



24th Sunday After Pentecost

St. Paul the Confessor, Bishop of Constantinople

6 / 19 November

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 St Paul the Confessor tone 3: Thou wast shown to the Church as another Paul/ and a zealot among priests by the confession of the Faith./ Abel and the blood of Zacharias cry with thee unto the Lord./ O righteous Father, entreat Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

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 St Paul the Confessor tone 2: Thou didst shine on earth as a star from heaven, O Paul,/ and dost now enlighten the Church/ for which thou didst suffer and lay down thy life./ Thy innocent blood cries out to the Lord with that of Abel and Zacharias.

Matins Gospel II

EPISTLE: Ephesians 2: 14-22

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, And that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, In whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

YOU ARE NO LONGER STRANGERS AND FOREIGNERS, BUT FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

Is this then the great privilege, it may be said, that we are admitted into the commonwealth of the Jews? ...What is this, 'both one?' He does not mean that He has raised us to that high heritage of theirs, but that he has raised both us and them to a yet higher. However, the blessing to us is greater, because to the Jews it had been promised, and they were nearer than we ...For this reason he says, 'And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy' (Rom. 15:9). The promise He gave indeed to the Israelites, but they were unworthy; to us He gave no promise, no, we were even strangers. We had nothing in common with them, yet He has made us oneHe calls 'the enmity in the flesh,' a middle wall, in that it is a common barrier, cutting us off alike from God. As the Prophet says, 'Your iniquities separate between you and Me' (Isa. 54:2) ...And this, while the law existed, was not only not abolished, but rather was strengthened; 'for the law,' says the Apostle, 'works wrath' (Rom. 4:15) ...The law was a hedge ...Listen again to the Prophet, where he says, 'I made a trench about it' (Isa. 5:2). And again, 'You have broken down her hedges, so that all who pass by the way pluck her fruit' (Ps. 80:12) ...It became a middle wall, no longer establishing them in security, but cutting them off from God ...His death, says the Apostle, has 'slain' the enmity ...How then is it that it does rise again? From our exceeding depravity. For as long as we abide in the body of Christ, as long as we are united, it does not rise again, but lies dead ...He calls those acts which the soul performs of herself 'natural,' and those which the body performs of itself 'carnal' ...The virtue of the flesh is her subjection to the soul. It is her vice to govern the soul ...He did not send Angels or Archangels on the mission, because to repair so many and such vast mischiefs and to declare what had been wrought was in the power of none other, but required His own coming. The Lord then took upon Himself the rank of a servant, no, almost of a minister.

THE GOSPEL: LUKE 8: 41-56

And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And he fell down at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come to his house, For he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But as He went, the multitudes thronged Him. Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, Came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped. And Jesus said, "Who touched Me?" When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, "Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?' " But Jesus said, "Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me." Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. And He said to her, "Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace." While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher." But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, "Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well." When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl. Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, "Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise." Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat. And her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened.

RESURRECTION OF THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS

Last Sunday's reading from the Apostle told us that we are saved by Grace, and that Grace is received through faith, and this is the gift of God. And we were shown what faith is in a striking example.

And here, even today's Gospel speaks about faith. To some degree we all possess it. But because it is imperfect, our faith is often subject to temptations. And the most terrible, the strongest of such temptations, is the death of a person near and dear to us. I think that the majority of those present here have already lived through, or are now living through, this incurable grief. But if not, it is something which will inevitably come. Today's Gospel gives us a classic example of how, in spite of all the difficulty of such an experience, it is possible to endure it. And at the same time it shows us again how much we need faith. For only through faith does God give us and will give us His power of Grace not to fall spiritually in such a terrible moment.

Jairus approached Christ; his daughter was near death. He fell at the feet of Jesus and asked Him to enter his house. Christ agreed, but the people were crowding Him. On the way, the woman with an issue of blood was healed. The whole time there were delays. Christ moved slowly, very slowly. Imagine what Jairus was going through. Here he had asked Christ to hurry. After all, this was a matter of life and death for his daughter. If Christ were one minute late, it might be too late—his daughter could die. And this is exactly what happened. Someone came from the house of the ruler of the synagogue and said to him: "Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master" (Lk. 8:49).

Yes, according to human understanding it was all over. Why trouble the Master? Anything is possible to mend, but not death. Death alone is irreparable. Before it even the Teacher is powerless. Yes, this is so according to human understanding, but not according to God's understanding. And Jesus, after He heard this, said to Jairus: "Fear not: Believe only, and she shall be made whole" (Lk. 8:50). And in this moment Jairus rejected human understanding and accepted God's understanding. Now before him stood not just a Teacher, but the Saviour of the world, the Son of God—God Himself. Because God alone has power over life and death.

