



4th Sunday After Pentecost

Appearance of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God

8 / 21 July

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 the Icon tone 4: O fervent intercessor, Mother of the Lord Most High,/ thou dost pray to thy Son Christ our God and savest all who seek thy protection./ O Sovereign Lady and Queen,/ help and defend all of us who in trouble and trials,/ in pain and burdened with sins, stand in thy presence before thine icon,/ and who pray with compunction, contrition and tears and with unflagging hope in thee./ Grant what is good for us,/ deliverance from evil, and save us all, O Virgin Mother of God,/ for thou art a divine protection to

thy servants.

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 the Icon tone 8: O peoples, let us run to that quiet good haven,/ to the speedy helper, the warm salvation, to the Virgin's protection./ Let us speed to prayer and hasten to repentance./ For the Mother of God pours out her mercy, anticipates needs and averts disasters/ for her patient and God-fearing Servants.

Vespers:

Lord I have Cried - Tone 3, on 10: Octoechos 4; Icon 6 (As the all-beauteous palace); G: Icon (Come, let us rejoice); N: Sunday Dogmatic Theotokion in the tone of the week.

Aposticha: Octoechos; G/N: Icon (O ye people)

Matins Gospel IV

EPISTLE: Rom 6: 18-23

And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH, BUT THE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD

[In the Orthodox Church] sin is identified not with transgression and guilt, but with failure and "missing the mark." The idea cultivated in western Christendom, which identified sin with legal transgression and salvation with individual justification and atonement, linked Christian ethics in people's minds with a host of psychological complexes offering no way of escape. The striving for individual justification and atonement leaves man still enslaved to his autonomous individuality, separated from the possibility of life and existence ...The egocentric fear of transgression, and the tendency to gloss over sin or to reach an accommodation with it are extensions and consequences of the psychological guilt complex, and neither has any place in the spiritual climate of Orthodox ethics...

In man's sin, in his failure to be what he is called to be, the Church sees an affirmation of the truth of the person: personhood is affirmed even in man's capacity to say no even to life and existence itself, to say no to God, although relationship and communion with Him are all that makes existence into a hypostasis of life. In man's sin, the Church sees the tragic adventure of human freedom ...Sin is the measure of our awareness of separation from God, of separation from life - it is the measure of our conscious recognition of death ...Thus sin becomes a starting point for repentance, metanoia. This word in Greek means "change of mind," in other words a change in man's whole attitude... Christ's assumption of human nature is the event which brings the Church into being. What Christ has assumed is all of us who make up the body of the Church, burdened as we are with daily failure: and He shows us to be partakers in His life, in His own mode of existence ...Participation in the antropic body of Christ, in the existential unity of the communion of saints, is not secured by individual merit or the objectively recognized "virtues" of the individual: it is secured by repentance, by the new attitude of trust in God...

Repentance is a change in our mode of existence: man ceases to trust in his own individuality. He realizes that existing as an individual, even a virtuous individual, does not save him from corruption and death, from his agonizing existential thirst for life. This is why he takes refuge in the Church, where he exists as someone loving and loved. He is loved by the Saints, who give him a "name" of personal distinctiveness and take him into the communion of their love despite his sinfulness; and he himself strives to love others despite their sinfulness, to live free from the necessities of his mortal nature. He struggles to overcome his individual resistances, his individual wishes and autonomous impulses, not in order to "improve himself" individually, but in order to measure up to the "frenzied love" of Christ and the saints, to the preconditions required for personal life as opposed to natural survival.

Christos Yannaras. The Freedom of Morality, B#81A, pp. 38-42.

Second Epistle: Phil 2:5 - 11

GOSPEL - Matthew 8: 5-13

Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, Saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralysed, dreadfully tormented." And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour.

THE ROMAN CENTURION

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Mt. 6:33). This is what last Sunday's Gospel left with us. On the day of Pentecost the Lord sent down upon His Church the Holy Spirit. Just as all of nature which, after it had been warmed up by the sun, began to grow flowers, plants, and fruits—so the Holy Church, upon receiving the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life, began to grow spiritual flowers—her wonderful Saints.

