

3rd Sunday After Pentecost

All Saints of Russia

1 / 14 July

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!

Tropar of All Saints of Russia, Tone 8: As a beautiful fruit of the sowing of Thy salvation, / the land of Russia doth offer to Thee, O Lord, all the Saints that have shone in her. / By their prayers keep the Church and the world in profound peace, // through the Theotokos, O Most-merciful One.

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.

Kondak of All Saints of Russia Tone 3: Today the choir of the saints who pleased God in the land of Russia / doth stand before us in Church and invisibly doth pray for us to God. / With them the angels glorify Him, / and all the saints of the Church of Christ keep festival with them; // and they all pray together for us to the Eternal God.



Vespers

Lord I have Cried - Tone 2, on 10: Octoechos 4; Saints 6 (Come, ye assemblies of Russia); G: Saints (Rejoice, O sure rule of Russia); N: Sunday Dogmatic in the tone of the week.

Aposticha: Octoechos; G: Saints (Celebrating the yearly commemoration of our holy kinsmen); N: Theotokion in the Menaion (Let us sound the clarion of hymns).

Matins Gospel III

EPISTLE: St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans 5:1-10

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; And perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

THROUGH WHOM ALSO WE HAVE ACCESS BY FAITH INTO THIS GRACE

And let me beg you to consider how he everywhere sets down these two points, His part, and our part. His part, however, is varied and numerous and diverse. For He died for us and reconciled us; He brought us to Himself, and gave us grace unspeakable. But we brought only faith as our contribution. And so he says, 'by faith, into this grace.' What grace is this? Tell me. It is being counted worthy of the knowledge of God; being forced from error; coming to a knowledge of the truth; obtaining all the blessings that come through baptism. For the purpose of His bringing us close was that we might receive these gifts. It was not only that we might have simple remission of sins and that we should be reconciled, but that we might also receive countless benefits ...He unveils the whole of things to come ...For this is the nature of God's grace. It has no end; it knows no bounds, but is on the advance at all times to greater things ...Take an instance of what I mean. A person has acquired rulership and glory and authority, yet he does not stay in that status continuously, but is speedily cast out of it. If man does not take it from him, death comes, and is sure to seize it. But God's gifts are not of this kind: for neither man, nor occasion, nor crisis of affairs, nor even the Devil, nor death, can come and cast us out of them. But when we are dead, we then more strictly speaking have possession of them, and continue enjoying them more and more.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily IX on Romans IV: B#55, p. 396.

Second Reading: Hebrews 11:33 - 12:2

GOSPEL according to St. Matthew 6:22-33

"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; And yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

"Seek ye the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Mt. 6: 33).

Everything necessary for our earthly existence will be added: food, drink, clothing. But not just added; there is one condition: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God.

What does "seek" mean? It means that the Lord requires from us actions, an effort of our will. Remember the Gospel readings for the last two weeks ("The Week of All Saints" and "The Week of All Saints Who Shone in Russia") and also what was said in today's Gospel. These are like steps by which all the saints ascended to the heavenly dwellings, and by which we too must all ascend. Indeed, there is no other way. The way to the Lord is the same for everyone. And it is this: Confess Christ before people, love Him more than everyone and everything else, and take up our cross and follow Him, in the same way the Apostles followed Him, leaving everything behind: their families, nets and boats. And not care about what we eat or drink or about what to wear, because our Heavenly Father knows that we need all these things. The Gospel gives us wonderful examples: "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap... yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Mt. 6:26, 28-29).

This is what it means to seek the Kingdom of God. But what is the centre of such seeking? What is required of us for this? What is the beginning? Here it is: "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be clean, (" The Russian text reads "clean" or "pure," instead of "single" or "sound," which appear in the English versions) thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness" (Mt. 6:22-23).

Which eye is meant here? This eye is our conscience, and the body is our entire being. This means that if our conscience is clean, then our entire being will be full of light. But for our conscience to be clean, an effort on our part is needed. We must keep vigilant watch over thoughts and every movement of our heart, It is for purpose that we are given this inner eye.

May the Lord help us to strain all our forces to keep clean. And then all the commandments of God will become joyous and possible for us, because we will be full of light!

"O Christ, the true Light, Who enlightens every who comes into the world, may the light of Thy Countenance be signed upon us, and may we behold in it unapproachable Light!"

(Prayer at First Hour after Evening Vesper Service).

Feast of All Saints of Russia.