Jairus accepted within himself His words: "Fear not: believe only!" From this very moment he lived only by these words and continued following after Christ. They entered the house. And again two sides: the human side —"All wept and bewailed her." And Christ said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth." And again the human. "And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead." But in the soul of Jairus there was an unspeakable calm. He had faith. And faith conquered. "Maid, arise!" exclaimed Christ, and her spirit returned into her and she immediately got up and was united with her father (Lk. 8:52-55).

Yes, but you may say this is a miracle of resurrection, and such miracles do not happen now. True. But the same miracle has been promised to all of us. Every day in our Confession of Faith we read, "I look for the resurrection of the dead." And this will happen, it will! Not as soon as it happened for Jairus,

but it will happen! Pay attention to the following moment. Jairus already knew that his daughter was dead, but all the same he followed Christ, believing His words. How long this walk in faith lasted is not important; but what is important is that it took place.

Let us also believe in the words of the Gospel that the dead will rise; and like Jairus, let us follow Christ in faith. Mystically, this walk of Jairus after Christ did not end and will never end. It goes on even now, and we can all participate in it. Let us hasten to join Jairus. Then the words of Christ, "Fear not: Believe only, and she shall be made whole," will refer also to us. But for this to happen, like Jairus, we must hold fast to the robe of Christ and endure everything that God sends to us on the road of our life. The way of Jairus was comparatively short. Ours might be long, very long. It will go to the end of our life. But let us believe that there will be the resurrection of the dead and that we will be united with those dear to us who are already with the Lord. May God grant us the faith and the patience of Jairus!

Archbishop Andrei, The One Thing Needful

Saints of the week

6 / 19 November - St Paul the Confessor, Patriarch of Constantinople - When the blessed Patriarch Alexander was lying on his deathbed, the lamenting faithful asked him whom he would leave to follow him as chief pastor of the flock of Christ. Then the sick Patriarch said to them: 'If you want to have a shepherd who will teach you and whose virtues will illumine you, choose Paul; but, if you want a suitable man as a figurehead, choose Macedonius.' The people chose Paul. This was not acceptable to the Arian heretics, nor to the Emperor Constantius, who was at that time in Antioch, and so Paul was quickly deposed and fled to Rome together with St Athanasius the Great. There, both Pope Julian and the Emperor Constans gave them a warm welcome and upheld them in their Orthodoxy. The Emperor and the Pope sent letters which restored Paul to his episcopal throne, but, after the death of Constans, the Arians raised their heads again and drove the Orthodox Patriarch off to Cucusus in Armenia. While Paul was celebrating the Liturgy one day in exile, he was set on by the Arians and strangled with his pallium. This was in the year 351. In the time of the Emperor Theodosius, in 381, his relics were translated to Constantinople, and, in 1236, to Venice, where they still lie. (A small piece of their relics is kept at the Russian Cathedral in London). Our Holy Father Varlaam of Chutinsk, the Wonderworker; Commemoration of the falling of ash from the air;

All Saints of Ireland - This day's feast is not only a celebration of the great multitude of Irish and Celtic Saints, many of whom were missionaries throughout Europe, but is also a celebration of the many contributions of Celtic culture to the world. A number of centuries ago, a family from a Central European tribe met with a tribe from the Carpathian mountains. The result was the beginning of Celtic civilization, especially with respect to the La Tene and Hallstadt cultures. The "Keltoi" as the Greeks called them were described vividly by Julius Caesar in Gaul. The Iberian Peninsula was once called "Celtiberia." Macbeth, High King of Scots, on his way to Rome by ship, visited these people and could carry on a conversation with them, no problem! The Celtic language of these people, "Galiz" from Galizia, has survived and they are one of the seven nations of the Celts (the others being: Irish, Highland Scots, Manx, Cornish, Breton and Welsh). Paris was named for the Celtic tribe that settled there, the "Parisii." Notre Dame Cathedral with its hanging heads calls to mind the way in which Celtic warriors would celebrate a military victory . . . Everything that had the prefix "Wal" in front of it was of Celtic origin. "Wales" and "Cornwall" and even "Wallachia" in Roumania. Sevastopol in Crimea was originally built by the Celts who settled there very early. "Walnuts" are also named for the Celts who developed them. St Peter Mohyla, Metropolitan of Kyiv, is also of Wallachian and therefore Celtic, descent. The Celtic Christian missionaries were intrepid travelers. They would cross vast areas in their little boats known as "birinns." Even Christopher Columbus visited Ireland to read the log books of St Brendan the Navigator who was said to have crossed over to the Eastern Coast of what is now Canada. There is evidence of early Christian settlements in Newfoundland and also in Baffin Island! Celtic missionaries came down through the Baltic Sea into Kyivan Rus/Ukraine and St Olha the Great greeted Celtic men of God at her court. The Celtic Rite is actually one of the most "Eastern" of those in the West. The Celts had strong ties with Coptic Egypt and its tradition of the Thebaid through the Ukrainian Saint, John Cassian. There are still mentioned in Celtic liturgical sources a veneration for "Seven Coptic Monks" buried in Ireland. The Irish Rite has many connections to the Egyptian liturgy. For example, following the Rule of St Pachomios, the Irish Celtic Office has groups of 12 Psalms. So, depending on the Feast, the Morning Office will have 12, 24, 36, 60 or 72 Psalms. In many cases, the entire Psalter is read in a single day. Prostrations to the ground, familiar in the East, were also practiced by the Celts. It was the Celts who invented the tradition of saying 150 Our Fathers and Hail Mary's for the Psalms. They devised strands of beads and knotted cords as prayer counters, the Celtic Rosary. The great asceticism of the Celtic saints is patterned after that of the Eastern Church Fathers. Saying the Psalter while standing in cold running water, among other things, required a hardy sort of person . . . The Celts had their own tonsure, the tonsure of Simon Magus, which was in front of the head, rather than on top in the Roman fashion. The