All the Gospel readings since the coming down of the Holy Spirit have been telling us what we must do to obtain the Kingdom of Heaven; what all the Saints did, how they sought and how they found “the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.” We were given the commandments of the Lord. But today we are not given commandments, or a teaching. No, but rather life itself, a living example. And as an example for us, the Gospel reading gives us a Roman centurion, a pagan. This is an example of the most profound humility. This example shows us how a master, out of love for his neighbour, becomes a slave. After all, according to his civic position, this Centurion was master not only over the hundred soldiers which he commanded, but also over all Jews, which meant even over Christ; because the Jews were enslaved by the Romans.

This Centurion had a servant. And this servant fell sick and was suffering terribly. And here the Centurion was told that among the Jews who were subject to him there was a remarkable man who had the supernatural power of healing. Now the Centurion was a pagan. He did not know Holy Scripture, he knew nothing about the Messianic expectations of the Jews. For him Christ was without doubt a great man, but nevertheless just a man, and subject to him besides. He could have sent for Him, summoned Him. But humility blots out all boundaries. His servant was in danger, and this man could help him.

The Centurion himself went to Christ. He went and asked: not for his wife, not for his son, not for his daughter, father or mother, but for a servant. And he asked a Jew, enslaved by Rome; a Roman citizen asked for mercy, as a slave would ask his master. And he said: “Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented” (Mt. 8:6). He said nothing more. In these words trembled all his sorrow. And he brought his sorrow to Christ. Now he stood humbly and with bowed head waited for an answer. “I will come and heal him” (Mt. 8:7), Christ quickly answered. How very simple. But look what happened here, to what incredible height the Centurion’s faith and humility rose. He stopped Christ: “Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof” (Mt. 8:8). Listen... “I am not worthy.” Now this is repentance. This is the same as if he had said: I am a sinner and you are a righteous man. ‘But speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed” (Mt. 8: 8). Only a word. Even the Lord was surprised at such faith. “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (Mt. 8:10). And indeed the Centurion’s faith was so simple, so very humble. “I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh” (Mt. 8:9). What do these words express? This is what: Thou art Lord over sickness and health, over life and death. Only say the word! One word! And Christ said this word: “Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour” (Mt. 8:13). What a reward for humility! This is what humility can do! May the Lord grant us this humility of the Centurion.

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei

Second Gospel - Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-18

Saints of the Week

8 / 21 July — Appearance of the "Kazan" Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos - The celebration of the Most-holy Theotokos, in honour of her Icon known as the Kazan Icon, was established in thanks for the saving of Moscow and all Russia from the attack of the Poles in 1612. The late 16th and early 17th Centuries are known in Russian history as the Time of Troubles. The nation was attacked by Polish armies, who mocked the Orthodox Faith, and who looted and burned churches, towns and villages. By means of deceit, they succeeded in seizing Moscow. In response to the appeal of His Holiness Patriarch Hermogenes (commemorated on May 12) the Russian people rose up in defence of the homeland. The miraculous Icon of the Most-holy Theotokos was sent from Kazan to join the militia led by Prince Dimitry Mikhailovitch Pozharsky. In his "Homily on the day of the appearance of the Icon of the Mother of God in Kazan" (celebrated July 8), Holy Hierarch Dimitry of Rostov (commemorated September 21) said: The Mother of God saves from great misfortunes and evils not only the righteous, but also the sinful, but what manner of sinners? Those, who like the prodigal son, return to their Heavenly Father; who lament [over their sins]; who, like the publican, beat their breasts; who are like the sinful woman that wept at the feet of Christ and washed His feet with her tears; those who, like the thief on the cross, confess Him. The Mother of God looks after such sinners and rushes to help them, and saves them from great misfortunes and evils. Recognizing that the misfortune had been permitted because of their sins, the entire people and militia observed 3-day fast, and turned to the Lord and His most-pure mother for divine help. Their prayers were heeded. Holy Hierarch Arseny (later to become bishop of Suzdal), who was a prisoner of the Poles, sent word that he had had a vision revealing by the intercession of the Most-holy Virgin, God's judgment been had turned to mercy. Inspired by this news, the armies on October 22, 1612 liberated Moscow from the Polish occupiers. The celebration in honour of the Kazan Icon of the Most-holy Theotokos was established in 1649. To this day, that Icon is highly venerated by the Russian Orthodox people.