The feast of All Saints of Russia is not a feast of just righteous ones, but of saints. God is filled with holiness; "Holy is the Lord our God." But man is created in the "image and likeness" of God, and the Lord at creation breathed into him the power to partake of the Divine essence, and thereby come closer to God. And the closer a man is to God, the holier he is. Saints are those who have partaken of the Divine essence and made it their own; to God, they become "His own." The saints enjoy blessedness, for God is blessed. From them there is light for men. Through them the power of God is revealed. Saints retain all that is characteristic of the human condition; they know everything that is ours. They are near to God, but they are also near to us; they walked and dwelt among us. The people of Holy Russia venerated them, kissed their icons and holy relics, wanted to be as close as possible to the saints, touched holiness, and the Russian land was filled with it. Holy Prince Vladimir demonstrated the regenerating power of the Divine essence upon himself. Previously wild and passionate, he was completely reborn, so that he became a new person, radiating light and joy, and was called "beautiful sun." Do not think that contact with holiness is the fate of only the Russian nation. No! All peoples can live in the spirit that Holy Russia lived and lives in, and then they are close and comprehensible to each other. St. Anthony of the Kiev Caves and St. Anthony the Roman were men of different countries, but together they built the Russian Church, and they are equally near and dear to her. Until recent times we did not have martyrs, but there was a multitude of saints. They influenced the direction that the Russian people took; the people loved them and tried to follow them, and this determined the way of life. All of life was illuminated, until spiritual apostasy began, which led to a fall. But Holy Russia is alive. When the persecution began, strugglers were revealed, confessors, and now we have martyrs. The spirit of Holy Russia lives. Holy Russia is part of the Ecumenical (i.e., the entire) Church. Celebrating the saints, we desire to be together with them and to acquire the power of God through their holiness. They know us, our nature, our characteristics and spirits, and they know our souls, too — what is necessary for us. We are close to them as children are close to their parents. The Apostle Peter prayed for his disciples. St. Demetrius of Thessalonica rushes to help the Greeks because this is his own nation. Sts. Boris and Gleb help their relatives (e.g., Alexander Nevsky), and their own Russian people.

St. John Maximovitch

Second Gospel: Matthew 4:25 – 5:12

Saints of the Week

1 / 14 July — The Holy Martyrs Cosmas and Damian - unmercenary doctors and wonderworkers, these two saints were brothers. Born in Rome, baptised as children and given a Christian education, they were endowed by God with the gift of healing, generally by the laying-on of their hands, of both men and animals. They sought no reward for their work, only urging the sick to faith in Christ the Lord. Inheriting great wealth, they compassionately divided it among the poor and needy. The Emperor Galerius was on the throne in Rome at that time. Persecutors of the Christian faith brought these two holy brothers, bound in chains, before him. After prolonged interrogation, the Emperor charged them to deny Christ and offer sacrifice to idols. Cosmas and Damian not only refused to obey the Emperor; they urged him to forsake dead idols and come to the knowledge of the one, true God. 'Our God is not created, but is the Creator of all, and your gods come of the imaginings of men and the hands of artists. If there were no artists to make your gods, you would have nothing to worship.' After a miracle performed on the Emperor himself—healing him of a grave infirmity—the Emperor declared his faith in Christ and let the holy brothers go in peace. They continued to glorify Christ our God and to heal the sick, and were themselves glorified on all sides by the people. A doctor, a former teacher of theirs, envying their fame, lured them into the hills on the pretext of collecting herbs and stoned them to death. They suffered with honour for the Christian faith in 284. Their memory endures in the Church on earth, and their souls went to the Kingdom of the Lord, to live eternally in glory and joy.

Our Holy Father Peter the Patrician - a nobleman from Constantinople and a commander during the reign of Emperor Nicephorus. In a war with the Bulgarians, Emperor Nicephorus was slain and Peter, with fifty Greek commanders and princes, was captured and cast into prison. St. John the Theologian miraculously freed Peter from prison. Peter then despised all earthly glory, left his wife and son, and withdrew to Mount Olympia where, as a monk and as a disciple of St. Joannicius the Great, lived a life of mortification for thirty-four years. Following the death of his wife and son, he settled in Constantinople where he spent eight more years in fasting and prayer and fell asleep in the Lord in the year 865 A.D. in the seventy-seventh year of his life.

The Holy Martyr Potitus - a thirteen-year-old child who was born in Sardinia. He endured much suffering for Christ both from his father and from the civil persecutors of Christianity. Potitus was beheaded during the reign of Emperor Antoninus (138-161 A.D.) but, before this, Potitus cured and baptized Agnes, the daughter of the emperor.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerables Tikhon, Basil and Nikon Sokolovsky (movable holiday on the 1st Sunday after June 29th). St. Arsenius, bishop of Tver (movable holiday on the 1st Sunday after June 29th). Synaxis of saints of Tver (movable holiday on the 1st Sunday after June 29th). 1Hieromartirs Neophytus, Jonah, Neophytus, Jonah, and Parthenius of Lampsacus (movable holiday on the 1st Sunday after June 27th). Celebration in Vologda to the venerable fathers of Vologda (movable holiday on the 3rd Sunday of Pentecost). Synaxis of Novgorod Hierarchs (movable holiday on the 3rd Sunday of Pentecost). Synaxis of Saints of Belorussia (movable holiday on the 3rd Sunday of Pentecost). Synaxis of Saints of Pskov (movable holiday on the 3rd Sunday of Pentecost). Synaxis of Saints of St. Petersburg (movable holiday on the 3rd Sunday of Pentecost). Synaxis of Saints of the Lands of Udmurtia (movable holiday on the 3rd Sunday of Pentecost). Synaxis of Saints of Volgograd (movable holiday on the 3rd Sunday of Pentecost). New Martyrs of the Turkish Yoke (movable holiday on the 3rd Sunday of Pentecost). New Hieromartyr Arcadius priest. New Hieromartyr Alexis deacon. St. Angelina, despotina of Serbia. Venerable Nicodemus of Svyatogorsk. Translation of the relics of Venerable John of Rila from Turnovo to Rila. Holy Julius and Aaron, protomartyrs of Wales. St. Servanus, Apostle of Western Fife of East Scotland. St. Leontius, bishop of Radauti in Moldavia. Venerable Gallus, bishop of Clermont. 25 Martyrs in Nicomedia. Venerable Basil, founder of the Monastery of the Deep Stream in Cappadocia. Martyr Constantine the Wonderworker and those with him, of Cyprus. St. Leo the Hermit. St. Serf, bishop of Kinross. St. Eparchius the Recluse of Gaul.

