



28th Sunday After Pentecost

Great Martyr Barbara and St. John of Damascus

4 / 17 December

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 3: Let the heavens rejoice / let the earth be glad / for the Lord has shown strength with His arm! / He has trampled down death by death! / He has become the first-born of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell / and has granted the world great mercy.

Troparion of Great Martyr Barbara tone 8: Let us praise holy Barbara who has broken the snares of the enemy./ By the help of the weapon of the Cross/ she has escaped as a bird and flown Godwards.

Troparion of St John of Damascus tone 8: Thou wast a holy instrument/ and a tuneful harp of godliness./ Thy teachings shone forth to the ends of the world; O righteous John./ We pray thee to entreat Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 3: On this day thou didst rise from the tomb, O Merciful One, / leading us from the gates of death / On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices. / With the prophets and the patriarchs they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Thy power.

Kontakion of Great Martyr Barbara tone 4: Great Martyr Barbara, thou didst follow Him Who is praised in Trinity,/ having abandoned the idols' shrines./ Thou didst strive in the midst of the arena not shrinking from the tyrants' threats./ Thou didst cry out in a strong voice:/ I worship the Trinity, the One Divinity.

Kontakion of St John of Damascus tone 4: Let us praise the illustrious hymnographer John,/ teacher of the Church and champion against her enemies./ For armed with the weapon of the Lord's Cross,/ he has banished the errors of heresy./ He fervently intercedes with God Who grants forgiveness to all.

Matins Gospel VI

EPISTLE: ST. PAUL'S Letter To The Colossians 1:12-18

Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence.

AND HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY OF THE CHURCH

He who is thus above, and above all, connected Himself with those below. For everywhere He is first; above first; in the Church first, for He is the Head; in the Resurrection first. That is, Ver. 18. "That He might have the pre-Eminence." So that in generation also He is first. And this is what Paul is chiefly endeavoring to show. For if this be made good, that He was before all the Angels; then there is brought in along with it this also as a consequence, that He did their works by commanding them. And what is indeed wonderful, he makes a point to show that He is first in the later generation. Although elsewhere he calls Adam first (1 Cor. xv. 45), as in truth he is; but here he takes the Church for the whole race of mankind. For He is first of the Church; and first of men after the flesh, like as of the Creation.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily III on Colossians. B#57,pp.271

for the Great Martyr: Gal. 3:23-29

GOSPEL: ST. LUKE 17: 12-19

Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

THE BLIND MAN HEALED NEAR JERICHO

The lepers then having met the Saviour, earnestly besought Him to free them from their misery, and called Him Master, that is, Teacher. No one pitied them when suffering this malady: but He Who had appeared on earth for this very reason, and had become man

that He might show pity unto all, He was moved with compassion for them, and had mercy upon them. And why did He not rather say, "I will, be ye cleansed;" as he did in the case of another leper; but commanded them rather to show themselves unto the priests? It was because the law gave directions to this effect to those who were delivered from leprosy: for it commanded them to show themselves to the priests, and to offer a sacrifice for their cleansing. He commanded them therefore to go, as being already healed, and, that they might, so to speak, bear witness to the priests, as the rulers of the Jews, and ever envious of His glory, that wonderfully, and beyond their hope, they had been delivered from their misfortune by Christ's willing that they should be healed. The nine then, as being Jews, falling into a thankless forgetfulness, did not return to give glory to God: by which He shows that Israel was hard of heart, and utterly unthankful: but the stranger, for as being a Samaritan he was of foreign race, having been brought thither from Assyria: for the phrase is not without meaning, in the middle of Samaria and Galilee: "returned with a loud voice to glorify God. It shows therefore that the Samaritans were grateful, but that the Jews, even when benefited, were ungrateful.