Abbot, rather than the Bishop, was the administrator of the Celtic communities, built around the monasteries or "cashels" as they were. Their calculation of Easter was their own and varied from that of the rest of the Church at the time. The Celts inherited much from their druidic ancestors. Like the Eastern Slavs, they worshipped the Sun. After becoming Christian, the Sun symbol still figured prominently in their Christian faith. St Ninian of Galloway in Scotland and St Colum mac Felim O'Neill of Isle of Hy (Iona) and their missionary companions worshipped within stone circles and adapted other Sun imagery in their Christianised traditions. The haloed Celtic Cross is also popular in Ukraine. There is one marking the grave of Taras Shevchenko, the national poet and bard. It refers to the fact that Christ is our "Sun." It is also said to be a Celtic form of the "Chi Rho" or "XP" Greek symbol for the first two letters of Christ's Name, also called the "Cross of St Constantine." The term "Celtic," as some have argued, may be connected to "Chaldea." It is also a play on the monastic notion of "cell." Another explanation is that it refers to the monastic Order of the Celi De or the "Friends of God." Celtic spirituality is very popular these days. Those who should probably know better are presenting it within a type of "New Age" context. Closeness to animals and nature are also stimulants to interest in this version of "Celtic spirituality." In fact, while Celtic monks and nuns lived very simply, their asceticism runs in the face of modern, easy-going spiritual orientations. Their lives were rather exhausting. In addition to daily Divine Liturgy and their Horologion, they recited the full 150 Psalms of David. One could always rest in the after-life, the old Irish spiritual teachers said . . . During the Irish Penal Times when it was against the law to be Catholic and a priest, Irish priests would roam the countryside incognito, just like during the Roman times of persecution. Irish families would light candles in their windows as a sign that this was where the priests could receive a meal and shelter for the night. When Cromwell's Puritan soldiers asked the people what the candles signified, the people said they were "lighting the way of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem." This interpretation has remained and is why, today, so many homes are decorated with Christmas lights! The Celtic Thebaid was a school for Saints and it is this great Choir that we celebrate today. We are heirs to the rich Celtic Christian culture they produced. The Celtic missionaries were experts at spreading the Gospel and inculturating it with local traditions which they "baptized" as they said. This is why Celtic Christianity became so deeply rooted among the Celtic peoples. Presbyterianism, although Protestant, sees itself as an heir to this tradition as well. Certainly, the Celtic nations had long harboured resentment towards Rome for imposing its Rite on their ancient ways. There is renewed interest in the Celtic Rite today among Orthodox, Roman Catholics and Anglicans. What characterizes the Celtic Rite is its focus on the worship of the Holy Trinity, its spirit of simplicity and asceticism, devotion to the Psalms, the Horologion and the reading of the Gospel, a positive relationship to God's creation in nature, and community in monastic life. The ancient Celtic Rite exemplifies the spiritual richness of the undivided Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ. A missionary Church, the Celtic Rite was practiced throughout Western Europe at one time, reaching out to the shores of North America itself. The Saints of Eire and all Celtic Saints remind us of our calling to preach Christ to all nations, while inculturating the Gospel in every national tradition. All ye Holy Saints of Eire and the Celtic nations, pray unto God for us!