2 / 15 July — Deposition of the Vesture of the Most Holy Mother of God in the Blachernae Church in Constantinople - in the time of the Emperor Leo the Great (457-474) and the Empress Verina and Patriarch Gennadius, two Constantinopolitan nobles, Galbius and Candidus, were travelling in the Holy Land to venerate the holy places there. In Nazareth, they stayed in the house of a Jewish girl who had the vesture of the Mother of God kept in a secret place. Many of the sick and wretched had received healing through prayer and the touching of this vesture. Galbius and Candidus took this holy relic to Constantinople and informed the Emperor and the Patriarch of its existence. It was the cause of great rejoicing in the imperial city. The vesture was ceremonially placed in the Blachernae church (a church built by the Emperor Marcian and Empress Pulcheria on the shore of a bay, and named 'Blachernae' after a General Blacheran from Scetis, who was killed there), and this commemorative feast was instituted.

St Juvenal, Patriarch of Jerusalem - a contemporary of the great illuminators of the Orthodox Church: Euthymius, Theodosius, Gerasimus, Simeon the Stylite and others. He participated in two Ecumenical Councils: the Third Council in Ephesus [431 A.D.] and the Fourth Council in Chalcedon [451 A.D.]. With great power and zeal, he fought against the blasphemous heresies: in Ephesus against Nestorius who called the Birth-giver of God the Birth-giver of Christ and in Chalcedon against Eutyches and Dioscorus who taught that there was only one nature in Christ, i.e., only a divine nature without a human nature. Following the victory of Orthodoxy at both councils, Juvenal returned to his throne in Jerusalem. Even though the heresies were condemned, the heretics were not eliminated. Through the intrigue and violence of Theodosius, a friend of Dioscorus, Juvenal was banished from the patriarchal throne and Theodosius, on his own, elevated himself in Juvenal's place. In the beginning, this heretic Theodosius was supported by Empress Eudocia, the widow of Theodosius the Younger who, at that time, took up residence in Jerusalem. Hesitant and indiscreet, Eudocia finally went to see St. Simeon the Stylite in order to ask him wherein lies the truth. The saint of God unmasked all the heretical teachings and instructed the empress to adhere to the teachings of Orthodoxy as confirmed at the councils. The empress heeded, repented and she herself became embittered against the false Patriarch Theodosius. During that time Marcian and Pulcheria reigned in Constantinople. A letter from the emperor was sent to Commander Athanasius ordering him to banish Theodosius and to return and reinstate Juvenal to his throne which the commander quickly did. Juvenal governed the Church in Jerusalem for thirty-eight years as its hierarch and at a ripe old age presented himself to the Lord in the year 458 A.D. to receive from Him the reward for great suffering and misery which he had endured for the truth. During the reign of St. Juvenal, the celebration of Christmas was established on December 25.

St Photius, Metropolitan of Moscow - of Greek descent. He prudently governed the Russian Church for twenty years. Photius died in the year 1430 A.D. A week before his death an angel of God appeared to him and informed him of the exact time of his departure from this world.

St. Juvenal, protomartyr of America and Alaska - St Juvenal was (together with St Herman, Dec. 12) a member of the first mission sent from Russia to proclaim the Gospel in the New World. He was a priest-monk, and a zealous follower of the Apostles, and baptized hundreds of the natives of Alaska. He was martyred by enraged pagans in 1796.

Also commemorated on this day: "Pozai" (17th c.), "Theodotiev" (1487) and "Akhtyr" (1739) Icons of the Most Holy Theotokos. Right-believing King Stephen the Great of Moldavia. St. Monegunde of Chartres. New Martyr Lampros of Makri. Uncovering of the relics (2003) of New Hieromartyr Priest Sergius Florinsky of Rakvere, Estonia. Feast of the Robe of the Most Holy Theotokos. St. Oudoceus, bishop of Llandaff. St. Swithun, bishop of Winchester.