for the Great Martyr: Mark 5:24-34

Saints of the week

4 / 17 December — Nativity Fast -The Holy and Great Martyr Barbara - This famous follower of Christ was betrothed to Him from her early years. Her father, Dioscorus, was a pagan in the city of Heliopolis in Egypt, and was famed for his wealth and standing. Dioscorus shut up his only daughter, who was both intelligent and beautiful, in a high tower, surrounded her with all possible comforts, gave her a host of attendants, set up idols for worship and built her a bathroom with two windows. As she gazed through the windows of the tower upon the earth below and the starry sky above, Barbara's mind was opened by the grace of God, and she came to know Him as the one, true God and Creator, although she had no human teacher to bring her to the knowledge of Him. Once, when her father was away from the city, she came out of the tower and, by God's providence, met some Christians who told her about the true Christian faith. Barbara's heart was set on fire with love for Christ. She had a third window cut in the bathroom as a symbol of the Holy Trinity, and traced a Cross with her finger on one wall of it, which etched itself deep in the stone as if cut by a chisel. A spring of water gushed forth from the bathroom floor from her footprint, and it later gave healing from sickness to many. When Dioscorus found out about his daughter's faith, he beat her harshly and drove her from the tower, chasing after her to kill her, but a cliff opened and hid Barbara from her irate father. When she appeared again, Dioscorus took her to Marcian, the governor of the city, who handed her over for torture. The innocent Barbara was stripped and beaten until her entire body was covered in bloody wounds, but the Lord Himself appeared to her in the prison with many angels, and healed her. A certain woman, Juliana, beheld this and conceived a desire for martyrdom herself. Both of them were fearfully tortured and taken around the city to be mocked, then their breasts were cut off and much blood flowed from them. They were finally led out to the place of execution, and Juliana was slain by soldiers while Barbara was killed by her own father. On the same day, lightning struck Dioscorus's house, killing both him and Marcian. St Barbara suffered in 306, and her wonderworking relics are preserved in Kiev. Greatly glorified in the Kingdom of Christ, she has appeared many times down to our own days, sometimes alone and sometimes in the company of the most holy Mother of God..

St John Damascene - he was first a minister of Caliph Abdul-Malek, and then became a monk in the monastery of St Sava the Sanctified. For his ardent advocacy of the veneration of icons while still a courtier during the reign of the iconoclast Emperor Leo the Isaurian, he was slandered by the Emperor to the Caliph, who had his right hand cut off. John fell down in prayer before the icon of the most holy Mother of God, and his hand was re-joined to his arm and miraculously healed. When he beheld this wonder, the Caliph repented, but John no longer desired to remain at court as a nobleman, but to withdraw to a monastery. There, he was from the beginning a model of humility and obedience, and of all the works of asceticism prescribed for monks. He wrote the hymns for the Parting of the Soul from the Body, put together the Octoechos, the Irmologion, the Menologion and the Easter Canon, and wrote many theological works of an inspired profundity. A great monk, hymnographer and theologian, and a great warrior for the truth of Christ, Damascene is counted among the great Fathers of the Church. He entered peacefully into rest in about 749, being seventy-five years old; St Gennadius, Archbishop of Novgorod.

5 / 18 December — Nativity Fast - Fish, Wine & Oil allowed — Our Holy Father Sabbas the Sanctified - The unknown village of Mutalaska, in the province of Cappadocia, became famous through this great light of the Orthodox Church, for St Sabbas was born there. He left the home of his parents, John and Sophia, at the age of eight and became a monk in a nearby monastery called 'Flavian's'. After ten years, he moved to the monasteries of Palestine, staying longest in the monastery of St Euthymius the Great (Jan. 20th) and Theoctistus. Euthymius, who had the gift of discernment, foretold that he would be a famous monk and leader of monks, and that he would found a monastery that would be greater than any other of that day. After St Euthymius's death, Sabbas went into the desert, where he lived for five years as a hermit in a cave which an angel of God showed him. After that, when he had become a perfected monk, he began by divine providence to gather round him many desirous of the spiritual life. They very quickly grew in number, so that Sabbas had to build both a church and many cells. Some