7 / 20 November - The Holy Martyr Hieron and his 32 companions(The 33 Martyrs of Melitene)

- He was born in the Cappadocian city of Tijane of a good and God-fearing mother, Stratonica, who was blind. Hieron was a very zealous Christian, and cared for his blind mother with a truly filial love. Because of both his faith and his mother, he refused to go into the army, and fended off and drove away those who were sent to take him, for he was loathe to leave his helpless, blind mother and be forced as a soldier to bow down and offer sacrifice to idols. Finally, Hieron was seized and taken before the governor of the city of Melitene, along with other Christians. While they were on the road, a man in white apparel appeared one night to Hieron and said to him: 'Behold, Hieron, I reveal to thee thy salvation: thou shalt not wage war for any earthly king, but shalt engage in a battle for the King of heaven, and quickly shalt thou come to Him and receive from Him both honour and glory.' Hieron's heart was filled with ineffable joy at these words. When they reached Melitene, they were all thrown into prison, where Hieron strengthened them all in their faith with great ardour, exhorting them that not one should fall away but that all should freely give their bodies over to torment and death for Christ. To a man, they all confessed their faith in Christ the Lord before the judge, except for one kinsman of Hieron's called Victor, who repudiated his faith. Hieron's hands were cut off, then he was flogged and tortured in various ways, until he was finally beheaded with the sword together with the others. Going out to the place of execution, the thirty-three martyrs sang the psalm: 'Blessed are those that are undefiled in the way, and walk in the Law of the Lord' (Ps. 1:1). Let us remember by name these honourable martyrs, who are inscribed in the Book of Life: Hesychius, Nicander, Athanasius, Mamas, Barachus, Callinicus, Theogenes, Nikon, Longinus, Theodore, Valerius, Xanticus, Theodulus, Callimachus, Eugene, Theodochus, Ostrichius, Epiphanius, Maximian, Ducitius, Claudian, Theophilus, Gigantius, Dorotheus, Theodotus, Castrichius, Anicetas, Themilius, Eutyichius, Hilarion, Diodotus and Amonitus. A certain man called Chrysanthus found Hieron's severed head and gave it burial, and he later built over it a church in honour of St Hieron. One of the martyr's hands was taken to his blind mother. St Hieron suffered with his companions in 298, and entered into the glory of Christ. The Holy Martyr Thessalonica, with Auctus and Taurion;

Our Holy Father Lazarus of Mount Galesius - A pillar of light appeared above the house where he was born. Lazarus left his village of Magnesia And went to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage to the holy places. There, he was tonsured a monk in the Monastery of St. Sava the Sanctified. After ten years, he settled on Mount Galesius and lived a life of asceticism on a pillar as a stylite. Lazarus was a miracle-worker both during his lifetime and after death. Emperor Constantine Monomachus had great respect for him. Attaining old age, St. Lazarus entered into eternity toward the end of the eleventh century; The Holy Martyr Thessalonica; St. Willibrord (Clement), archbishop of Utrecht and enlightener of Holland (d..739).

‡ **Scripture Readings - 2 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Luke 12:13-15, 22-31; 2 Thessalonians 1:10-22; Luke 12:42-48** ‡

8 / 21 November - Synaxis of the Archangels, SS Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Salaphiel, Jugediel & Barachiel - The angels of God have been commemorated by men from the earliest times, but this commemoration often degenerates into the divinisation of angels (IV Kings 23:5; A.V. II Kings). Heretics always wove fantasies round the angels. Some of them saw the angels as gods and others, if they did not so regard them, took them to be the creators of the whole visible world. The local Council in Laodicea, that was held in the fourth century, rejected in its 35th Canon the worship of angels as gods, and established the proper veneration of them. In the time of Pope Sylvester of Rome and the Alexandrian Patriarch Alexander, in the fourth century, this Feast of the Archangel Michael and the other heavenly powers was instituted, to be celebrated in November. Why in November? Because November is the ninth month after March, and it is thought that the world was created in the month of March. The ninth month after March was chosen because of the nine orders of angels that were the first created beings. St Dionysius the Areopagite, a disciple of the Apostle Paul (that Apostle who was caught up to the third heaven), writes of these nine orders in his book: 'Celestial Hierarchies'. These orders are as follows: six-winged Seraphim, many-eyed Cherubim, godly Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels and Angels. The leader of the whole angelic army is the Archangel Michael. When Satan, Lucifer, fell away from God, and carried half the angels with him to destruction, then Michael arose and cried to the unfallen angels: 'Let us give heed! Let us stand aright; let us stand with fear!', and the whole angelic army sang aloud: 'Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory!' (See on the Archangel Michael: Joshua 5:13-15 and Jude v.9). Among the angels there rules a perfect unity of mind, of soul and of love; of total obedience of the lesser powers to the greater and of all to the holy will of God. Each nation has its guardian angel, as does each individual Christian. We must keep in mind that, whatever we do, openly or in secret, we do in the presence of our guardian angel and that, on the Day of Judgement, a great multitude of the holy angels of heaven will be gathered around the throne of Christ, and the thoughts, words and deeds of every man will be laid bare before them. May God have mercy on us and save us at the prayers of the holy Archangel Michael and all the bodiless powers of heaven. Amen; St. Tysilio, abbot of Meifod; St. Willehad, bishop of Bremen.

