8 / 21 September - The Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God - *Epistle: Phil. 2:5-11 & Epistle: St. Luke: 10:28-42 & 11:27-28)* The Holy Virgin Mary was born of her aged parents, Joachim and Anna. Her father was of the tribe of David and her mother of the tribe of Aaron, and so she was of royal blood from her father and priestly blood from her mother. By this, she foreshadowed Him who would be born of her as King and High Priest. Her parents were already old and had no children, and, because of this, were ashamed before men and humble before God. In their humility, they prayed with tears that God would bring joy to their old age with the gift of a child, as He had once given joy to the aged Abraham and Sarah, giving them their son Isaac. God, almighty and all-seeing, gave them a joy far exceeding all their expectations and their wildest dreams, for He gave them not just a daughter, but the Mother of God; He illumined them not only with temporal joy but with eternal. God gave them just one daughter, who later gave them just one grandson—but what a daughter and what a grandson! Mary full of grace, blessed among women, the temple of the Holy Spirit, altar of the living God, table of living bread, ark of God's holy things, tree of the most delicious fruits, glory of the human race, praise of womanhood, fount of virginity and purity—this was the daughter given by God to Joachim and Anna. Born in Nazareth, she was after three years taken to the Temple in Jerusalem, whence she returned again to Nazareth and shortly afterwards heard the tidings of the holy Archangel Gabriel concerning the birth of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, from her most pure and virginal body.

Troparion of the Mother of God tone 4: Thy birth, O Mother of God,/ has brought joy to all the world;/ for from thee arose the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God,/ Who, having dissolved the curse, has given His blessing,/ and having abolished death, has granted us life eternal.

Kontakion of the Mother of God tone 4: Joachim and Anna were freed from the reproach of childlessness/ and Adam and Eve from the corruption of death, O Immaculate One, by thy holy nativity./ And thy people, redeemed from the guilt of sin,/ celebrate thy birth by crying to thee:/ The barren woman gives birth to the Mother of God and the nurse of our life.

Ss. Ina, king of Wessex, restorer of Glastonbury, & his queen Ethelburga. (8th c.) - He was a son of the underking Cenred and ascended the West-Saxon throne in 688, a year before the death of his predecessor Caedwalla. For thirty-seven years he ruled over a turbulent and war-like people, and by virtue of a varied genius was equally successful as a warrior and legislator. His first efforts were directed towards establishing internal peace, and in the fifth year of his reign he drew up a set of laws which regulated the administration of justice and fixed the legal status of the various elapses of his subjects. With the exception of the Kentish laws this code is the earliest extant specimen of Anglo-Saxon legislation, and for that reason is of particular interest. When matters in his own realm had been adjusted, Ina turned his attention to Withred, King of Kent, and at the head of a formidable army demanded weregild (compensation) for the death of Mul (for Mollo), brother of Caedwalla. Withred paid the full compensation—thirty thousand pounds of silver—and admitted the supremacy of the West-Saxon over all the country held by the English south of the Thames. By successive conquests, Ina added several districts to the western provinces of his domain, and after a bitter war conquered Geraint, King of Cornwall, and built a fortress on the Tone, at the site of the present Taunton. Throughout his entire reign was particularly solicitous for the welfare of religion and religious establishment, founding many monasteries and endowing those already in existence. The Abbey of Glastonbury was erected by him, with the funds, it is thought, which came from the weregild collected from Withred. Other monastic establishments which were recipients of his bounty were those at Malmesbury, Wimborne, Nursling, Tisbury, Waltham, and Sherborne. Worn out by his long rule, Ina determined to abdicate in favour of Æthelheard and Oswald, and to make his peace with God. In

pursuance of this project, he convened the Witenagemot and formally announced his abdication. With his wife he proceeded to Rome, to watch and pray at the tomb of the Apostles in the guise of a poor and pious pilgrim. While there he founded a hospice or home for English pilgrims, in the district known as Burges Saxonum, the modern Borgo. Some historians trace the foundation of the English College at Rome back to this hospice. The memory of the hospice still lives in the Church of San Spirito in Sassia, formerly S. Maria in Saxia; it is thought that King Ina and his Queen Ethelburga, lie buried in this church or in the atrium of St. Peter's. They died blessing God that they had been allowed to lay their dust in the consecrated soil of Rome.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Lucian of Pereyaslavl (†1654); Martyr Athanasius of Thessalonica (†1774); St. Sophronius, bishop of Achtalea, Georgia (†1803); Venerable John (1957) and George (†1962), confessors of Georgia; 'Kursk-Root', 'Domnitsk,' 'Lesna,' 'Lukianov,' 'Pochaev,' 'Syamsk,' 'Kholm,' 'Glinsk' and 'Sophia - the Wisdom of God' Icons of the Mother of God.