3 / 16 July — The Holy Martyr Hyacinthus - a young man, a courtier at the court of the Emperor Trajan, he was a secret Christian. Once, when the Emperor and all his court were offering sacrifice to idols, Hyacinthus stood apart from these abominable ceremonies. He was therefore denounced and brought to trial before the Emperor. The Emperor urged him to deny Christ and sacrifice to idols, but Hyacinthus remained firm as diamond and said to the Emperor: 'I am a Christian. I revere Christ and worship Him, and I bring my living self to Him as a sacrifice.' Whipped, spat upon and flayed, this holy martyr was flung into prison. By order of the Emperor, he was given nothing to eat but food that had been sacrificed to idols. Hyacinthus would not eat this, and died in prison after eight days. The warder saw two shining angels in the prison, one covering the martyr's body with his own glorious vesture and the other placing a wreath of glory on his head; and the whole prison was filled with light and radiance. The young Hyacinthus suffered with honour and was crowned with a wreath of glory in the year 108.

St Anatolius, Patriarch of Constantinople - At first, Anatolius was a presbyter in the Church at Alexandria and following the death of Patriarch Flavian, he was elevated to the patriarchal throne of Constantinople in the year 449 A.D. During his reign, the throne of Constantinople was recognized as equal to the throne of Rome by the Ecumenical Council held at Chalcedon in 451 A.D. He struggled greatly for the purity of the Orthodox Faith, suffered much at the hands of the heretics and finally was slain by them in the year 458 A.D. during the reign of Pope Leo the Great. Anatolius governed the church for nearly nine years and took up his habitation among the holy hierarchs in the Kingdom of God.

Our Holy Father Alexander - born in Asia, educated in Constantinople and after the completion of his schooling he devoted himself to military service and attained the rank of an officer. Reading Holy Scripture, he came across the words of the Savior: "If you seek perfection, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor. You will then have treasure in heaven. Afterward come back and follow me" (St. Matthew 19:21). These words had such an effect on Alexander that he immediately sold and distributed all that he had and withdrew into the wilderness. After many mortifications and labours in purifying himself, he established a monastery of the Sleepless Ones with a special constitution according to this rule: the divine services [offices] were carried on night and day without interruption in his community. The brotherhood was divided into twenty-four relays [cursus]. Each relay knew their hour of the day and night and went to church to continue the reading and singing of the preceding relay. Carrying nothing

with him, Alexander traveled much throughout the eastern regions enlightening men with the Faith of Christ. Alexander disputed with heretics, worked miracles by the Grace of God, grew old serving the Lord and finally ended his earthly life in Constantinople in the year 430 A.D. where his relics manifested miraculous power and glory through which God glorifies His holy servants.

St. Germanus, bishop of Isle of Man and enlightener of Peel, (5th c.) - a nephew of Saint Patrick; when Saint Germanus of Auxerre (July 31) visited Britain in 448 AD to refute the Pelagians, he met an Irish colonist whose son became his disciple and chose his master's name for himself. Germanus of Man was born in Brittany and went to Ireland to work with Saint Patrick. He was a missionary monk in Ireland, in Wales under Saints Brioc (May 1) and Illtyd (November 6), and Brittany. Germanus left Brittany to meet Patrick in Britain about 462. There he engaged in a magic contest with Gwrtheyrn. After that he returned to Ireland (c. 466) eventually to become the bishop of the Isle of Man during the lifetime of Patrick. After evangelising in Wales, his name is traced in Spain and Gaul. His martyrdom is recorded in Normandy. His memory is preserved in place names, such as Jarman and Gremain, in areas such as Caernavonshire, Denbighshire, Montgomeryshire, and Radnorshire. His name is also found in the Acts of Kieran and those of other early Irish saints. Leland mentions a pilgrimage to Garmon ("Armon") at Llanarmonyn.

Tropar of St German, Tone 2: Nephew of Patrick and missionary in Ireland,/ thou didst spread the Faith in many lands./ From Wales to Brittany, and thence to the Isle of Man,/ thou didst glorify Christ wherever thou didst tread./ Pray to Christ to save our souls.

Also commemorated on this day: Translation of the relics (1652) of Hieromartyr Philip, metropolitan of Moscow. New Hieromartyr Anthony, archbishop of Archangelsk. Uncovering of the relics of Sylvester, bishop of Omsk. Venerable Anatolius, of the Near Caves in Kiev. St. Anatolius (another) recluse of the Far Caves in Kiev. Holy Princes Basil and Constantine of Yaroslavl. Repose of St. Basil, bishop of Ryazan. Venerables John and Longinus, wonderworkers of Yarenga. Blessed John of Moscow, fool-for-Christ. Venerable Nicodemus, abbot of Kozha Lake. Martyrs Diomedes, Eulampius, Asclepiodotus, and Golinduc of Caesarea in Cappadocia. Martyrs Mocius (Mucian) and Mark. Venerable Isaiah the Solitary of Seeds and Palestine. Blessed Michael, Herodion, Basil, and Thomas, fools-for-Christ of Solvychevodsk. Martyrs Theodotus and Theodota, martyred with St. Hyacinth. Venerable Gerasimus the New of Carpenision. St. Claudianus, patriarch of Alexandria. St. Anatolius, bishop of Laodicea, and his successor, St. Eusebius. St. Symeon, the third stylite of Cilicia. St. George the God-bearer of the Black Mountain, teacher of St. George of Mt. Athos. St. Basil, archbishop of Novgorod.

