

# 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

## The Holy Hierarchs of Moscow

### 21 September / 4 October



**Resurrection Tropar, Tone 2:** When Thou didst descend to death, O Life Immortal, Thou didst slay hell with the splendour of Thy Godhead! And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead, all the powers of Heaven cried out: O Giver of Life, Christ our God, Glory to Thee!

**Troparion of the Hierarchs tone 4:** Russian Hierarchs, guardians of Apostolic tradition, / firm pillars, guides of Orthodoxy, / Peter, Alexis, Jonas, Philip and Hermogenes, / pray to the Lord of all / to grant peace to the world and great mercy to our souls.

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

**Kontakion of the Hierarchs tone 3:** You were holy as Hierarchs, / you taught the people, and you were well-pleasing to God. / He has glorified you with incorruption and miracles / as disciples of the grace of God.

#### Matins Gospel VIII

#### EPISTLE: II Cor . 11:31-12:9

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; But I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands. It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- How he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

#### PAUL'S VISIONS AND REVELATIONS OF THE LORD

This revelation was great indeed ...Why is it then that he neither spoke plainly nor kept silence? To show by this also that he resorts to the thing unwillingly ...to show that he who had refrained for so long a time would not now have spoken out unless the necessity for doing so had been great. But he would still have kept silence, had he not seen the brothers perishing ...

Was it the mind that was caught up and the soul, while the body remained dead, or was the body caught up? It is impossible to tell. For if Paul, who was caught up and whom things unspeakable - so many and so great - had befallen, was in ignorance, much more are we. For indeed, that he was in Paradise he knew, and that he was in third heaven he was not ignorant, but the manner he did not clearly know ...For this reason he also goes on to say, 'Of such a one I will glory,' not meaning that he who was caught up was some other person, but he so frames his language in the best manner he possibly could, so as to mention the fact, and at the same time to avoid speaking of himself openly ... But why was he caught up? In my thinking, so he might not seem to be inferior to the rest of the Apostles. For since they had accompanied Christ but Paul had not: He therefore caught him up unto glory - 'into Paradise' ...He also added, 'For I will speak the truth, but I forbear lest any man should account me above what he sees me to be, or hears from me.' Here you have the acknowledged reason; for they even deemed them to be gods, on account of the greatness of their miracles ... By 'the messenger of Satan,' he means Alexander the coppersmith, the party of the Hymenaeus and Philetus, all the adversaries of the Word, those who contended with and fought against him, those who cast him into a prison, those who beat him, and who led him away to death, for they did Satan's business.

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXVI on II Corinthians XII, 1, 2. B#56, pp. 398-400*  
for the Hierarchs: Heb . 13:17-21

## GOSPEL: LUKE 6:31-36

The Lord said, as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

### “LOVE YE YOUR ENEMIES”

Starting with the Sunday about “the talents,” the Sunday readings have been showing us how a talent (the strength given to each of us by God to fulfil His commandments of love for God and neighbour) was manifested in various Christian qualities of the human soul. On the Sunday about “the Canaanite woman”—in deep humility; on this Sunday about “the miraculous catch of fish”—in obedience to the word of God, in unshakable faith. And here in the Apostle and Gospel readings for this Sunday—in great patience in sorrows, in great spiritual comfort, and especially in the unspeakable joy which is hidden in mercy and love for one’s enemies. The last one, by human standards, appears to be unnatural; but because of the strength of the Lord’s talent, it is possible, joyous, wonderful.

This is what the Apostle says today: “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for ever, knoweth that I lie not” (II Cor. 11:31). What is this? What is the Apostle going to say further if he makes such a beginning in which he affirms, “I lie not”? Further on, he reveals what happened to him in Damascus: “In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands” (II Cor. 11:32-33). As you can see, a terrible epoch of martyrdom was opening up, which the first Christians lived through after the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, at the beginning of the preaching.