9 / 22 September - Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos — Ss Joachim and Anna - St Joachim was of the tribe of Judah, and a descendant of King David. Anna was the daughter of Matthan the priest, of the tribe of Levi as was Aaron the High Priest. This Matthan had three daughters: Mary, Zoia and Anna. Mary was married in Bethlehem and bore Salome; Zoia was also married in Bethlehem and bore Elisabeth, the mother of St John the Forerunner; and Anna was married in Nazareth to Joachim, and in old age gave birth to Mary, the most holy Mother of God. Joachim and Anna had been married for fifty years, and were barren. They lived devoutly and quietly, using only a third of their income for themselves and giving a third to the poor and a third to the Temple, and they were well provided for. Once, when they were already old and were in Jerusalem to offer sacrifice to God, the High Priest, Issachar, upbraided Joachim: 'You are not worthy to offer sacrifice with those childless hands.' Others who had children jostled Joachim, thrusting him back as unworthy. This caused great grief to the two aged souls, and they went home with very heavy hearts. Then the two of them gave themselves to prayer to God that He would work in them the wonder that He had worked in Abraham and Sarah, and give them a child to comfort their old age. God sent them His angel, who gave them tidings of the birth of 'a daughter most blessed, by whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed, and through whom will come the salvation of the world.' Anna conceived at once, and in the ninth month gave birth to the holy Virgin Mary. St Joachim lived for eighty years and Anna for seventy-nine, and they both entered into the kingdom of God.

Commemoration of the Third Ecumenical Council - This Council met in Ephesus in 431 at the time of Emperor Theodosius the Younger. There were two hundred Holy Fathers present at this Council. This Council condemned Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, for his heretical teachings concerning the Most-holy Virgin Mary and the birth of the Lord. Nestorius did not want to call the Holy Virgin the Theotokos (Birth-giver of God), but rather the Christotokos (Birth-giver of Christ). The Holy Fathers condemned the teachings of Nestorius and confirmed that the Holy Virgin be called the Theotokos. Besides this, the Council confirmed the decisions of the First and Second Ecumenical Councils-especially as regarding the Nicaean-Constantinopolitan Creed, commanding that no one take from or add to the Creed.

St. Kieran (Ciaran) of Clonmacnois, Ireland (c.545) - The holy abbot Ciaran was the son of the wagonmaker, Beoit. Beoit was a very good and careful worker, and so he became rich. He and his wife Darerca had five sons and three daughters. Of these sons, four became presbyters and one, a deacon. All three daughters became nuns. This blessed family lived in the province of Meath, but because the local king was greedy and asked for too much tax money, the family moved to Roscommon in the province of Connaught. St Ciaran was born at Roscommon in the year 515. Like other boys his age, the young saint learned to work hard, helping his father, and also working for neighbouring farmers. One of his chores was to herd his family's sheep. Ciaran especially liked this duty, because he could be alone and pray to God in peace. The boy knew many of the psalms by heart, and he loved to chant them as he watched over the flock. The sheep were grazed in a plain called Ai. At that time, the wondrous old man, Saint Diarmat lived on this plain. This holy elder at once saw God's Grace in the young shepherd, and he taught the youth to read the psalms from the book for himself. The two spent many hours together, reading and praying. The elder taught the young saint many things about spiritual struggle, and how to keep himself clean and pure for Christ's sake. When he was old enough, St Ciaran wanted to go to school. In those days, there were no public schools, and the bishops and presbyters taught the students. St Findian had a school at Cluain. Here, he taught the Divine Scripture and the sciences. Saint Ciaran learned quickly, and grew in wisdom and in spirit under his elder. Some of the other students, however, were jealous of the young saint, and they used to torment him and shun him. Ciaran only prayed for them and tried to teach them love and mercy. The students of the school had to take turns working in a flour mill, to help pay for their needs. St Ciaran toiled with meekness and obedience. The saint loved beggars, and from his earliest youth he had sought to help them and give them