Armenians also came to him, and he set aside a cave for them, and they celebrated the services there in their own language. When his father died, his aged mother Sophia came to him and he made her a nun and gave her a cell away from the monastery, where she lived in asceticism till her death. This holy father endured many attacks from those close to him, from heretics and from demons. But he overcame them all in these ways: those close to him he won over by his goodness and forbearance, the heretics by an unshakeable confession of the Orthodox faith, and the demons with the sign of the Cross and the invocation of God's aid. He had a particularly severe battle with the demons on the mountain of Castellium, where he founded the second of his seven monasteries. He and his neighbour, Theodosius the Great, are considered to be the greatest lights and pillars of Orthodoxy in the East. Kings and Patriarchs were brought to the right Faith by them, and these holy and wonderful men, strong in the power of God, served each and every man as an example of humility. St Sabbas entered into rest in 532 at the age of ninety-four, after a life of great labour and great reward. Our Holy Fathers, the Martyrs of Karyes; Our Holy Father Nectarius of Bitola; Our Holy Fathers Karion and Zachariah;

St. Justinian, hermit of Wales (560) - Breton noble. Well educated. Priest. Left his country to become a travelling evangelist. Settled on the Isle of Ramsey near southern Wales, living with a pious layman named on Honorius; he moved in on the condition that all the women of the household were sent away. Hermit on the island. Visited Saint David of Wales, who was so impressed with the man's holiness that he gave him hermitages on the mainland and a nearby island. Justinian is listed on very ancient Welsh calendars of saints and martyrs, and the church at Llanstinan is dedicated to him. Once some sailors landed at the island hermitage. They said that Saint David was very ill, and that they had been sent to bring Justinian to the mainland. En route, Justinian discerned that the sailors were actually devils in disguise. The saint recited Psalm 79; the devils changed to blackbirds and flew, leaving the boat to sail itself safely to shore where Justinian found David in excellent health. Justinian died when he advised his servants that they should apply themselves to their jobs. Goaded by devils, the three of them became enraged, assaulted Justinian, and beheaded him. At the place where the body fell, a spring of healing water emerged from the ground. The killers were struck with leprosy, and lived out their days in the caves and rocks near the hermitage. Justinian had already specified a location for his burial; a church was built over the tomb, and became known as a scene of miracles. Saint David later moved the body to his own church.

St. Cawrdaf (Cowdrey in English): Cawrdaf is recorded as one of the sons of King Caradog Freichfras. Though the kingdom of the latter appears of have been Gwent & Ergyng, tradition ascribes that he also held sway over areas to the north, between the Wye and the Severn. When his kingdom was divided, upon his death, this region apparently fell to Cawrdaf. It was called Fferreg, though, in later centuries, it was known by the descriptive name of Rhwng Gwy ag Hafren. He was apparently a wise monarch, one of the 'Three Chief Officers' of Britain and counsellor of King Arthur. Nothing is recorded of his reign, but Cawrdaf was a founder of churches, sometimes described as a saint with his feast day on 5th December. His endowments, at Llangowdra (Ceredigion), Abererch (Llyn) and Llangoed (Mon), were, however, not in Fferreg; and it is possible that, in old age, he abdicated in favour of his son, Caw, in order to follow his religious calling. He was supposedly a disciple of St. Illtud. Cawrdaf had several saintly children and though it is unknown how long his descendants remained Kings of Fferreg, they continued for many centuries as two of the leading patriarchal families of Brycheiniog.

Tropar of St. Cawrdaf, Tone 8: O Father Cawrdaf, spurning the transitory glory of temporal power,/ thou didst flee from the world to serve God in monastic seclusion./ Wherefore, O righteous one, pray that we, following thy example by serving God rather than self,/ may be found worthy of eternal salvation.

‡ **Scripture Readings - Luke 6:17-23 (Matins Gospel); Galatians 5:22-6:2; Matthew 11:27-30; Hebrews 3:5-11, 17-19; Luke 20:27-44** ‡