The Apostle Paul was going to Damascus to persecute the Christians. But on the way, the Lord Himself appeared to him in a vision and said: “Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” (Acts 9:4). And here the truth was revealed to the Apostle Paul. The Messiah, the true Messiah appeared to him on the road to Damascus. And when he arrived in Damascus, instead of persecuting the Christians, he himself started to preach Christ. Knowing his past, they did not believe him at first. But later, when they did believe, they began to consider him a traitor, an enemy of the Jews. This is why the Apostle Paul begins this passage with the words: “I lie not.” Because in order to preach Christ as the Messiah Who had come, strength was required; and a special grace of God was needed, that talent which God gives to his servants, to strengthen such a preacher. And here the same talent which strengthened the Apostle earlier in Damascus, when he was almost caught to be martyred (and only a miracle delivered him from their hands); this same talent supported and encouraged him even now.

And further on in this Epistle, the Apostle Paul shows us in more detail what actually strengthened his spirit in such a difficult struggle. “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven” (II Cor. 12:2). A mysterious revelation. There, Christ appeared on the road, and here, Christ revealed to him a great mercy. He revealed the state in which the soul perceived “the third heaven,” a state of spirit, a peace of heart which is ineffable.

So in giving us this reading today, the Holy Church shows us that there was something in the martyrdom of the first Christians which supplied them with that strength in which appeared an unearthly force, which is this same godly talent, the gift of God. This was a peace of soul which covered all suffering, covered all earthly sorrows, which was completely above everything. Here is the state of spiritual strength which is presented to us today for our edification. We must follow the Lord. But how do we start on this way? Today’s Gospel shows us the beginning, the first steps which a Christian must make in order to walk. If you remember, the Gospel said: “And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye?” (Lk. 6:31-32). And further, “If ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? ...But love ye your enemies, and do good [to those who hate you], and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest” (Lk. 6:34-35).

“Love ye your enemies.” This is the first step which today’s Gospel reading offers us, so that we may receive that strength which the Apostle Paul also received in a vision of the third heaven, as did all the martyrs. If we will fulfil what the Holy Church gives us in the words of the Gospel, then let us only start to do so; let us step on this new way. And we will receive that revelation which will help us in those terrible moments when grief invades our soul, when sorrows surround us. The grief and sorrows will go away. Yes, they will leave us, because in that moment these points of grace, this godly light of Christ, will be revealed to us and will give us strength to bear the burdens of our earthly life, so that we may be comforted in Eternal Life with Christ.

*Archbishop Andrei, The One Thing Needful*

for the Hierarchs: Matt. 5:14-19

## Saints of the week

**5 / 18 October - Sts. Peter, Alexis, Jonah, Philip, Hermogenes (Germogen), Philaret, Innocent (Veniaminov), and Tikhon, metropolitans of Moscow.**

**The Holy Martyr Charitina of Amisus** - Orphaned young, she was adopted by an eminent Christian man called Claudius, who brought her up as his own daughter. Charitina was meek, humble, obedient and silent. She studied the law of God day and night and vowed to live in perpetual virginity as a true bride of Christ. But, Charitina having brought others to the Christian faith, the Emperor Diocletian's governor, Dometius, heard of her and sent soldiers to take her from her foster-father for trial. The judge asked her: 'Is it true, little girl, that you are a Christian, and that you delude others by bringing them to this dishonourable faith?' Charitina courageously replied: 'It is true that I am a Christian, and a lie that I delude others. I lead those in error to the way of truth, bringing them to my Christ.' The wicked judge ordered that her hair be cut off and live coals put on her head, but the maiden was preserved by God's power. They threw her into the sea, but God delivered her from it. She was bound to a wheel which began to turn, but an angel of God stopped the wheel and Charitina remained unharmed. Then the wicked judge sent some dissolute youths to rape her. Fearing this dishonour, St Charitina prayed to God to receive her soul before these dissolute men could foul her virginal body and so, while she was kneeling in prayer, her soul went out from her body to the immortal Kingdom of Christ. The Hieromartyr Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria; Our Holy Father Eudocimus of Vatepedi; Our Holy Fathers Damian, Jeremiah and Matthew.