money, food or clothing whenever possible. He even gave them some of the flour which he ground. As Saint Findian grew older, he called his monks together and announced that when he reposed, Ciaran should take his place as abbot. To this, they all agreed. Meanwhile, St Ciaran got a blessing from his elder to visit some of the holy places of Ireland. He went to Lake Erne to hear the holy words of St Ninned, and from there, the young man went to the sacred isle of Aran. On Aran Island, the monks lived in great poverty and worked very hard. The holy elder, St Enda, was abbot of Aran in those days, and he accepted St Ciaran with joy. The young saint joined the hard labour and prayers of the monks, and he daily grew in God's Grace. From Aran, the saint made his way to Scattery Island to learn what he could from Saint Senan. The blessed one journeyed around the whole country, learning much from the holy elders, and working and praying with all the monks. Soon, however, many monks came desiring to have St Ciaran as their elder; The saint built a small monastery on Hare Island (called Inis Aingin in Irish language) which is in Lake Ree. Even though Ciaran was the abbot of this monastery, he served the brothers, and often when a visitor came, Saint Ciaran would wash his feet and serve him like a slave. God worked many miracles and healings through this young saint, and the faithful from all over Ireland began to come to Lake Ree as pilgrims. The saint was sorrowful because of the attention and praises he was receiving, and so after a while, he appointed the holy presbyter Donnan as abbot, and he himself departed to the wilderness of Clonmachnoise. In those days, the elder Diarmat was living in this wilderness in a poor cell. The saint came to this cell and built himself one nearby. He lived here with his old friend and teacher for a long time, and a brotherhood soon grew up around him. St Ciaran became a father of saints, for many of his monks later became wonderworkers. The saint spent many years in struggle and prayer. He travelled throughout Ireland preaching and teaching the rulers and people alike to be merciful and charitable. This holy elder and wonderworker reposed in the Lord on 9 September, in the year of our Lord 550. He was about thirty-five years old.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Chariton and Stratorus (3rd C); Venerable Theophanes the confessor (†c.300); Martyr Severian (†320); Venerable Wilfrida of Wilton (†988); Venerable Wulfhilda of Barking (†c.1000); Blessed Nicetas the Hidden, of Constantinople (12th C); Venerable Joseph of Volotsk (†1515); Venerable Joachim of Opochka Monastery (†c.1550); Venerable Joachim of Shartomsk (†1625); Venerable Onuphrius of Vorona, Moldavia (†1789); Synaxis of the Elders of Glinsk Monastery: Philaret (†1841), Iliodor (†1879), Ioannicius (†after 1912), Seraphim (†1958); Innocent (†1888), Basil (†1831), Macarius (†1864), Luke (†1898), Archippus (†1896), Euthymius (†1866), Theodotus (†1859), Martyrius (†1896), Dositheus (†1874), Andronicus (1974) Seraphim (1976), and schema-metropolitan Seraphim (1984); Finding of the relics of St. Theodosius of Uglich, archbishop of Chernigov (†1896); New Hieromartyrs Gregory Garyev, priest, and Alexander Ipatov, deacon (†1918); New Hieromartyrs Zachariah, Archbishop of Voronezh, Sergius Uklonsky, Basil Razumov Joseph Arkharov, Alexis Uspensky, priests, Dmitry Troitsky, deacon, and Martyr Basil Shikalov (†1937); New Monk- martyr Andronicus (Surikov) (†1938); New Hieromartyr Alexander Vinogradov, priest (†1942).

10 / 23 September – Fast Day - Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos — The Holy Martyrs Menodora, Metrodora and Nymphodora - They were three sisters from some place in Asian Bithynia. Brought up in a Christian spirit, they withdrew from the city into the desert, desiring to lift up their minds to God and free themselves from the illusory world, and thus to live their lives in purity and virginity as true brides of Christ. They gave themselves to fasting, prayer and toil, and God adorned them with the gift of wonderworking. When people began to bring the sick to them for healing, they became known against their will. A certain governor, Fronton, heard of them and brought them to trial. Seeing them, the governor was amazed at their beauty, for, although they were nuns and their bodies were withered, their faces were radiant, illumined by an inner peace and the grace of God. The governor at first flattered them and promised to send them to the Emperor, who would give them in marriage to his nobles, but, when he realised that his flattery and promises were having no effect on these brides of Christ the Lord, he ordered that Menodora be put to torture and her sisters be thrown into prison. After harsh torture, the governor cried to Menodora, all wounded and covered in blood: 'Offer sacrifice to the gods!' To this the holy martyr replied: 'Don't you see that I am doing nothing but offer myself in sacrifice to my God?' When she expired under torture, the governor brought out her two sisters and stood them beside Menodora's dead body, and, pointing to it, urged them to deny Christ. As they remained steadfast, he tortured them to death. At that, a thunderbolt fell from the sky and killed the soul-less Fronton and his servants. Christians buried the bodies of these holy martyrs, who suffered some time between 305 and 311, in the time of Galerius, and entered into rest in the Kingdom of Christ.