6 / 19 December — Nativity Fast (Fish allowed) — St Nicolas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia -- This saint, famed throughout the entire world today, was the only son of his eminent and wealthy parents, Theophanes and Nona, citizens of Patara in Lycia. They dedicated to God the only son He gave them. St Nicolas was instructed in the spiritual life by his uncle Nicolas, Bishop of Patara, and became a monk at 'New Sion', a monastery founded by his uncle. On the death of his parents, Nicolas distributed all the property he inherited to the poor and kept nothing back for himself. As a priest in Patara, he was known for his charitable works, fulfilling the Lord's words: 'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth' (Matt. 6:3). When he embraced a life of solitude and silence, thinking to live in that way until his death, a voice from on high came to him: 'Nicolas, set about your work among the people if you desire to receive a crown from Me.' Immediately after that, by God's wondrous providence, he was chosen as archbishop of the city of Myra in Lycia. Merciful, wise and fearless, Nicolas was a true shepherd to his flock. He was cast into prison during the persecutions of Diocletian and Maximian, but even there continued to instruct the people in the Law of God. He was present at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325, and, in his zeal, struck Arius with his hand. For this act, he was removed from the Council and from his episcopal duties, until some of the chief hierarchs had a vision of our Lord Christ and His most holy Mother showing their sympathy with Nicolas. This wonderful saint was a defender of the truth of God, and was ever a spirited champion of justice among the people. On two occasions, he saved three men from undeserved sentences of death. Merciful, trustworthy and loving

right, he walked among the people like an angel of God. People considered him a saint even during his lifetime, and invoked his aid when in torment or distress. He would appear both in dreams and in reality to those who called upon him for help, responding speedily to them, whether close at hand or far away. His face would shine with light as Moses' did aforetime, and his mere presence among people would bring solace, peace and goodwill. In old age, he sickened of a slight illness, and went to his rest in the Lord after a life full of labour and fruitful toil. He now enjoys eternal happiness in the Kingdom of heaven, continuing to help the faithful on earth by his miracles, and to spread the glory of God. He entered into rest on December 6th, 343. St Nicolas, Bishop of Patara - The uncle of the great St Nicolas, he set his nephew on the spiritual path and ordained him priest; The Holy Martyr Nicolas of Karamanos; St Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch; On icons of St. Nicolas, our Lord and Saviour will often be seen on one side with the Gospels in his hand, and the most holy Mother of God on the other with an episcopal stole in hers. This has a twofold historical significance: it denotes firstly, Nicolas's calling to episcopal office, and secondly his vindication and re-instatement following the punishment for his clash with Arius. That very night, several of the fathers had the selfsame vision: how the Lord stood on one side of Nicolas with the Gospels and the Mother of God on the other with a pallium, offering to the saint those marks of rank that had been stripped from him. Seeing this, the fathers were amazed, and quickly returned to Nicolas that which they had taken from him. They began from that time to respect him as a great man, and to interpret his action against Arius not as some senseless rage but as the expression of great zeal for God's truth. Name Day Tsar Nicholas II (1918).

‡ **Scripture Readings - John 10:9-16 (Matins Gospel); Hebrews 13:17-21 (St. Nicholas); Luke 6:17-23 (Nicholas) ‡**

7 / 20 December — Nativity Fast — St Ambrose, Bishop of Mediolanum (Milan) - This great Father of the Orthodox Church was of eminent parentage. His father was the imperial governor of Gaul and Spain, and a pagan, while his mother was a Christian. While he was still in his cradle, a swarm of bees once settled on him, left some honey on his lips and flew off; and, while still a child, he thrust out his hand and said prophetically: 'Kiss it, for I shall be a bishop!' On the death of his father, the Emperor made him governor of Liguria, of which province Milan was the chief city. When the bishop of Milan died, there was great dissension between the Orthodox Christians and the heretical Arians about the choice of a new bishop. Ambrose went into the church to keep order, this being his responsibility. Thereupon, a child at its mother's breast cried out: 'Ambrose for bishop!' All the people took this to be the voice of God, and unanimously elected Ambrose as their bishop, although it was against his will. Ambrose was baptised, and passed through all the necessary ranks in one week, and was consecrated bishop. In this capacity, he strengthened the faith of the Orthodox, restrained heretics, adorned churches, spread the Faith among the pagans, wrote many instructive books and was an example of a true Christian and a true shepherd. He also composed the Te Deum, the great hymn of thanksgiving. This renowned hierarchy, who was visited by people from distant lands for his wisdom and gracious words, was very austere in his personal life, being no stranger to toil and full of good works. He slept little, worked and prayed constantly and fasted every day except Saturday and Sunday. God therefore permitted him to witness many of His wonders, and to perform many himself. He discovered the relics of Ss Protasius, Gervasius, Nazarius and Celsus. Humble before lesser men, he was fearless before the great. He reproached the Empress Justina for heresy, cursed Maximus for tyranny and murder and forbade the Emperor Theodosius to enter a church until he had repented of his sin. He refused to meet the powerful Eugenius, the self-styled Emperor. God granted this man, who was so pleasing to Him, such grace that he could raise the dead, drive demons from men, heal the sick of every ailment and see into the future. He died peacefully at daybreak on Easter Day in the year 397; Our Holy Father Gregory the Hesychast ; Our Holy Father Nilus of Stolobnoye.