**6 / 19 October - The Holy and Glorious Apostle Thomas** - He was one of the twelve Great Apostles. Through his doubt of the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, a new confirmation was given of that wonderful and saving event, for the risen Lord appeared again to His disciples, to convince Thomas. The Lord said to Thomas: 'Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing', and Thomas cried: 'My Lord and my God! (John 20). After the descent of the Holy Spirit, when the apostles cast lots to see who would go where to preach the Gospel, it fell to Thomas to go to India. He was somewhat saddened at having to go so far away, but the Lord appeared to him and comforted him. In India, St Thomas converted many, both rich and poor, to the Christian faith, and founded a Church there, making priests and bishops. Among others, St Thomas converted two sisters, Tertiana and Mygdonia, wives of Indian princes. Both sisters were ill-treated for their faith by their husbands, who would not live with them after their baptism, and divorced them. Being freed from their marriages, they lived godly lives till their deaths. Dionysius and Pelagia, a couple at first betrothed to each other, heard the Apostle's teaching and did not live together, but devoted themselves to the ascetic life. Pelagia died a martyr for the Faith and Dionysius was made bishop by the Apostle. Prince Misdaeus, the husband of Tertiana, whose wife and son Iuzanes Thomas baptised, condemned the Apostle to death, and sent five soldiers who ran him through with their lances, and thus the holy Apostle Thomas gave his soul into the hands of his Christ. Before his death, he, with the other apostles, was miraculously borne to Jerusalem for the funeral of the most holy Mother of God. Arriving late, he grieved bitterly and, at his request, the tomb of the Most Pure was opened, but the body was not there; the Lord had taken His Mother to His heavenly home. Thus St Thomas first, by his unbelief, confirmed the faith in the Resurrection of the Lord and then, by his late arrival, revealed to us the wondrous glorification of the Mother of God. Our Holy Father, the New Martyr Macarius.

**7 / 20 October - The Holy Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus** - These holy and wonderful martyrs and heroes of the Christian faith were at first nobles at the court of the Emperor Maximian. The Emperor himself valued them greatly for their courage, wisdom and zeal, but, when he heard that these great nobles of his were Christians, his love for them turned to fury. And once, when there was a great offering of sacrifices to idols, the Emperor summoned Sergius and Bacchus to offer sacrifice together with him, and they openly refused to obey him in this. Beside himself with anger, the Emperor ordered that their robes, rings and marks of eminence be stripped from them and they be dressed in women's clothing. He then put iron yokes on their necks and led them thus through the streets of Rome, to be mocked by each and all. The Emperor then sent them to Asia, to Antiochus the governor, for torture. Antiochus had achieved his distinguished rank with the help of Sergius and Bacchus, who had at one time recommended him to the Emperor. When Antiochus began to urge them to deny Christ and save themselves from dishonourable suffering and death, the two saints replied: 'Both honour and dishonour, both life and death—all are one to him who seeks the heavenly Kingdom.' Antiochus threw Sergius into prison and ordered that Bacchus be tortured first. The servants took turns in beating holy Bacchus until his whole body was broken into fragments. His holy spirit went forth from his broken and bloodstained body and was borne to the Lord by angels. St Bacchus suffered in the town of Varvallis. Then holy Sergius was led out. Iron shoes studded with nails were put on his feet, and he was driven out into the Syrian town of Resapha, and there beheaded with the sword. His soul went to Paradise where, together with his friend Bacchus, he received the wreath of immortal glory from Christ his King and Lord. These two glorious knights suffered for the Christian faith in about 303; The Holy Martyr Polychronius; St. Dubtach, bishop of Ardmagh (513); Holy Martyr Princess Osyth of Crich, England (c.700).