Also commemorated on this day: Holy Apostles of the Seventy Apelles, Luke, and Clement (1st C); Martyr Barypsabus (2nd C); Right-believing Pulcheria, empress of Byzantium (†453); Venerable Finnian

of Ulster (†579); St. Salvius, bishop of Albi (†584); Hieromartyr Theodard, bishop of Maastricht (†670); Sts. Peter (†826) and Paul (9th C), bishops at Nicaea; Venerable Paul the Obedient of Kiev Caves (14th C); Venerable prince Andrew (in monasticism Ioasaph), of Kubensk (†1453); St. Theodoretus, archbishop of Ryazan (†1617); New Hieromartyrs Ishmael Kudryavtsev, Eugene Popov, John Popov, Constantine Kolpetsky, Peter Grigoriev, Basil Maximov, Gleb Apukhtin, Basil Malinin, John Sofronov, Peter Yurkov, Nicholas Pavlinov, Palladius Popov, priests, Monk-martyrs Meletius (Fedyunev), Gabriel (Yatsik), Martyrs Symeon Turkin and Tatiana Grimblit (†1937); New Hieromartyr Varus, bishop of Lipetsk (†1938); Synaxis of the Saints of Lipetsk.

11 / 24 September - Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos — Canonisation of St. Xenia of St. Petersburg (1978) - Prayer to the Holy Blessed Xenia of Petersburg: O most simple in thy way of life, homeless on earth but an inheritor of the Heavenly Father, blessed wanderer Xenia! Just as earlier those who fell down before the inscription over thy grave, so now we also, hastening to thee, entreat thee to pray that our steps might be directed, according to the word of the Lord, in the doing of His commandments, and that the soul-corrupting lawlessness sowed by the godless might not prevail over our people, but that we all might yet behold the deliverance of thy city and thy beloved Russian land from the present cruel affliction. O thou who didst hide thyself from the wise of this world, but wast known to God, entreat for us humility, a pledge of meekness and love in our hearts, in prayer faith, in repentance hope, in labours firmness, in afflictions the mercy of healing, and the renewal of our whole life, at least from this time forth; so that glorifying thee, with contrition we may confess the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Trinity One in essence and undivided, unto the ages of ages. Amen.

St. Silouan the Athonite - On this day we keep the memorial of our sacred father Silouan whom God inspired, who lived the monastic life upon the Holy Mountain in the Russian Monastery of the holy and great martyr Panteleimon, and who died godly in the Lord on the twenty-fourth day of September in the year of our salvation 1938.

Once, in this life, thou didst see Christ, O Saint;

And now thou beholdest Him face to face,

Not darkly as in a glass.

Thine earthly country delights that thou wast born in her;

Athos rejoices in the Spirit; for in thee she nurtured a saint;

And from that sylvan mountain heaven has now received thee.

Saint Silouan, that citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, was born of pious parents in the land of Russia in the village of Shovsk in the diocese of the Metropolitan of Tambov. He came into the world in the year of our Lord 1866, and from a young man was called to repentance by the all-praised Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary.

When he had reached his twenty-seventh year, he renounced the things of this life, and, with the prayers of Saint John of Kronstadt to speed him on his way, he set forth for Greece and the illustrious Holy Mountain. Here, in the cloister of the holy great martyr and physician Panteleimon, he took upon him the yoke of the monastic life.

Thus he gave himself to God with all his soul, and in a brief while he not only received the gift of unceasing prayer from the most holy Mother of God, but was also granted ineffably to see the living Christ in the chapel of the holy prophet Elijah that was next to the monastery's flour mill.