4 / 17 July — The Royal Martyrs - In April of 1918, Tsar Nicholas and his family and faithful servants were transferred to Ekaterinburg by the now victorious Bolsheviks. There they spent three hellish months of psychological torture and yet they all retained their inward calm and state of prayer, so that not a small number of their tormentors were softened by these valiant Christian strugglers. As Pierre Gilliard, the French tutor to the Tsarevich Alexis recalled: "The courage of the prisoners was sustained in a remarkable way by religion. They had kept that wonderful faith which at Tobolsk had been the admiration of their entourage and which had given them such strength, such serenity in suffering. They were already almost entirely detached from this world. The Tsaritsa and Grand Duchesses could often be heard singing religious airs, which affected their guards in spite of themselves." Gradually these guards were humanized by contact with their prisoners. They were astonished at their simplicity, attracted by their gentleness, subdued by their serene dignity, and soon found themselves dominated by those whom they thought they held in their power. The drunken Avdiev found himself disarmed by such greatness of soul; he grew conscious of his own infamy. The early ferocity of these men was succeeded by profound pity." When this would happen, the inhuman Bolsheviks would replace the guards who had been so touched with crueller and more animalistic ones. Seldom being allowed to go to church, they nevertheless nourished their souls with home prayers and greatly rejoiced at every opportunity to receive the Divine Sacraments. Three days before their martyrdom, in the very house in which they were imprisoned, there took place the last church service of their suffering lives. As the officiating priest, Fr. John Storozhev, related: "' It appeared to me that the Emperor, and all his daughters too, were very tired. During such a service it is customary to read a prayer for the deceased. For some reason, the Deacon began to sing it, and I joined him. As soon as we started to sing, we heard the Imperial Family behind us drop to their knees' (as is done during funeral services). Thus they prepared themselves without suspecting it, for their own death?in accepting the funeral viaticum. Contrary to their custom none of the family sang during the service, and upon leaving the house the clergymen expressed the opinion that they 'appeared different' as if something had happened to them." Finally, after midnight on July 4, 1918, the entire family, with their doctor and two faithful servants, was brought to the basement of the house of their confinement under the pretext of moving them once again. There they were brutally and mercilessly murdered, the children as well as the adults, under the cover of darkness for "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). The Tsar was shot as he stood forward to defend his family. Tsaritsa Alexandra was able to make the sign of the Cross before she too fell. Amid screams, the children were shot, clubbed and bayoneted, in an act of indescribably brutality. There is evidence that the murders were ritualistic; strange symbols (CANABALISTIC) were found on the

walls of the room where the crime took place. Thus ended the life of the gentle, Christ-like Tsar, as a sacrifice for the Orthodox Faith and for the Russian people, both of whom he so fervently loved and believed in. This crime was the beginning of an inhuman bloodbath which left tens of millions dead, the Church in the grip of atheists and Holy Russia entirely unrecognizable. Now it is up to us to pray to the twice-crowned Tsar-Martyr Nicholas and his family to intercede before the throne of God that the sins of the Orthodox might be forgiven. And may our Lord Jesus Christ grant us the strength of faith to follow the example of these true servants of His.

St. Andrew of Crete - born in Damascus of Christian parents. He was a mute from birth until the age of seven. When his parents brought him to church and he received Holy Communion, he began to speak. So great is the power of the Divine and Holy Communion. At age fourteen, Andrew went to Jerusalem and was tonsured in the Lavra of St. Sabas the Sanctified. By virtue of his understanding and asceticism, he surpassed many of the older monks and was an example to them. After a while, the patriarch took him as his personal secretary. When the Monothelite heresy began to rage the heresy which taught that the Lord Jesus did not possess a human will but only a divine will the Sixth Ecumenical Council convened in Constantinople in the year 681 A.D. during the reign of Constantine IV [Bearded One]. Theodore, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, was unable to attend the council but sent Andrew as his representative who, at that time, was an Archdeacon. At the council, Andrew displayed his wonderful gift of oratory, his zeal for the Faith and rare prudence. Having assisted in strengthening the Orthodox Faith, Andrew returned to his duties in Jerusalem. Later, he was elected and installed as the Archbishop of the Island of Crete. As an archbishop, he was greatly loved by the people. Andrew was very zealous for Orthodoxy and vehemently eradicated all heresies. Through his prayers he worked miracles. By his prayers, he drove the Saracens from the Island of Crete. Andrew wrote many books of instruction, hymns and canons of which the most renown is the Great Canon to the Birth-giver of God read on Thursday of the Fifth Sunday of the Great Lenten Season. His outward appearance was such that "seeing his face and hearing his words flowing like honey, everyone found pleasure and amended their ways." On one occasion, returning from Constantinople, Andrew foretold his death before he arrived in Crete. And so it happened. When the boat in which he traveled sailed near the island of Mitylene, this beacon of the Church ended his earthly life and with his soul, took up habitation in the Kingdom of Christ in the year 721 A.D.