**8 / 21 October - Our Holy Mother Pelagia** - A repentant sinner, she was born a pagan in Antioch and endowed by God with great physical beauty, but she used this beauty to destroy her own soul and those of others, acquiring great wealth from her prostitution. One day, walking past the church of the holy martyr Julian, where Bishop Nonnus was preaching, she turned into the church and listened to the sermon, which was about the Dreadful Judgement and the punishment of sinners. These words so shook her, and wrought so great a change in her, that she was of a sudden filled with self-loathing and fear of God, and, repenting of all her filthy sins, fell down before St Nonnus, begging him to baptise her: 'Holy father, be merciful to me, a sinner; baptise me, and teach me repentance. I am a sea of iniquity, an abyss of destruction, a net and weapon of the devil.' Thus this penitent implored Christ's hierarch with tears. And he baptised her. Blessed Romana, a deaconess of that church, stood sponsor to her at her baptism and, after that, as her spiritual mother, grounded her well in the Christian faith. But Pelagia was not content just to be baptised. Feeling the weight of her many sins and the pricking of her conscience, she decided on a great asceticism. She gave away to the poor the enormous wealth she had amassed by her immorality and went secretly to Jerusalem, where, under a man's name as the monk Pelagius, she shut herself in a cell on the Mount of Olives and there began a strict asceticism of fasting, prayer and vigils. Three years later, St Nonnus's deacon, James, visited her and found her still alive, but when he went to her again a few days later, he found her dead body and gave it burial. St Pelagia entered into rest in about

461. Thus that sometime great sinner, by repentance and striving, received the mercy of God, the forgiveness of her sins and sanctification, and her purified and sanctified soul was made worthy of the Kingdom of God. Our Holy Mother Thals; The Holy Martyr Pelagia.

**9 / 22 October - The Holy Apostle James** - The son of Alphaeus and one of the twelve Great Apostles, he was the brother of the Apostle and Evangelist Matthew. He was a witness of the true words and miracles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and a witness of His Passion, Resurrection and Ascension. After the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, it fell to the lot of the Apostle James to preach Christ's Gospel in Eleutheropolis and the surrounding area, and then in Egypt, where he suffered for his Saviour. With great power both in word and act, James spread abroad the saving news of the incarnate Word of God, rooting out idol worship, driving demons out of men, healing all manner of sickness and disease in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. His labours and his zeal were crowned with great success. Many pagans came to belief in Christ the Lord, churches were founded and set in order and priests and bishops were made. He suffered in Egypt in the town of Ostracina, being crucified by the pagans. Thus this great and wonderful apostle of Christ went to the heavenly Kingdom, to reign forever with the King of glory. Our Holy Father Andronicus and his wife Athanasia; Holy and Righteous Abraham and Lot; St Dimitrios, Patriarch of Alexandria; St Stephen, Despot of Serbia; Hieromartyr Dionysius (Denis) of Paris, bishop (c. 258) - an Italian sent to Paris in the year 250 with six other missionaries, including two bold assistants, Eleutherius and Rusticus. The pagan citizens of the Roman city were disturbed by the success of the Christian Gospel, as a result of the labours of the missionaries. The Roman governor, Fescenninus Sisinnus, arrested the three and put them in prison. For a long time they suffered privations until they were beheaded and their corpses thrown into the River Seine. Montmatre, 'Martyr's Hill', marks the place of their death.