But this first grace was taken away, and the saint was constrained by anguish and great grief, and with God's permission for fifteen years he was given over to manifold temptations of spiritual foes, and so he followed in the footsteps of Christ, having offered up prayers and strong supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death (Heb. 5:7), being taught by God through a voice from above that gave him this commandment: Keep thy mind in hell, and despair not. This he observed as an infallible rule, and so ran the way of Antony, Macarius, Pœmen and Sisoës, and the other celebrated preceptors and fathers of the desert, to whose measure and spiritual gifts he also attained, and was manifested an apostolic and inspired teacher both living and after death.

The saint was wondrously meek and lowly in heart, a fervent advocate before God for the salvation of all, and unequalled among teachers: For he says that there is no surer proof that the divine Spirit dwells within us than that we love our enemies.

This blessed Saint Silouan passed over from death to life, full of spiritual days on the twenty-fourth day of September in the year of our Lord Jesus Christ 1938: To Whom be glory and might forever and ever. Amen.

At his prayers and those of all Thy saints, O Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

Troparion: By prayer didst thou receive Christ for thy teacher in the way of humility; and the Spirit bare witness to salvation in thy heart; wherefore all peoples called unto hope rejoice this day of thy memorial. O sacred Father Silouan, pray unto Christ our God for the salvation of our souls.

Kontakion: In thine earthly life thou didst serve Christ, following in his steps; and now in heaven thou seest him whom thou didst love, and abidest with him according to the promise. Wherefore, O Father Silouan, teach us the path wherein thou didst walk.

The Venerable Theodora - Theodora was from Alexandria and the wife of a young man. Persuaded by a fortune-teller, she committed adultery with another man and immediately felt the bitter pangs of conscience. She cut her hair, dressed in men's clothing and entered the Monastery of Octodecatos, under the male name of Theodore. Her labor, fasting, vigilance, humbleness and tearful repentance amazed the entire brotherhood. When a promiscuous young woman slandered her, saying that Theodore had made her pregnant, Theodora did not want to justify herself, but considered this slander as a punishment from God for her earlier sin. Banished from the monastery, she spent seven years living in the forest and wilderness and, in addition, caring for the child of that promiscuous girl. She overcame all diabolical temptations: she refused to worship Satan, refused to accept food from the hands of a soldier, and refused to heed the pleas of her husband to return to him-for all of this was only a diabolical illusion, and as soon as Theodora made the sign of the Cross everything vanished as smoke. After seven years, the abbot received her back into the monastery, where she lived for two more years, and reposed in the Lord. Only then did the monks learn that she was a woman; an angel appeared to the abbot and explained everything to him. Her husband came to the burial, and then remained in the cell of his former wife until his repose. St. Theodora possessed much grace from God: she tamed wild beasts, healed infirmities, and brought forth water from a dry well. Thus, God glorified a true penitent, who with heroic patience repented nine years for just one sin. She reposed in the year 490.

Venerable Euphrosynus the Cook - Euphrosynus was a simple man, but a man of God. He served as the cook in an Amorean monastery in the ninth century. One night, the spiritual father of this monastery saw himself in Paradise, and saw Euphrosynus there as well. Euphrosynus picked and gave him three apples from Paradise. When the spiritual father awoke, he saw three unusually beautiful and fragrant apples by his pillow. He quickly found Euphrosynus and asked him: ``Where were you last night, brother?'' ``I was where you were, father,'' the blessed God-pleaser replied. The spiritual father then revealed the entire incident to the monks, and all recognized the sanctity and godliness of Euphrosynus. But Euphrosynus, fearing the praise of men, immediately fled the monastery and hid in the wilderness, where he spent the remainder of his life.

St. Deinol (Daniel), first bishop of Bangor, Wales (584) - Dismissal Hymn (Tone 4): By thy teaching and pious life thou didst shine forth in the age of Saints, O Hierarch Deinol, and becoming Bangor's first bishop thou wast an instrument of God's grace, leading many to salvation. Pray, O Saint, that we may be led into the Way of Truth that our souls may be saved.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Demetrius, his wife Evanthia, and their son Demetrian (1st C); Martyrs Serapion, Cronides, and Leontius of Alexandria (†237); Martyr Ia of Persia and 9,000 others with her (†362-364); Martyrs Diodorus and Didymus of Syria (4th C); Venerable Paphnutius the confessor, bishop of Tais (4th C); St. Patiens, bishop of Lyon (†491); Translation of the relics of the Venerable Sergius and Herman, wonderworkers of Valaam; New Hieromartyrs Nicholas Podyakov and Victor Usov, priests (†1918); New Hieromartyr Carp Elba, priest (†1937); New Hieromartyr Nicholas Shirogorov, deacon (†1942); 'Kaplunovka,' Icon of the Mother of God.