St. Andrew Rublev - His "Holy Trinity" icon of the Hospitality of Abraham is sometimes called the most perfectly executed of all icons. Many consider him the greatest iconographer of all time, and his "Holy Trinity" the finest icon. Very little is known of his life. He was born around 1360, and probably studied with the Byzantine iconographer Theophanes the Greek. He is known to have created icons for the Cathedral of the Annunciation in Moscow and the Cathedral of the Dormition at Vladimir. He created a highly spiritual and distinctively Russian iconographic style that set the standard for Russian iconography for centuries thereafter. It is said that he knew St Sergius of Radonezh (July 5). In his later years he became a monk.

St. Finbar of Wexford - Founded a monastery on the Innis Doimhle (Isle of Crimlen), Wexford, Ireland in the sixth century, and served as its first abbot. His name means white head (Fionnbharr).
Tropar of St Finbar tone 3: O holy Finbar, thou didst labour faithfully/ and gain many disciples who followed thee to Christ./ As thou didst guide souls in thine Irish monastery,/ pray to Christ our God/ to grant us His great mercy.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Martha, mother of St. Symeon Stylites the Younger. New Hieromartyr Hieromonk Nilus of Poltava. New Hieromartyr Demetrius priest. New Hieromartyrs Sava (Trlajic), Bishop of Gornji Karlovac and George of Serbia. Burial of St. Andrew, prince of Bogoliubsk. Uncovering of the relics (1507) of Venerable Euthymius the Wonderworker, archimandrite of Suzdal. Martyrs Theodotus and Theodota at Caesarea in Cappadocia. Hieromartyr Theodore, bishop of Cyrene in Libya, and with him Martyrs Cyprilla, Aroa, and Lucia. Icon of the Mother of God of "Galatea". Venerables Tikhon, Basil and Nikon Monks of Solovki. St. Andrew the Russian of the Cairo. St. Donatus of Libya, bishop. St. Asclepias the Wonderworker. Hieromartyr Theophilus. St. Menignus, monk. Hieromartyr Theodotus. Hieromartyrs Innocent and Sabbatius and 30 others with them in Sirmium of Pannonia. Translation of the relics of St. Martin the Merciful, bishop of Tours. St. Ulrich of Augsburg and Bavaria.

5 / 18 July — Our Holy Father Athanasius the Athonite - born in Trebizond of God-fearing parents, he was early left destitute, but, by the providence of God, a high-ranking army officer took him, removed him to Constantinople and had him educated there. He was beloved by all his contemporaries for his meekness and humility. In their childish games, they appointed one of themselves to be Emperor, another Commander and so forth. Athanasius was always chosen Abbot, as if in prophecy. Finishing his schooling, Athanasius (called Abraham until his tonsuring) retired to Mount Kyminas in Bithynia, where he lived in asceticism as a disciple of the famous Michael Maleinos. Desiring yet stricter asceticism, he moved to the Holy Mountain, to live in silence. Many, desirous of the ascetic life, began to gather round him and he was constrained to build the famous Lavra. The Byzantine Emperors gave him generous help in this, especially Nicephorus Phocas, who himself had the intention of retiring and becoming a monk.

Later, John Tzimiskes also gave him great help. Manifold temptations were visited upon Athanasius, from demons and from men, but he, as a valiant soldier of Christ, resisted and overcame them all by his immense humility and unceasing prayer to the living God. Filled with the grace of God, he was found worthy to behold the most holy Mother of God, who miraculously brought forth water from a rock and promised him that she would evermore be the abbess of his monastery. Athanasius surpassed his brethren in work and in prayer, and loved them all with the love of a spiritual father and shepherd. Death came to him suddenly. He, together with six of his monks, had climbed up onto a newly-constructed part of the church to inspect a wall that was in building when the wall fell in and buried them all. So died this great light of monasticism in 1003. He appeared a number of times to his brethren after his death, to console or rebuke them.

St. Fragan and St. Gwen (Blanche) - 5th century. During the troubled times following the Roman departure from Britain, Saints Fragan and Gwen became refugees in Brittany, when many churches are dedicated to each of them. They are the parents of Saints Winwaloe, Jacut, Guethenoc, and Gunthiern. Tropar of Ss Fragan and Gwen tone 4: O noble exiles Fragan and Gwen/ who fled to Brittany in troubled times:/ you established churches to God's praise and glory;/ your children brought joy and gladness to the Breton people./ We praise you, glorious Saints.

St. Morwenna, patron of Morewenstow, England (6th c.) - her name means 'maiden' in Cornish.

Also commemorated on this day: Uncovering of the relics (1422) of Venerable Sergius of Radonezh. New Hieromartyr Gennadius priest, Martyrdom of St. Elizabeth Romanov and Nun Barbara (1918). Venerable Agapitus, confessor. Martyr Anna at Rome. Martyr Cyrilla of Cyrene in Libya, a widow . Venerable Lampadus, monk, of Hirenopolis. Icon of the Mother of God "Economissa". New Martyr Cyprian of Koutloumousiou Monastery, Mt. Athos. New Martyrs Grand Dukes Sergius Mikhailovitch, Princes John Constantinovich, Constantine, Igor Constantinovich and Vladimir. Synaxis of 23 Saints of Lesbos. Hieromartyr Stephen, bishop of Rhegium, disciple of the Apostle Paul, and with him Bishop Suerus and the women Agnes, Felicitas, and Perpetua. Martyr Athanasius, deacon of Jerusalem.