‡ **Scripture Readings - Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 (Matins Gospel); Hebrews 2:2-10 (Epistle, Angels); Luke 10:16-21 (Gospel, Angel)** ‡

9 / 22 November - The Holy Martyrs Onesiphorus and Prophyrius - These two wonderful men were martyred for the name of Christ in the time of the Emperor Diocletian (284-305). They were harshly beaten, and then burned in iron coffins, and after that tied to horses' tails and dragged over stones and thistles. They were thus broken to pieces and gave their holy souls into God's hands. Their relics were buried in Pentapolis. Our Holy Father John the Dwarf; Our Holy Mother Matrona of Constantinople; Our Holy Father Euthymius of Docheiariou and his disciple, Neophytus; St. Simon Metaphrastes; Our Holy Mother Theoctista of Paros.

The Venerable John the Dwarf [Kolobos] - John is numbered among the greatest of the Egyptian ascetics. "Kolobos" means "dwarf," for he was of little stature. He came to Scetis with his brother Daniel and, with the greatest zeal, devoted himself to such asceticism that Daniel had to urge him to moderation. John was a disciple of St. Pambo, and was later the teacher of St. Arsenius the Great. His fellow disciple under St. Pambo was St. Paisius the Great. Once, when he and Paisius were discussing what kind of asceticism to undertake, an angel of God appeared to them and commanded John to stay where he was and instruct others, and Paisius to enter the wilderness and live as a hermit. In order to test John's obedience, St. Pambo ordered him to water a dry stick planted in the ground until it turned green. Without hesitation or doubt, John watered this stick daily for three whole years until by the power of God, it grew green sprouts and brought forth fruit. Pambo then gathered the fruit from this tree, brought it to church and distributed it among the brethren saying: "Draw near and taste of the fruit of obedience!" John the Dwarf had many disciples. Some of his wise sayings have been preserved. He entered into rest peacefully and took up his habitation in the joy of his Lord.

Saint Matrona, Abbess of Constantinople was born in the city of Perge Pamphylia (Asia Minor) in the fifth century. They gave her in marriage to a wealthy man named Dometian. When her daughter Theodota was born, they resettled in Constantinople. The twenty-five-year-old Matrona loved to walk to