12 / 25 September – **Fast Day - Apodosis of the Nativity of the Theotokos - The Hieromartyr Autonomus -** A bishop, he left Italy for Bithynia in Asia during Diocletian's persecution, going to a place called Soreoi, where he brought many to the Christian faith and built them a church dedicated to the Archangel Michael. He stayed in the house of a devout Christian, Cornelius, whom Autonomus ordained priest and then consecrated bishop. Not far from the town of Soreoi was a place called Limnae, entirely inhabited by pagans. St Autonomus went to this place and quickly brought many to the light by the Gospel of Christ. This roused the pagans, and they hurried one day to the church of the Archangel Michael in Soreoi and, during divine service, slew Autonomus in the altar, killing also many other Christians in the church. In the time of the Emperor Constantine, a noble courtier,

Severian, built a church over St Autonomus's grave. Two hundred years after his death, St Autonomus appeared to a soldier called John. This soldier dug up the saint's relics and found them to be completely uncorrupt, and many of the sick received healing from them. Thus God glorified him who glorified Him while in the body.

St. Ailbe of Emly - He was the child of a clandestine union. The father, fearing King Cronan, fled before the child was born. The King ordered that the baby be killed but his servants left him near a rock where, it is said, a wolf nursed him. The child was later found by a passerby - Lochan - who gave him to some Britons in the neighbourhood. A tradition held that he went to Rome and was ordained bishop by the Pope. He preached throughout Ireland, and made people "not only Christians but saints." He founded the monastery of Emly which became very important in Munster. A ninth century Rule bears his name. And the wolf? Ailbe was able to save the wolf when he was present at a run at which she was to be killed. She ate from his table from then on.

Tropar of St. Ailbe Tone 4: When Ireland's Enlightener returned to his native land,/ he found thee, O holy Ailbe, preaching the Faith at Emly,/ where at the bidding of an Angel thou hadst built a church./ O wise shepherd of souls and glorious ascetic,/ O friend of animals, and fellow missionary with the illustrious Patrick,/ pray to Christ our God that we might also become bastions of Orthodoxy/ and a shining example to our fellow countrymen,/ drawing them away from ignorance and error/ and into the true Faith that all our souls may be saved.

Also commemorated on this day: St. Coronatus, bishop of Nicomedia (†249); Martyrs Macedonius, Tatian, and Theodulus, in Phrygia (†361); Martyr Julian and 40 others with him (4th C); St. Sacerdos, bishop of Lyon (†551); Venerable Daniel of Thasos (†843); Venerable Athanasius of Serpukhov (†1401) and his disciple Athanasius (†1395); Venerable Bassian of Tiksna (†1624); Translation of the relics of Righteous Symeon of Verkhoturye (1704); Hieromartyr Dositheus, metropolitan of Tbilisi (†1795); Blessed Alexis of Elnat, fool-for-Christ (†1937); New Hieromartyrs Theodore Lebedev, John Prudentov, and Nicholas Zhitov, priests, and Martyr Alexis Voroshin (†1937); Martyr Theodore of Alexandria; 'Boyan' Icon of the Mother of God.

13 / 26 September - Forefeast of the Exaltation of the Cross - The Consecration of the Church of the Resurrection. When the holy Empress Helena found the Lord's Cross in Jerusalem, she stayed longer in the city and built churches in Gethsemane, in Bethlehem, on the Mount of Olives and in other places that commemorated the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. On Golgotha, where she found the Precious Cross, she began to build an enormous church, under whose roof would be the places both where the Lord was crucified and where He was buried, the holy Empress wanting to bring under one roof the places of His suffering and His glory. But Helena went to the Lord before this magnificent church was completed. It was finished in the same year in which Constantine completed thirty years on the throne, and so the consecration of the church and the Emperor's Jubilee were fixed for the same day, September 13th, 335. At that time, a local Council of bishops was meeting in Tyre. These bishops, with many others, made their way to Jerusalem, to the solemn consecration of the Church of the Resurrection of the Lord. It was then instituted that this day, as a day of victory and triumph for the Church of Christ, should be celebrated every year.