6 / 19 July — Our Holy Father Sisoes the Great - an Egyptian by birth, he lived at first in Scetis then, after St Antony's death, settled on the desert mountain on which Antony had earlier lived in asceticism and which was named after him. He learned humility through great struggles with himself, becoming meek and guileless as a lamb. Therefore God gave him the great gifts of healing the sick, driving out unclean spirits and raising the dead. Sisoes lived in the desert for sixty years, and was a fount of living wisdom for all the monks and lay folk who came to him for advice. At the time of his death, his face shone like the sun. The monks stood around him and marvelled at this sight and, when the saint gave up his soul, the whole chamber was filled with a wonderful fragrance. He entered into rest in great old age, in about 429. St Sisoes taught his monks: 'When temptation comes to a man, that man must give himself over to the will of God, and acknowledge that the temptation comes upon him because of his sins. If something good comes to pass, he must acknowledge that it comes about by the providence of God.' A monk asked him: 'How can I please God and be saved?' The saint replied: 'If you desire to please God, withdraw from the world, separate yourself from the earth, leave aside creation and draw near to the Creator, unite yourself to God with prayers and tears, and you will find rest in this world and in the next.' A monk asked Sisoes: 'How can I acquire humility?' The saint replied: 'When a man learns to regard every man as better than himself, he thus acquires humility.' Ammon complained to Sisoes that he could not memorise the wise sayings that he had read, to be able to quote them in conversation with others. The saint replied: 'It is not necessary. That which is necessary is to acquire purity of mind and to speak from this purity, placing one's hope in God.'

Also commemorated on this day: Synaxis of All Saints of Radonezh. New Hieromartyr Simon, bishop of Ufa. New Martyr Euthymius. New Martyr Theodore. Venerable Sisoes of the Kiev Caves. Uncovering of the relics of Holy Princess Juliana Olshanskaya. Martyrs Marinus and Martha, their children Audifax and Abbacum (Habakkuk), and those with them at Rome: Cyrinus, Valentine the Presbyter, and Asterius. Martyrs Isaurus the Deacon, Innocent, Felix, Hermias, Basil, Peregrinus, Rufus, and Rufinus of Apollonia in Macedonia. St. Cointus (Quintus) of Phrygia, confessor and wonderworker. Virgin-martyr Lucy, Martyr Rixius, and those with them at Rome (301): Martyrs Anthony, Lucian, Isidore, Dion, Diodorus, Cutonius, Arnosus, Capicus, Satyrus, and others. "Bogorodsko-Ufimsky" Icon of the Mother of God. St. Gleb Vsevolodovich of Kiev. Venerable Monenna, foundress of Killeevy Monastery. Synaxis of the Apostles Archippus, Philemon, and Onesimus. Martyrs Apollonius, Alexander, and Epimachus. New monk-martyr Cyril of Hilandar, Mt. Athos, who suffered at Thessalonica. St. Barnabas, elder of the Gethsemane Skete of St. Sergius' Lavra. St. Goar, hieromonk, hermit, and missionary along the Rhine.

7 / 20 July — Our Holy Father Thomas of Mt. Maleon - was a general, famed for his courage and wealth. He was massive of body and a source of fear to his enemies. But, when he came to love Christ more than the world or anything in the world, he left everything and retired to the desert, where he became a monk and gave himself to asceticism. St Elias the Prophet appeared to him, and led him to the mountain called Malea, near the Holy Mountain. There he lived in solitude, alone with God, in unceasing prayer day and night. Although he hid from the world, he could not succeed in concealing himself. Learning of the holiness of his life, people began to go to him, bringing their sick. St Thomas healed them of all ills and weaknesses. When he went to God (in the tenth century), his relics continued to give aid to all who drew near to them in faith.

Our Holy Fathers, the Martyrs Epictetus and Astius - Astius, the only son of his parents, was persuaded to love the Faith of Christ by Epictetus the priest who baptized him and tonsured him a monk. After that they moved from somewhere in the eastern regions of Scythia and settled in the Scythian town of Almirida (now Ramzina) on the mouth of the Danube on the Black Sea. They were tortured and beheaded for the Faith of Christ about 290 A.D. After their deaths, they both appeared in great radiance to the parents of St. Astius, Alexander and Marcellina, who were converted to Christ and who were baptized by Bishop Evangelus who himself, then was beheaded for Christ: "Evangelus, another angel" as is sung about him.

St. Illtyd, founder of the Llantwit abbey in Wales - (c. 425 to c. 505), the founder of the great school/seminary/abbey of Llan Illtyd Fawr (English, "Llantwit Major") in the west of South Glamorgan. Illtyd was considered the most learned person in Britain, expert alike in Maths, Grammar, Philosophy, Rhetoric and Scripture. One of the *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, or Welsh Triads, refers to him as one of the "three knights of the Court of Arthur who kept the Holy Grail". In an age when any schooling was available only to a very few privileged people, perhaps Illtud's seminary was the closest approximation in existence to an institution of higher education. Among Illtyd's pupils were Saints Pol Aurelian (in Latin, *Paulinus Aurelianus*), Samson, Gildas and Dewi (English, *David*).