The Holy and Great Martyr Procopius - born in Jerusalem of a Christian father and a pagan mother, at first bearing the name Neanias. After his father's death, his mother brought him up entirely in the spirit of Roman idolatry. When he had grown up, the Emperor Diocletian saw him at sometime and was so pleased with him that he took him to court to serve in the army. When this wicked Emperor launched a persecution of Christians, he ordered Neanias to go with a detachment of soldiers to Alexandria and exterminate the Christians there. But, on the road, there happened to Neanias something similar to that which happened to Saul. At three o'clock in the morning there was a violent earthquake, the Lord Jesus appearing to him and saying: 'Neanias, where are you going, and against whom are you rebelling?' In great fear, Neanias replied: 'Who are you, Lord? I cannot recognise You.' Then a brilliant Cross, as of crystal, appeared in the sky and a voice came from the Cross: 'I am Jesus, the crucified Son of God.' The Lord went on: 'By this sign that you have seen, overcome your enemies, and My peace will be with you.' This event utterly changed Neanias's life. He caused a cross such as he had seen to be made, and, instead of moving against the Christians, set off with his soldiers against the Agarians, who were attacking Jerusalem. He entered Jerusalem victorious and told his mother that he was a Christian. Brought to trial, he took off his army belt and sword and cast them before the judge, demonstrating by this that he was a soldier only of Christ the King. After harsh torture, he was thrown into prison. There Christ the Lord appeared to him again, baptising him and giving him the name Procopius. One day twelve women came to the window of his cell and said to him: 'We also are the servants of Christ.' Arrested for this, they were thrown into the same prison, where St Procopius instructed them in the Christian faith and carefully prepared them to receive the crown of martyrdom. (*) These twelve women were then harshly tortured. Beholding their sufferings and courage, Procopius's mother also came to faith in Christ, and then all thirteen were put to death. When St Procopius was led to the scaffold, he raised his hands towards the East and prayed to God for all the poor and needy, the destitute and the widowed, and especially for the holy Church, that it might grow and spread and that Orthodoxy might shine to the end of time. He was assured from heaven that his prayer was heard, after which he joyfully laid his head under the sword and went to his Lord, to eternal joy. St Procopius suffered with honour in Palestinian Caesarea, and was crowned with an eternal wreath of glory, on July 8th, 303. *Author's note: Therefore those in the married state ('crowned'), invoke St Procopius, together with the God-crowned Constantine and Helena.

Also commemorated on this day: Synaxis of All Saints of Pskov-Pechers (movable holiday on the 4th Sunday of Pentecost). St. Procopius, fool-for-Christ, wonderworker of Ustiug. New Hieromartyrs Alexander, Theodore and Nicholas priests. Righteous Procopius, fool-for-Christ of Usya. Miracle of the Annunciation Icon of the Mother of God at Ustiug. "Jacobshtad" Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. Venerable Theophilus the Myrrh-gusher of Pantocrator Monastery, Mt. Athos. New Martyr Anastasius at Constantinople. Martyrs Epictetus and Astion at Halmyris in Scythia Minor. Blessed King Edgar the Peaceable. Martyr Theodosia, mother of Great-martyr Procopius. Martyr Mirdat the King of Kartli. Translation of the relics (1779) of Venerable Demetrius Basarbov of Bulgaria. Synaxis of Saints of Diveyevo: Alexandra, Martha, and Helen. St. Grimbald, hieromonk of Winchester. Translation of the relics of St. Withburga, hermitess of East Dereham. Virgin-martyr Urith (Hieritha) of Chittlehampton.