‡ **Scripture Readings - Hebrews 5:11-6:8; Luke 21:5-7, 10-11, 20-24; Hebrews 4:1-13; Luke 21:12-19 ‡**

8 / 21 December — Nativity Fast — Our Holy Father Patapius - born and brought up in the Faith and in the fear of God by pious parents in the Egyptian city of Thebes he early perceived and rejected the empty vanity of the world and went into the Egyptian desert, where he devoted himself to cleansing his heart from every worldly thought and desire for the sake of divine love. When his virtues became known among the people, they began to come to him and seek relief from their troubles. Afraid of human glory, which darkens a man's mind and separates it from God, Patapius fled from the desert to Constantinople, for this wonderful saint thought that he could more easily hide himself from men in the heart of a city than in the desert. He built himself a hut close to the Blachernae church and there, enclosed and unknown, took up again his interrupted life of asceticism. But the light cannot be hidden. A child, blind from birth, was led by divine Providence to St Patapius and begged him to offer a prayer that he might be given his sight and look upon God's creation, and praise God all the more. Patapius had pity on the suffering child and prayed to God, and the child saw. Through this miracle, Patapius's godly life became known throughout the entire capital, and people began to turn to him for healing, comfort and teaching. Patapius healed one eminent man of dropsy after blessing him with a cross and anointing him with oil. Making the sign of the Cross in the air, he freed a youth from an unclean spirit which had cruelly tormented him, and the evil spirit went out of God's creature like smoke, uttering a great cry. He made

the sign of the Cross over a woman who had sores on her breasts all filled with worms, and she was healed. St Patapius worked many other miracles, all through prayer in the name of Christ and by the power of the Cross. He entered into rest in great old age, going to the Kingdom of God in the seventh century; The Holy Apostles Sosthenes, Apollos, Tychicus, Epaphroditus, Onesiphorus, Cephas and Caesar; The Holy Martyrs in Africa;

St. Budoc, bishop of Plourin - from an early age resolved to embrace the religious life, and was in due course made a monk by the Abbot of Youghal. His mother died, and on the death of the Abbot of Youghal he was elected to rule the monastery. Later, upon the death of the King of Ireland, the natives raised Budoc to the temporal and spiritual thrones making him King of Ireland and Bishop of Armagh. After two years he wished to retire from these honours, but the people were "wild with despair" at the tidings, and surrounded the palace lest he should escape. One night, while praying in his metropolitan church, an angel appeared to him, bidding him betake himself to Brittany. Going down to the seashore, it was indicated to him that he must make the voyage in a stone trough. On entering this it began to move, and he was borne across to Brittany, landing at Porspoder, in the diocese of Léon. The people of that district drew the stone coffer out of the water, and built a hermitage and a chapel for the Saint's convenience. Budoc dwelt for one year at Porspoder, but, "disliking the roar of the waves," he had his stone trough mounted on a cart, and yoking two oxen to it he set forth, resolved to follow them wherever they might go and establish himself at whatever place they might halt. The cart broke down at Plourin, and there Budoc settled for a short time; but trouble with disorderly nobles forced him to depart, and this time he went to Dol, where he was well received by St Malglorious, then its bishop, who soon after resigned his see to Budoc. The Saint ruled at Dol for twenty years, and died early in the seventh century.