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Acacius of Sinai, who is mentioned in The Ladder. New Hieromartyr Paul priest. Venerable Eudocia, in monasticism Euphrosyne, grand-duchess of Moscow. Uncovering of the relics (2001) of Venerable Gerasimus, abbot of Boldino. Martyrs Peregrinus, Lucian, Pompeius, Hesychius, Pappias, Saturninus, and Germanus, of Dyrrachium in Macedonia. Martyr Evangelus, Bishop of Tomi (Constanta) in Rumania. Martyr Cyriaca (Domnica or Nedelja) of Nicomedia. Translation (1654) of the Icon of the Mother of God "Vlaherensk" to Russia. St. Hedda, bishop of the West Saxons. St. Maelruin of Tallaght. St. Pantaenus the Confessor of Alexandria. Hieromartyr Eustace. Martyr Polycarp the New.

‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡

Monday - Romans 9:18-33; Matthew 11:2-15; Hebrews 9:1-7 (Theotokos); Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28 (Theotokos)

Tuesday - Luke 6:17-23 (Matins Gospel); Romans 10:11-11:2; Matthew 11:16-20; Hebrews 13:17-21 (Hieromartyr Philip); John 10:9-16 (Hieromartyr Philip)

Wednesday - Matthew 10:16-22 (Matins Gospel); Romans 11:2-12; Matthew 11:20-26; Romans 8:28-39 (Royal Martyrs); John 15:17-16:2 (Royal Martyrs); Hebrews 13:7-16 (St. Andrew Rublev); Luke 6:17-23 (St. Andrew Rublev); Hebrews 8:3-6 (St. Andrew, archbishop of Crete); Matthew 7:12-21 (St. Andrew, archbishop of Crete)

Thursday - Matthew 11:27-30 (Matins Gospel); Romans 11:13-24; Matthew 11:27-30; Galatians 5:22-6:2 (St. Athanasius); Luke 6:17-23 (St. Athanasius); 2 Corinthians 6:1-10 (Sts. Elizabeth and Barbara); Matthew 15:21-28 (Sts. Elizabeth and Barbara)

Friday - Romans 11:25-36; Matthew 12:1-8

Saturday - Romans 6:11-17; Matthew 8:14-23

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

In His Divine Providence, miraculous is the Lord, To Andrew, the mute, He gave a clear voice And the mute, His audible trumpet made As one time Saul (Paul), the pillar of the Church. In vain from marriage did holy Martha shun To the will of God must bow down, To marriage the Providence of God led Martha That for God and the world, of a saint to give birth Whoever himself gives to God, himself he gave to the Best, And his will, he overcame by God's will My child, without the Lord, do not plan anything, That your plans without fruit do not be. Of life, all the threads and all your desires In the hands of the Creator Almighty stand. His are the fields; His are the slopes, His are the basic elements, the foundations and the threads. His is the soul; His is the body, And of everything and its attire, the spirit In his field with His tools Whose shall we fulfill, except His will.

HOMILY

About the salvation of a soul as the end of faith

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:9).

Brethren, what is the end of faith? The salvation of a soul. What is the goal of faith? The salvation of a soul. What is the fruit of faith? The salvation of a soul. We do not adhere to faith, therefore, for the sake of faith but rather for the salvation of our souls. No one travels for the sake of the road but because of someone or something that awaits him at the end of the road. No one throws a rope into the water in which someone is drowning for the sake of the rope but for the sake of the one drowning. God gave faith to us as a road, the end of which the travelers will receive salvation of their souls. And, as a rope, God extended faith to us who are drowning in the dark waters of sin, ignorance and vice that we, through the help of faith, save our lives.

That is the purpose of faith. Whoever knows the price of a human soul must admit that there is nothing in this world more necessary or more beneficial than faith. A merchant who carries precious stones in an earthen vessel carefully and cautiously protects the vessel, hides it and keeps vigil over it. Is it because of the vessel that the merchant exerts such effort and concern? Not because of the vessel, but because of the precious stones which are in the vessel. Our entire earthly life is like an earthen vessel in which a priceless treasure is hidden. That priceless treasure is our soul. A vessel is cheap but a treasure is valuable. First, one must have faith in the value of a human soul and second, in the future glow and life of the soul in the Kingdom of God; third, in the Living God Who waits for the return of a soul which He Himself gave us and fourth, in the possibility that a soul could be lost in this world. Whosoever has faith in these four things will know how to protect his soul and will further know that the salvation of a soul is the end of his road, the goal of his faith, the fruit of his life, the purpose of his existence on earth and the justification of his sufferings.

We believe for the sake of the salvation of our soul. Whoever has a true faith, must also know that faith is for the sake of the salvation of souls. He who thinks that his faith serves another purpose other than salvation does not have a true faith nor does he know the value of his soul.

O All-good Lord Jesus, You have given us a shining and victorious faith, strengthen and maintain that faith in us that we may stand unashamed before Your judgment with our pure and shining souls.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.