9 / 22 July — The Hieromartyr Pancratius, Bishop of Taormina. - this holy hierarch was born in Antioch at the time that the Lord Jesus walked as a man among men on earth. Hearing of Christ's miracles, Pancratius's parents desired to see the Lord, the wonderworker. They came to Jerusalem, bringing Pancratius, where they saw Jesus, heard His words and witnessed His miracles. There Pancratius met the Apostle Peter. After the Lord's Ascension, both parents and their son were baptised in Antioch. Pancratius retired to a cave in Pontus, where the Apostle Peter found him and, in consultation with the Apostle Paul, installed him as bishop of Taormina in Sicily. St Pancratius worked great wonders in that town. He destroyed idols, baptised the unbaptised and instructed the baptised, and governed the Church of God. A pagan general, Aquilinus, hearing that the whole town of Taormina had become Christian, set out with an army to the town to destroy it. Holy Pancratius encouraged the faithful to be fearless, and he himself went out from the city with the clergy, carrying in his hands the unconquerable sign of the precious Cross. When the soldiers drew near to the town, a darkness fell on them and they were seized with great terror. A great confusion arose, so that they fell over one another and were stabbed and cut about by their own swords. Thus that godly man, Pancratius, saved his city and his flock by the power of his prayers before God. He was finally stoned to death by some envious and wicked pagans, and entered into rest in the Lord. His holy relics are preserved in Rome.

The Hieromartyr Cyril, Bishop of Gortyna - as an old man of eighty-four, he was tortured for Christ during Decius' reign. Cast into the flames, he was saved by the providence of God. Then the judge pronounced this sentence: 'Just judgement cannot tolerate that Cyril, having been delivered from fire, remain among the living. I therefore command that he be killed with the sword.' The old man joyfully laid his head under the sword and was beheaded, to live eternally in the Kingdom of Christ.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Gabriel, abbot of St. Elias Skete, Mt. Athos. New Hieromartyr Constantine priest. Martyrs Paternuthius, Coprius, and Alexander the Soldier, in Egypt. Sts. Paternuthius and Coprius, ascetics of Egypt. St. Theodore, bishop of Edessa. "Cyprus" in the village of Stromyn (Moscow diocese) and "Koloch" Icons of the Mother of God. Venerable Anthony Leokhnovsky. Venerable Euthymius of Karelia. Blessed Peter, hieromartyr of Cherevko. St. Everild, nun, of England. Martyrs Andrew and Probus. Venerables Dionysius the Rhetorician and Metrophanes of Mt. Athos. Venerable Theodosius, stylite of Edessa. Venerable John of the Caves in Babylon. Martyr Michael, disciple and the Kinsman of St. Theodore. Martyr John (before holy baptism Moavy), king of Baghdad and with him the Three Holy Youths. New Hieromartyr Methodius of Amaria, Crete. Hieromartyr Killian, bishop in East Franconia and Thuringia, and his companions Hieromonk Colman and Hierodeacon Totman, at Wurzburg.