the temple of God. She spent entire days there, ardently praying to the Lord and weeping for her sins. At the church the saint met two pious Eldresses, Eugenia and Susanna, who from their youth lived there in asceticism, work and prayer. Matrona began to imitate the God-pleasing life of an ascetic, humbling her flesh by abstinence and fasting, for which she had to endure criticism by her husband. Her soul yearned for a full renunciation of the world. After long hesitation, St Matrona decided to leave her family and entreated the Lord to reveal whether her intent was pleasing to Him. The Lord heard the prayer of His servant. Once, during a light sleep, she had a dream that she had fled from her husband, who was in pursuit of her. The saint concealed herself in a crowd of monks approaching her, and her husband did not notice her. Matrona accepted this dream as a divine directive to enter a men's monastery, where her husband would not think to look for her. She gave her fifteen-year-old daughter to be raised by the Eldress Susanna, and having cut her own hair and disguised herself in men's attire, she went to the monastery of St Bassion (October 10). There the Nun Matrona passed herself off as the eunuch Babylos and was accepted as one of the brethren. Apprehensive lest the monks learn that she was a woman, the saint passed her time in constant quietude and much work. The brethren marveled at the great virtue of Babylos. One time the saint was working in the monastery vineyard with the other monks. The novice monk Barnabas noted that her ear-lobe was pierced and asked about it. "It is necessary, brother, to till the soil and not watch other people, which is not proper for a monk," answered the saint. After a certain while it was revealed in a dream to St Bassion, the igumen of the monastery, that the eunuch Babylos was a woman. It was also revealed to Acacius, igumen of the nearby Abraham monastery. St Bassion summoned St Matrona and asked in a threatening voice why she had entered the monastery, to corrupt the monks, or to shame the monastery. With tears the saint told the igumen about all her past life, about her husband, hostile to her efforts and prayers, and about the vision directing her to go to the men's monastery. Convinced that her intent was pure and chaste, St Bassion sent St Matrona to a women's monastery in the city of Emesa. In this monastery the saint dwelt for many years, inspiring the sisters by her high monastic achievement. When the Abbess died, by the unanimous wish of the nuns the Nun Matrona became head of the convent. The fame of her virtuous activities, and miraculous gift of healing, which she acquired from the Lord, spread far beyond the walls of the monastery. Dometian also heard about the deeds of the nun. When St Matrona learned that her husband was coming to the monastery and wanted to see her, she secretly went off to Jerusalem, and then to Mount Sinai, and from there to Beirut, where she settled in an abandoned pagan temple. The local inhabitants learned of her seclusion, and began to come to her. The holy ascetic turned many from their pagan impiety and converted them to Christ. Women and girls began to settle by the dwelling of the nun and soon a new monastery was formed. Having fulfilled the will of God, revealed to her in a dream, the saint left Beirut and journeyed to Constantinople where she learned that her husband had died. With the blessing of her spiritual Father, St Bassion, the ascetic founded a women's monastery in Constantinople, to which sisters from the Beirut convent she founded also transferred. The Constantinople monastery of St Matrona was known for its strict monastic rule and the virtuous life of its sisters. In extreme old age St Matrona had a vision of the heavenly Paradise and the place prepared for her there after 75 years of monastic labor. At the age of one hundred, St Matrona blessed the sisters, and quietly fell asleep in the Lord.

Troparion — Tone 8: The image of God was truly preserved in you, O Mother, / for you took up the Cross and followed Christ. / By so doing, you taught us to disregard the flesh, for it passes away; / but to care instead for the soul, since it is immortal. / Therefore your spirit, O holy Mother Matróna, rejoices with the angels.

Kontakion — Tone 8: You passed through the storm of life without faltering, chosen and godly Mother Matróna, / guided to the harbor of life, where you sing hymns to the Deliverer. / You ever pray that Christ may grant us grace and mercy; / you preserve the flock which you painstakingly gathered!

St. Nectarios (Anastasios Kaphalas), metropolitan of Pentapolis - born in Greece in 1846. His family was very poor, so he left home at the age of 14 to seek work. He found a job in Constantinople, but he received very low wages and ate poorly and only wore rags. Seeing that his master received many things by mail, he decided to write a letter for help. He had no friends in the world, and the post did not go to his mother's village. In his childlike faith, he decided to write to Christ to tell him his needs, writing on the envelope: "To the Lord Jesus Christ in Heaven". On his way to post it a merchant who knew him saw him and offered to post his letter. Reading the address and being overcome by curiosity, the merchant opened the letter and read the boy's plea to God for help. Greatly moved, he put money in an envelope and sent it anonymously to the boy, who gave thanks to God. Young Anastasios visited the Holy Places when he was very young. On the way he calmed a terrible storm through his prayers. Then, in his twenties, he entered a monastery, being tonsured in 1875 with the names Lazarus. Because of his virtues and piety he soon became a deacon and then a priest. He left his monastery because of Moslem rule and went to Egypt where he was elected the Metropolitan of Pentapolis. He lived a holy life and because of this was slandered by others, even his brother-bishops in the See of Alexandria. Thus, he was suspended from his diocese. Nevertheless, the saint bore this slandering humbly. When the people, greatly upset by his suspension, began to grow restless, he secretly left for Greece so as not to be the cause of dissension.. He found there, however, that the slanders had travelled ahead of him, and that the Church authorities would not give him a position. Some people who had come to love the Saint very much used

their influence to have him appointed Dean of a seminary in Athens. The busy city life was not pleasing to the saint and he looked for a quiet place where he could dedicate himself to prayer. Finding a disused convent on the island of Aegina he rebuilt the church and gathered a few nuns around him. Many came to confess their sins and receive wise counsel. He lived here until his death in 1920. On the day of his repose, the hospital in which he died was filled with a beautiful fragrance. An item of the saint's clothing, placed by a nurse on the bed of a sick man while they prepared the saint's body for burial, was a source of healing. His relics were incorrupt for many years after his repose, even after the impious Archbishop of Athens, Chrysostom, ordered that the relics be exposed to the elements for two days so they would dissolve. A friend of the saint's, a doctor, opened the relics in 1934 and was surprised to find the saint was easily recognisable to any who knew him during his life.