‡ Scripture Readings - Hebrews 7:1-6; Luke 21:28-33 ‡

9 / 22 December — Nativity Fast— The Conception by St Anna of the Most Holy Mother of God - 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, Gabriel, who appeared to each of them separately and told them that God had heard their prayer and that a daughter would be born to them. St. Anna conceived at once, and in the ninth month gave birth to the holy Virgin Mary who was blessed by God and all generations of men.

Tropar of the Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos, Tone 4: Today, the bonds of barrenness are loosed, / for God, hearkening unto Joachim and Anna, / doth manifestly promise them that they will, / beyond all expectation, / give birth to the divine Maiden, / from whom The Infinite One Himself, / becoming man, shall be born. / And He commandeth the angels to cry unto her: / Rejoice thou who art full of grace, // the Lord is with thee!

Kondak of the Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos, Tone 4 (Special Melody): Today the whole world doth celebrate / Anna's conceiving, / which was brought about by God; / for she gave birth unto her // who ineffably gave birth unto The Word.

St Hannah, Mother of the Prophet Samuel; Our Holy Father Stephen the New Light; St Sophronius, Archbishop of Cyprus; St. Diuma, bishop of the Mercians and Middle Angles - an Irishman and companion of St. Cedd

‡ Scripture Readings - Hebrews 7:18-25; Luke 21:37-22:8; Galatians 4:22-31 (St. Anna); Luke 8:16-21 (St. Anna) ‡

10 / 23 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Martyrs Menas, Hermogenes and Euphrasius - Both Menas and Hermogenes were born in Athens. They both lived in Constantinople, where they enjoyed the high favour of the Emperor and the honour of the people. Menas was known for his great learning and gift of speech and, although he acted outwardly as a pagan, he was in his heart a convinced Christian. Hermogenes was Eparch of Constantinople, and was a pagan through and through. He was, however, a merciful man and performed many good deeds. When dissention broke out between the Christians and the pagans in the city of Alexandria, the Emperor Maximian (285- 305) sent Menas to calm the turmoil and drive the Christians from the city. Menas went and restored peace, but he also declared himself to be a Christian and brought many of the pagans to the true Faith by the power of his

words and the witness of his many miracles. When the Emperor heard this, he sent Hermogenes to punish Menas and to liquidate the Christians. Hermogenes brought Menas to trial, and he cut off his feet and his tongue, gouged out his eyes and then threw him into prison. The Lord Jesus himself appeared to him there, to heal and console His suffering servant. When he saw Menas miraculously healed, Hermogenes was baptised and began to preach the mighty Faith of Christ, being made Bishop of Alexandria. Then the furious Emperor Maximian came himself to Alexandria and put Menas and Hermogenes to harsh torture, which they endured courageously with the help of God's grace. Beholding the fortitude of these soldiers of Christ and the miracles God wrought upon them, Euphrasius, Menas's secretary, went into the judgement-hall and shouted to the Emperor's face: 'I too am a Christian!' The Emperor flew into a rage, took a sword and beheaded Euphrasius himself, and then he commanded the executioner to behead Menas and Hermogenes. Their holy relics, thrown into the sea, floated in a miraculous way to Constantinople, where the bishop, forewarned in a dream, met them with great ceremony and buried them with honour; Our Holy Mother Angelina and St John the Despot; The Holy Martyr Gemellus; Our Holy Father Thomas of Bithynia.

‡ **Scripture Readings - John 10:9-16 (Matins Gospel); Ephesians 2:11-13; Luke 13:18-29; Ephesians 6:10-17 (Martyrs); Luke 21:12-19 (Martyrs); Hebrews 7:26-8:2; John 10:9-16 ‡**

HYMN OF PRAISE Saint John Damascene

O wondrous trumpet of the Orthodox Faith,
O glorious monk of a glorious coenobium,
John the poet, champion of the Faith,
Holy sufferer for the holy icons,
Having glorified God you are now glorified;
Immortal trumpeter of eternal life,
You left the world for the sake of the Living Christ.
Having humbled yourself, you are glorified the more.
You took upon yourself the path of asceticism;
Through tears you beheld the heavenly mysteries;
By prayer and faith you performed miracles;
You conversed with the Mother of God.
The Faith-who could better expound it?
Who could glorify God with a sweeter hymn?
O harp of eternal truth, there is none like you,
No one like you, glorious Father Damascene.
Oh, raise even now your pure mouth,
And implore the Life-giving Christ for us,
That His mercy accompany us until death,
That we with you may glorify Him.