10 / 23 July — Saint Anthony of the Kiev Caves -born in the year 983 at Liubech, not far from Chernigov, and was named Antipas in Baptism. Possessing the fear of God from his youth, he desired to be clothed in the monastic schema. When he reached a mature age, he wandered until he arrived on Mt. Athos, burning with the desire to emulate the deeds of its holy inhabitants. Here he received monastic tonsure, and the young monk pleased God in every aspect of his spiritual struggles on the path of virtue. He particularly excelled in humility and obedience, so that all the monks rejoiced to see his holy life. The igumen saw in St Anthony the great future ascetic, and inspired by God, he sent him back to his native land, saying, "Anthony, it is time for you to guide others in holiness. Return to your own Russian land, and be an example for others. May the blessing of the Holy Mountain be with you. Returning to the land of Rus, Anthony began to make the rounds of the monasteries about Kiev, but nowhere did he find that strict life which had drawn him to Mt. Athos. Through the Providence of God, Anthony came to the hills of Kiev by the banks of the River Dniepr. The forested area near the village of Berestovo reminded him of his beloved Athos. There he found a cave which had been dug out by the Priest Hilarion, who later became Metropolitan of Kiev (October 21). Since he liked the spot, Anthony prayed with tears, "Lord, let the blessing of Mt. Athos be upon this spot, and strengthen me to remain here." He began to struggle in prayer, fasting, vigil and physical labor. Every other day, or every third day, he would eat only dry bread and a little water. Sometimes he did not eat for a week. People began to come to the ascetic for his blessing and counsel, and some decided to remain with the saint. Among Anthony's first disciples was St Nikon (March 23), who tonsured St Theodosius of the Caves (May 3) at the monastery in the year 1032. The virtuous life of St Anthony illumined the Russian land with the beauty of monasticism. St Anthony lovingly received those who yearned for the monastic life. After instructing them how to follow Christ, he asked St Nikon to tonsure them. When twelve disciples had gathered about St Anthony, the brethren dug a large cave and built a church and cells for the monks within it. After he appointed Abbot Barlaam to guide the brethren, St Anthony withdrew from the monastery. He dug a new cave for himself, then hid himself within it. There too, monks began to settle around him. Afterwards, the saint built a small wooden church in honor of the Dormition of the Mother of God over the Far Caves. At the insistence of Prince Izyaslav, the igumen Barlaam withdrew to the Dimitriev monastery. With the blessing of St Anthony and with the general agreement of the brethren, the meek and humble Theodosius was chosen as igumen. By this time, the number of brethren had already reached a hundred men. The Kiev Great Prince Izyaslav (+ 1078) gave the monks the hill on which the large church and cells were built, with a palisade all around. Thus, the renowned monastery over the caves was established. Describing this, the chronicler remarks that while many monasteries were built by emperors and nobles, they could not compare with those which are built with holy prayers and tears, and by fasting and vigil. Although St Anthony had no gold, he built a monastery which became the first spiritual center of Rus. For his holiness of life, God glorified St Anthony with the gift of clairvoyance and wonderworking. One example of this occurred during the construction of the Great Caves church. The Most Holy Theotokos Herself stood before him and St Theodosius in the Blachernae church in Constantinople, where they had been miraculously transported without leaving their own monastery. Actually, two angels appeared in Constantinople in their forms (See May 3, the account of the Kiev Caves Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos). Having received gold from the Mother of God, the saints commissioned master architects, who came from Constantinople to the Russian land on the command of the Queen of Heaven to build the church at the Monastery of the Caves.

The 45 Holy Martyrs: Leontius, Maurice, Alexander, Sisinius and the rest - in the time of the wicked Emperor Licinius, who ruled over the eastern half of the Byzantine Empire, there was a great persecution of Christians. In Armenian Nicopolis, Leontius came before the imperial governor, Lysius, together with several of his friends, and told him that he was a Christian. 'And where is your Christ?', asked Lysius. 'Was he not crucified and did he not die?' To this, St Leontius replied: 'If you know that our Christ died, know that He also rose from the dead and ascended into heaven.' After much harassment for their faith, Lysius had them whipped and thrown into prison, where they were given neither food nor drink. A noble Christian woman, Vlassiana, brought them water and gave it to them through the window of the prison, and an angel of God appeared to them there, to comfort and encourage them. When their trial was held, two of their warders came before Lysius as Christian converts, and many others, numbering forty-five in all. The judge condemned them all to death, ordering that their arms and legs be

hacked off and that they then be thrown into the flames. This vicious punishment was carried out, and the souls of the holy martyrs flew off to their Lord, to eternal life. They suffered with honour and inherited the Kingdom in the year 319.