Hieromartyr Cornelius the Centurion - Soon after the sufferings on the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and after His Ascension into Heaven, there settled at Caesarea in Palestine a centurion by the name of Cornelius, who earlier had lived in Thracian Italy. Although he was a pagan, he distinguished himself by deep piety and good deeds, as the holy Evangelist Luke testifies about him (Acts 10: 1). The Lord did not disdain his virtuous life and led him to the understanding of truth through the enlightening light of faith in Christ.

One time Cornelius was at prayer in his home. An Angel of God appeared to him and said, that his prayer had been heard and accepted by God, and commanded him to send people to Joppa to Simon, called Peter. Cornelius immediately fulfilled the command. While those dispatched were on their way to Joppa, the Apostle Peter was at prayer, during which time he had a vision: thrice were lowered down vessels in visage of great plenitude, filled with meats and fowl. From Heaven he heard a voice, commanding him to eat of everything. At the refusal of the apostle there followed a reply: "What God hath purified, regard not as unclean" (Acts 10: 15).

By means of this vision the Lord commanded the Apostle Peter to go at preaching the Word of God to the pagans. When the Apostle Peter in the company of those sent to meet him arrived at the house of Cornelius, he was received with great joy and respect by the host together with his kinsmen and comrades. Cornelius on his knees bowed down to the apostle and requested to be taught the way of salvation. The apostle began to preach about the earthly life of Jesus Christ, about the miracles and signs worked by the Saviour, about His sufferings,

the teachings about the Kingdom of Heaven, the death on the Cross, the Resurrection and Ascent into Heaven. By grace under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Cornelius believed in Christ and was baptised together with all his kinsfolk. He was the first pagan to receive Baptism.

He retired from the world and went preaching the Gospel together with the Apostle Peter, who made him a bishop. When the Apostle Peter, together with his helpers Saints Timothy and Cornelius, was in the city of Ephesus, he learned of a particularly vigorous idol-worship in the city of Skepsis. Lots were drawn as to whom that would go there, falling upon Saint Cornelius. In the city lived a prince by the name of Demetrios, learned in the ancient Greek philosophy, hating Christianity and venerating the pagan gods, in particular Apollo and Theos/Deus (Zeus). Learning about the arrival of Saint Cornelius in the city, he immediately summoned him and asked him the reason for his coming. Saint Cornelius answered, that he came to free him from the darkness of ignorance and lead him to knowledge of the True Light. The prince, not comprehending the meaning of what was said, became angry and demanded him to answer each of his questions. When Saint Cornelius explained, that he serves the Lord and that the reason for his coming consists in an announcement of the Truth, the prince became enraged and demanded from Cornelius an offering of sacrifice to the idols. The saint asked to be shewn the gods. When he entered the pagan temple, Cornelius turned towards the East and bending down on his knees, he uttered a prayer to the Lord. There began an earthquake, and the temple of Zeus and the idols situated in it were destroyed. All the populace, seeing what had happened, were terrified. The prince was even more vexed and began to take counsel together with those approaching him, about how to destroy Cornelius. They bound the saint and took him to prison for the night. At this point one of his servants informed the prince the grievous news that his wife and child had perished beneathe the rubble of the destroyed temple. But a certain while later one of the pagan-priests, by the name of Barbates, reported that he heard the voice of the wife and son somewhere in the ruins and that they were praising the God of the Christians. The pagan-priest asked to free the imprisoned one, as gratitude for the miracle worked by Saint Cornelius, in that the wife and son of the prince remained alive. The joyous prince in the company of those about him hastened to the prison, declaring that he believed in Christ and asking him to lead out his wife and son from somewhere in the ruins of the temple. Saint Cornelius set off to the destroyed idol-temple, and through prayer the suffering were freed. After this the prince Demetrios, and all his kinsmen and comrades accepted holy Baptism. Saint Cornelius lived for a long time in this city, converted to Christ all the pagan inhabitants, and made Eunomios a presbyter for service to the Lord. Saint Cornelius died in old age and was buried not far from the pagan temple destroyed by him.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Cronides, Leontius, and Serapion (†237); Martyrs Seleucus, and Stratonicus (3rd C); Martyrs Macrobius, Gordian, Elias, Zoticus, Lucian, and Valerian (†320); St. Litorius, bishop of Tours (†371); Hieromartyr Julian, priest of Galatia (4th C); Venerable Peter at Atroe (9th C); Venerable John of Prislop (16th C); Great Martyr Ketevan, queen of Georgia (†1624); Venerable Hierotheus of Iveron, Mt. Athos (†1745); New Hieromartyrs Stephan Kostogryz and Alexander Aksenov, priests, and Nicholas Vasyukovich, deacon (†1937).