REFLECTION

Obedience, coupled with humility, is the foundation of the spiritual life, the foundation of salvation and the foundation of the overall structure of the Church of God. The great John Damascene-great in every good thing-as a monk left a deep impression on the history of the Church by his exceptional example of obedience and humility. Testing him one day, his elder and spiritual father handed him woven baskets and ordered him to take them to Damascus and sell them there. The elder established a very high price for the baskets, thinking that John would not be able to sell them at that price but would have to return with them. John, therefore, firstly had to go on a long journey; secondly, he had to go as a poor monk to the city where he, at one time, had been the most powerful man after the Caliph; thirdly, he had to seek a ridiculously high price for the baskets; and fourthly, should he not sell the baskets, he would have made this enormous journey, there and back, for nothing. In this way, the elder wished to test the obedience, humility and patience of his famous disciple. John silently prostrated before the elder and, without a word, took the baskets and started on his journey. Arriving in Damascus, he stood in the market place and awaited a buyer. When he told the interested passers-by the price of his goods, they laughed at and mocked him as a lunatic. He stood there the whole day, and the whole day he was exposed to derision and ridicule. But God, Who sees all things, did not abandon His patient servant. A certain citizen passed by and looked at John. Even though John was clad in a poor monk's habit and his face was withered and pale from fasting, this citizen recognized in him the one-time lord and first minister of the Caliph, in whose service he had also been. John also recognized him, but they both began to deal as strangers. Even though John named the all-too-high price of the baskets, the citizen purchased and paid for them without a word, recalling the good that John Damascene had once done for him. As a victor, holy John returned to the monastery rejoicing, and brought joy to his elder.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the sinful fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3):

1. How Adam and Eve, having sinned, hid themselves from God;
2. How, hearing the voice of God, they fled and hid themselves among the trees;
3. How, even now, every sin estranges us from God;
4. How a sinner, hearing the voice of God through his conscience, hides himself in irrational nature.

HOMILY - on how everything is good that is of God

And God saw that it was good (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25).

Brethren, only good works proceed from the good Creator. Therefore, let all those who say that both good and evil proceed from God be silent. After His every act, God Himself affirms that it is good. Six times He repeated that what He created was good, and finally, the seventh time, when He saw all in its entirety, He pronounced His judgment that all He had created *was very good* (Genesis 1:31). Therefore, in total He repeated seven times that everything was good that came into existence by His holy will. Is it not a great wonder that some people come up with the godless assertion that both good and evil equally proceed from God? God, as if He knew that such slanders would be cast against Him-or, better to say, that such slanders would be cast throughout the centuries-gave His defence in advance and repeated it seven times, for all times and for all generations. Evil comes from sin, and there is no sin in God. Therefore, God can do no evil. He is called the Almighty because He is powerful to do every good. Wicked and twisted are the commentators on God who claim that God is ``Almighty" because He can do both good and evil. God is the source of good and is darkened by nothing, and nothing can proceed from Him that is contrary to good. It is obvious to every normal man that evil is contrary to good. Know, brethren, that those who speak of duality in God, in the eternal Source of good, are those in whom is found the duality of good and evil. However, all those who love good, follow the path of goodness, and yearn for good have a clear revelation within themselves that God is good, and only good. O our God, our Creator, Thou art the Creator of all good, and all Thy works are good.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Words of Wisdom

For the divine Word was not united to an already pre-existing body of flesh, but, without being circumscribed, came in His own Person to dwell in the womb of the Holy Virgin and from the chaste blood of the ever-virgin made flesh subsist animated by a rational and noetic soul. Taking to Himself the first-fruits of the human clay, the very Word became a person in the flesh. Thus, there was a body which was at once the body of God the Word and at the same time an animate body possessing both rational and noetic aspects. Therefore, we do not say that man became God, but that God became Man. For, while He was by nature perfect God, the same became by nature perfect Man.

St. John Damascene

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