‡ **Scripture Readings - 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Luke 12:48-59** ‡

10 / 23 November - The Holy Apostles Olympas, Erastus, Quartus, Herodion, Sosipater and Tertius - They were all among the Seventy. The last three are also commemorated elsewhere: Herodion on April 8th, Sosipater on April 28th and Tertius on October 30th. Ss Olympas and Herodion were followers of the Apostle Peter and, when Peter suffered, they suffered too, being beheaded at Nero's command. Erastus was steward of the Church in Jerusalem, and later became Bishop of Paneas in Palestine. Quartus was bishop in Beirut; he suffered greatly and brought many to the Christian faith. Sosipater was bishop in Iconium, and Tertius followed him as bishop there. They strove in spirit, became victors and were crowned with wreaths of glory. The Holy Martyr Orestes; St. Nonnus, Bishop of Heliopolis.

The Holy Martyr Orestes - Orestes was from the town of Tyana in Cappadocia. He was a Christian from birth and a physician by profession. He was harshly tortured by a certain wicked eparch Maximus during the reign of Diocletian. When the eparch at first advised him to deny Christ and worship idols, Orestes replied: "If you knew the power of the Crucified One, you would reject idolatrous falsehoods and worship the true God." For this, he was savagely beaten, scraped, pulled apart on the rack, burned with a red-hot iron, and cast into prison to die of starvation. The young Orestes spent seven days without bread or water. On the eighth day, he was again brought before the eparch who threatened him with frightening tortures. Orestes answered: "I am prepared to endure every pain, having the sign of my Lord Jesus Christ inscribed on my heart." The governor condemned him, and the torturers hammered twenty iron nails into his feet and tied him to a horse, dragging him over thorns and rocks until the martyr of God breathed his last. On the place where they discarded Orestes's body, a man bright as the sun appeared, gathered Orestes's relics, and carried them to a hill near the town of Tyana, honorably burying them there. This wonderful saint appeared to St. Dimitri of Rostov after his repose, and showed him all the wounds on his body.

‡ **Scripture Readings - 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5; Luke 13:1-9** ‡

11 / 24 November - The Holy and Great Martyr Menas - An Egyptian by birth and a soldier by profession, St Menas, as a true Christian, could not bear to look upon the foul offering of sacrifice to idols, so he left the army and the town, the society of men and everything else, and went to a deserted mountain. It was easier for Menas to live with the wild beasts than with pagans. One day, Menas looked from afar in spirit at a pagan festival in the town of Cotyaeus, then went to the town and, before them all, confessed his faith in Christ the living God, denouncing idolatry and paganism as falsehood and darkness. The governor of that town, one Pyrrhus, asked who and what he was. The saint replied: 'My fatherland is Egypt; my name is Menas. I was an officer, but, seeing the worship of idols, I rejected your honours. I have come now to proclaim my Christ before you all as the living God, that He may reveal me as His servant in the Kingdom of God.' Hearing this, Pyrrhus put holy Menas to harsh torture. He was flogged, flayed with iron flails, burned with torches and tortured in many other ways, finally being beheaded. His body was burned to prevent Christians taking it, but they did succeed in rescuing some bits from the flames. They buried these remains with care, and they were later taken to Alexandria and buried there, a church being built over them. St Menas suffered in about 304, and entered into the Kingdom of Christ. He was and remains a great wonderworker in both lives: both on earth and in heaven. Whoever has glorified Menas or invoked his aid with faith in time of need has received help. He has often appeared as a soldier on horseback, to help the faithful or punish the faithless. The Holy Martyr Stephen of Decani, King of Serbia; The Holy Martyrs Victor and Stephanis; The Holy Martyr Vincent the Deacon; Our Holy Father Theodore the Studite; St Urosica, Prince of Serbia; St. Martin the Merciful, bishop of Tours.

The Holy Martyr Stefan of Decani, King of Serbia - Stefan was the son of King Milutin and father of Tsar Du an. By the command of his ill-informed father, Stefan was blinded, and at the command of his capricious son (Du an), was strangled in his old age. When he was blinded, St. Nicholas appeared to him in the church at Ovèe Polje (Field of the Sheep) and showed him his eyes saying: "Stefan, be not afraid: behold your eyes in my palm. In due time, I will return them to you." Stefan spent five years in

Constantinople as a prisoner in the Monastery of the Pantocrator. By his wisdom and asceticism, his meekness and piety, his patience and benevolence, Stefan not only surpassed all the monks in his monastery, but all monks in Constantinople. When five years had passed, St. Nicholas again appeared to him and said: "I came to fulfill my promise." He then traced the sign of the Cross on the blind king, and Stefan received his sight. In thanksgiving to God, Stefan built the Church of Decani, one of the most marvelous works of Byzantine artistic beauty, and one of the most famous monuments of Serbian piety. The holy King Stefan, with St. Sava and the holy Prince Lazar, constitute a most glorious trinity of holiness, nobility and self-sacrifice-the gift of the Serbian people. St. Stefan lived his earthly life as a martyr, and died as a martyr in the year 1336, receiving the wreath of immortal glory from the Almighty God Whom he had faithfully served.