† Daily Scripture Readings †

Monday – Vespers: Gen. 28:10-17; Ezek. 43:27, 44:1-4; Prov. 9:1-11
Matins Gospel: Luke 1:39-49, 56 (§4); Epistle: Phil. 2:5-11 (§240)
Gospel: Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28 (§54)

Tuesday – Epistle: for Monday: Eph. 1:22-2:3 (§219); for Tuesday: Eph. 2:19-3:7 (§222)
Gospel: for Monday: Mark 10:46-52 (§48); for Tuesday: Mark 11:11-23 (§50)

Wednesday –Epistle: Eph. 3:8-21 (§223); Gospel: Mark 11:22-26 (§51)

Thursday – Epistle: Eph. 4:14-19 (§225); Gospel: Mark 11:27-33 (§52)

Friday - Epistle: for Friday: Eph. 4:17-25 (§226); for the Theotokos: Phil. 2:5-11 (§240)
Gospel: for Friday: Mark 12:1-12 (§53); for the Theotokos: Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28 (§54)

Saturday –Vespers: III Kings 8:22-23, 27-30; Prov. 3:19-34; Prov. 9:1-11
Epistle: for the Holy Sepulchre: Heb. 3:1-4 (§307); for the Saturday before the Exaltation: I

Cor. 2:6-9 (§126); Gospel: for the Holy Sepulchre: Matt. 16:13-18 (§67); for the Saturday before the Exaltation: Matt. 10:37-11:1 (§39)

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE NATIVITY OF THE MOST-HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

O greatly desired and long awaited one,
O Virgin, thou hast been obtained from the Lord with tears!
A bodily temple of the Most-holy Spirit shalt thou become,
And shalt be called Mother of the Eternal Word.

The Burning Bush they called thee,
For thou wilt receive within thyself the divine fire:
Ablaze with fire but not consumed,
Thou shalt bear the Golden Fruit and offer it to the world.

Thou shalt be the Bearer of Him Who bears the heavens,
To Whom all of heaven offers up praise!
The Miracle of miracles shall come to pass within thee,
For thou shalt bear heaven, thou who art ``more spacious than the heavens!''

Thou art more precious to us, O Virgin, than precious stones,
For thou art the source of salvation for mankind.
For this, may the entire universe glorify thee,
O Most-holy Virgin, O white Turtledove!

The King of Heaven shall desire to enter the world,
And shall pass through thee, O Beautiful Gate!
O Virgin, when thou dost become woman thou shalt bear Christ for us;
From thy body, the Sun shall blaze forth.

REFLECTION

St. Dionysius the Areopagite writes of the immeasurable joy, the outer and inner radiance, and the indescribable fragrance that he sensed in the presence of the Holy Theotokos when he visited her in Jerusalem. In his zeal, he says that if he had not known the One True God, he would have recognized her, the Holy Virgin Mary, as God. The Holy Virgin made such a powerful and unique impression on men during her earthly life-and she received an incomparably greater power and glory after her physical death when, by the will of God, she was exalted above the heavenly hosts. Her power comes from her ceaseless prayer for the faithful, for all those who turn to her for help. When St. John of Novgorod and his people prayed to her for help against a hostile army, he understood that she was simultaneously praying to the Lord with tears in their behalf, and Novgorod was miraculously saved. As she was compassionate toward her crucified Son, so the Holy Most-pure One is also compassionate toward all those in need, and who turn to her for help. It could be said that the entire earth is covered by the miracles of her mercy. Even today, there lives in Belgrade a café owner (C. J.), who was born in the village of Labunishte (Macedonia) outside Struga. His mother brought him blind to the Monastery of Kali to, where, after the priest prayed over him before the icon of the Holy Theotokos, he received his sight. The first monk at Pochaev saw a fiery pillar extending from earth to heaven, and in that flaming pillar he saw the Holy Theotokos. She was standing on a rock. On the spot where she stood, a spring of healing water sprang forth: even today, it heals many of the sick.