The Translation of the Precious Vesture of our Lord Jesus Christ - at the time of our Lord's suffering for the human race, there was to be found in the ranks of the Roman army in Jerusalem a Georgian, Elias, from the town of Mtskhet. His mother had heard of Christ, and believed in Him in her heart. Sending her son into the army in Palestine, she exhorted him to do nothing against Christ. When the Lord was nailed to the Cross, the sound of the hammering on Golgotha came to the ears of Elias's mother in Mtskhet. Hearing this sound, she cried out: 'Woe is me that I did not die before this hour, that death might deliver me from this terrible sound!' And, thus saying, she fell dead. Elias was at that time underneath the Cross, and, with the other soldiers, was casting lots for Christ's vesture. The vesture fell to him, and he took it to Mtskhet, making a gift of it to his sister Sidonia. She, hearing of the Lord's death and learning that her brother had a hand in the shedding of innocent blood, fell dead with the Lord's vesture in her hands, in such a way that no-one could take it from her and they were constrained to bury it with her. A cedar grew up over her grave, from which flowed a healing myrrh. In time, the cedar fell and the place was forgotten. St Nina found it by the aid of a pillar of fire on that spot, in response to her prayers. King Mirian, when he had been baptised, built a church there to the Holy Apostles. In 1625, Shah Abbas took this vesture and sent it to Moscow as a gift to Prince Michael Feodorovitch and Patriarch Philaret. The vesture was then placed in the Cathedral of the Dormition in Moscow.

Also commemorated on this day: New Hieromartyrs Alexander, Basil, Peter and Stephen priests, Gregory and Nestor deacons. Venerables Eumenes (1920) and Parthenius (1905) of Gortyna. Venerable Silouan of the Far Caves in Kiev. Martyr Apollonius of Sardis. Martyrs Bianor and Silvanus of Pisidia. 10,000 Fathers of the desert and caves of Scetis martyred by the impious Patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria. "Konevits" Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. Translation of the relics (1609) of St. Basil, bishop of Ryazan. St. Gregory, bishop of Assos near Ephesus. New Hieromartyr Archpriest Joseph of Damascus and Companions. Synaxis of All Saints of Vatopedi Monastery, Mt. Athos.

11 / 24 July — Fast Day - The Holy and Great Martyr Euphemia - this saint is commemorated on September 16th, the day on which she suffered. On this day is commemorated the miracle wrought by her precious relics, revealed at the time of the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon. This Council was called together in the reign of the Emperor Marcian and the Empress Pulcheria, in 451, after the death of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, and was summoned because of the heresy of Dioscorus, Patriarch of Alexandria, and Eutyches, an archimandrite in Constantinople, who had disseminated the false teaching that there were in Christ not two natures, divine and human, but only one, a divine nature. At this Council, the chief role was played by Anatolius, Patriarch of Constantinople and Juvenal, Patriarch of Jerusalem. Because, through the quarrels and evidence on both sides, no decision could be reached, Patriarch Anatolius suggested that the Orthodox and the heretics each write down their confession of faith, and that they be put into the coffin that contained the relics of St Euphemia. All agreed to this. Two confessions of faith, then, were written and placed in the hands of the great martyr. The coffin was closed and sealed with the imperial seal, a watch then being set over it. They then all spent three days in fasting and prayer. On the fourth day, when the tomb was opened, they saw the Orthodox confession of faith in the saint's right hand and the heretical one beneath her feet. Thus was the conflict resolved by God's power, on the side of Orthodoxy. In the time of the Emperor Heraclius, the relics of St Euphemia were translated from Chalcedon to Constantinople, to the church dedicated to her near the Hippodrome. The iconoclast Emperor Leo the Isaurian ordered that her relics be thrown into the sea; but, by a wonderful act, the coffin was brought to the island of Lemnos and placed in the church of the holy martyr Glykeria. Then, in the time of the Empress Irene, the coffin with its relics was again taken to Constantinople, to its former place. Blood has flowed from these relics from time to time, to the succour of the sick and the feeble.