‡ Scripture Readings - 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18; Luke 13:31-35 ‡

12 / 25 November- St John the Merciful - Born on the island of Cyprus of a princely family, his father, Epiphanius, being the governor, he was brought up from childhood as a true Christian. Under pressure from his parents, he married and had children. But, by the providence of God, both his wife and children went from this world to the next. Famed for his compassion and devotion, John was chosen as Patriarch of Alexandria in the time of the Emperor Heraclius. He governed the Church in Alexandria for ten years as a true pastor, guarding it from pagans and heretics, and was a model of meekness, compassion and love for his fellow-men. 'If you seek nobility', he said, 'seek it not in blood but in virtue, for in virtue lies true nobility.' All the saints are distinguished by compassion, but St John was utterly dedicated to this great virtue. Celebrating the Liturgy one day, the words of Christ: 'If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath aught against thee ...' (Matt. 5:23), came into the Patriarch's mind, and he remembered that one of the clergy in the church there had a grudge against him. He left the holy gifts, went up to the priest, fell before his feet and begged his forgiveness. As soon as he had made his peace with that man, he returned to the Table of Preparation. Another time, on the way to the Church of Sts Cyrus and John, it happened that he was met by a poor widow, who started speaking to him of her poverty. The Patriarch's companions were bored by the woman's lengthy lamenting, and urged the bishop to hurry to the church for the service, and listen to the woman when it was over. St John replied: 'And how will God obey me, if I don't obey Him?', and he would not move from the spot until he had heard the widow out. When the Persians invaded Egypt, Patriarch John took ship to flee from the assault. He fell ill on the voyage and, arriving in Cyprus, died at his birthplace in 620, entering into the immortal kingdom of his Lord. His wonderworking relics were first taken to Constantinople, then to Budapest and finally came to rest in Presburg. The Holy Prophet Ahijah; Our Holy Father Nilus of Sinai; Our Holy Father Nilus the Outpurer of Myrrh; St. Lebuin, monk of Deventer (d.777); St. Machan, bishop of Aberdeenshire.

‡ Scripture Readings - Galatians 1:3-10; Luke 9:37-43 ‡

HYMN OF PRAISE- The Lord's mercy and goodness

Our Lord is mercy and true goodness, Yet He allows man to suffer for his sin: Floods, sickness, earthquakes, droughts, Horror and pains for body and soul. He who does not see the Father when He offers gifts Will see Him at the Judgment as the Righteous Judge. The awesome Judge has many servants, And employs them all for man's salvation- The earth's thorns; serpents and beasts; And floods, lightning, thunder from the sky; And evil winds of illness; the sun, heat and darkness; And the field, which gives either wheat or empty straw. As many gifts await the faithful, So many scourges are woven for the evil. Adam's fields are watered with gentle dew, But Sodom and Gomorrah are mowed with a flaming sword. Above other created things, God loves man: Therefore He forgives much; therefore He waits long. But, when God's patience exceeds all bounds, then fire, not dew, does the work.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the wondrous power of healing that proceeded from the Apostle Paul (Acts 19): 1. How the people took his aprons and handkerchiefs and placed them on the sick; 2. How all the sick were healed, and evil spirits fled from them; 3. How the words of the Savior came true, that he who believes in Him will perform greater miracles than He.

Words of Wisdom

Abba Poemen told of how Abba John the Dwarf had prayed the Lord to take away all the passions from him, and he became peaceful and without a care. He went to a certain geronda and said, "I am at peace, with no internal battles." And the geronda said, "Go and pray the Lord that battles may be stirred up in you, and likewise that the affliction and humility you had previously may return to you, for it is by means of the struggle with the passions that the soul makes progress." So he did as he was told, and when the

battle began again in his heart, he no longer prayed to be delivered from it, but asked that the Lord might give him the strength to bear it.

The Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Available on the net at <http://www.saintjonah.org/bltn/> or at <http://www.roq.org.au/bulletins.html> where you can subscribe to the email list.