**10 / 23 October - Synaxis of the Holy Elders of Optina** - Sts. Moses, Anthony, Leonid, Ambrose, Macarius, Hilarion, Isaac, Joseph, Anatole, Barsanuphius, Isaac the Younger, Anatole the Younger, Nectarius, and Hieromartyr Nikon; The Holy Martyrs Eulampius and Eulampia - They were brother and sister from Nicomedia. At the time of a vicious persecution of Christians by the Emperor Maximian (286- 305), some of the faithful of Nicomedia fled the city and hid. The young Eulampius was sent into the city for bread. Entering it, he saw the imperial decree on the persecution and killing of Christians stuck onto a wall, and, laughing at it, took it down and tore it up. He was immediately brought to trial for this. When the judge urged him to deny Christ, Eulampius began in return to urge the judge to deny the false idols and accept Christ as the one, living God. Then the judge ordered that he be flogged until the blood flowed, and tortured in other ways. Hearing of the torture of her brother, the maiden Eulampia ran to join him in suffering for Christ, and she was likewise beaten till the blood flowed from her nose and mouth. After that, they were thrown into boiling pitch then into a red-hot furnace, but they, by the power of the sign of the Cross and the name of Christ, rendered the fire harmless. Finally, St Eulampius was beheaded, but St Eulampia breathed her last before the same could be done to her. Two hundred other Christians, who had come to faith in Christ by seeing the power and miracles of St Eulampius and his sister, were slaughtered. All were crowned with wreaths of martyrdom and entered into their immortal, heavenly home. The Holy Martyrs of Zographou; Our Holy Father Theophilus the Confessor; The Holy Martyr Theotecnus; Our Holy Father Bassian; St. Paulinus, archbishop of York (644).

**11 / 24 October - Fast Day - The Holy Apostle Philip** - Born in Palestinian Caesarea, he was married and had four daughters, all four endowed by God with the gift of discernment and all four vowed virgins for the sake of Christ (Acts 21:8-9). When the holy apostles chose deacons, Philip was chosen along with Stephen and the others (6:5). Philip served the poor and the widows with great fervour. When persecution fell on the Christians in Jerusalem, he fled to Samaria and there preached the Gospel and witnessed to it by many miracles, driving out demons, healing the sick and so forth. Seeing the miracles of the holy apostle, Simon the Magician was baptised. St Philip also baptised the eunuch of Queen Candace. After that, an angel of God suddenly and invisibly bore him away to Azotus, where he taught and preached, bringing many to Christ (Acts 8). He was later made bishop in Tralles. He died peacefully in great old age, and entered into the joy of his Lord.

**Commemoration of the Seventh Ecumenical Council** - This Council was held in 787 in Nicaea, in the reign of the devout Empress Irene and her son Constantine, and in the time of Patriarch Tarasius. This Council finally upheld the veneration of icons, expounding it from Holy Scripture, the witness of the holy fathers and the examples of miracles in connection with the holy icons. Among other examples cited, the Cypriot bishop, Constantine, brought forward this one: A herdsman from the city of Constantia, driving his flock out to pasture one day, saw an icon of the Mother of God adorned with flowers by the devout. "Why give so much honour to a rock?", said the herdsman, obviously brought up in iconoclasm, and threw his iron stave at the icon, damaging the right eye of the Mother of God. As soon as he had left that spot, he stumbled over the same stave and put out his own right eye. Returning blinded to the city, he cried out tearfully that it was a punishment from the Mother of God. This Council also decided that the relics of the martyrs be placed in the antimins (the cloth spread on the Holy Table for the celebration of the Liturgy). Three hundred and sixty-seven fathers took part in the Council. May the Lord have mercy on us and save us by their prayers; Our Holy Father Theophanes the Hymnographer; St Nectarius, Patriarch of Constantinople; The Holy Martyrs Zinai and Philonilla; St. Cainnech (Kenneth), abbot of Aghaboe, Ireland (7th c.);

**St. Ethelburga, abbess of Barking Monastery, England, sister of St. Erkonwald (c.676)** - taught by Saint Hilda she was known for here meekness and humility and received many gifts of Grace from God, and miracles were worked through her holy prayers. Our holy mother Ethel had a great love for all people and she tried to help anyone who had a need. When a great epidemic came to Britain and hundreds of people were dying she received the sick and cared for them with her own hands. This holy saint lived a life of poverty and of love for God and neighbour for a very long time. At last, the time came for her to depart this life. As she lay dying, a great light suddenly filled her cell and God's angels took her soul to paradise.