Blessed Equal-to-the-Apostles St Olga, princess of Russia in baptism called Elena - renowned for her wisdom and sobriety, in her youth became the wife of Igor, Great Prince of Kiev, who ruled during the tenth century. After her husband's death, she herself ruled capably, and was finally moved to accept the Faith of Christ. She traveled to Constantinople to receive Holy Baptism. The Emperor, seeing her outward beauty and inward greatness, asked her to marry him. She said she could not do this before she was baptized; she furthermore asked him to be her Godfather at the font, which he agreed to do. After she was baptized (receiving the name of Helen), the Emperor repeated his proposal of marriage. She answered that now he was her father, through holy Baptism, and that not even among the heathen was it heard of a man marrying his daughter. Gracefully accepting to be outwitted by her, he sent her back to her land with priests and sacred texts and holy icons. Although her son Svyatoslav remained a pagan, she planted the seed of faith in her grandson Vladimir (see July 15). She reposed in peace in 969.

Also commemorated on this day: Uncovering of the relics of Hieromartyr Hilarion (Troitsky), bishop of Verey. Hieromartyr Cindeus of Pamphylia. "Rzevsk" or "Okovetsk" (1539) and "Borkolabsky" Icons of the

Most Holy Theotokos. Rudensk" (1687) Icon of the Mother of God. Venerable Nicodemus of Hilandar and Vatopedi, Mt. Athos. New Martyr Venerable Nicodemus of Elbasan and Mt. Athos. Uncovering of the relics of the Monk Arkadius of Vyazemsk and Novotorzhsk. New Martyr Nectarius of St. Anne's Skete, Mt. Athos. Venerable Leo, monk, of Mandra. Martyrs Januarius and Pelagia of Nicopolis in Armenia. New Hiero-martyrs Momcilo Grgurevic, Dobroslav Blazenovic, Milan Bozic, Mihailo Djusic, Jovan Zecevic, Bozidar Jovic, Bogdan Lalic, Trifun Maksimovic, Velimir Mijatovic, Bozidar Minic, Miladin Minic, Marko Popovic, Dimitrije Rajanovic, Budimir Sokolovic, Relja Spahic, Lazar Culibrk, Savo Siljac, Savo Skaljka, Milorad Vukojcic, Ratomir Jankovic, Mihailo Jevdjevic, Dusan Prijovic, Dobrosav Sokovic, Nestor Trkulja, Serafim Dzaric, Andrija Siljak, Slobodan Siljak, and Jovan Rapajic of Serbia. St. Drostan of Old Deer and Aberdeen.

12 / 25 July — St Veronica - this is the woman with the issue of blood, whom the Lord healed (Matt. 9:20). In gratitude to the Lord her healer, Veronica caused a statue of the Lord Jesus to be made, before which she prayed to God. By tradition, this statue was preserved up to the time of Julian the Apostate, when it was altered to become a statue of Zeus. This is one of the very rare occasions that a holy statue has been used in the Eastern Church. As is known, this later became a common custom in the Western Churches. St Veronica remained faithful to Christ till death, and entered peacefully into rest.

The Holy Martyrs Proclus and Hilarius - these martyrs were born in Kallippi in Asia, Proclus being Hilarius's uncle. They suffered in the time of Trajan. The judge asked Proclus: 'Of what race are you?' Proclus replied: 'I am of the race of Christ, and my hope is in my God.' When the judge threatened him with torture, he said: 'When you are afraid to transgress the Emperor's commands and risk falling into temporal punishment, how much more do we Christians fear to transgress against God's commands and fall into eternal torment!' While Proclus was being tortured, Hilarius came up to the judge and said: 'I too am a Christian!' After many tortures, the two of them were condemned to death, Proclus being crucified and Hilarius beheaded with the sword. They both entered into the joy of their Lord.

Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos "Of the Three Hands" - The Icon of the Mother of God, named "Three-Handed": The wonderworking image, before which the Monk John Damascene received healing of a cut-off hand, was given over by him to the Laura of the Monk Sava the Sanctified. In the XIII Century the icon was situated in Serbia, and afterwards it was miraculously transported to Athos to the Khilendaria monastery.

The Icon of the Mother of God, named "Of Three Hands" ("Troeruchitsa"): In the IX Century at the time of the Iconoclasts, the Monk John Damascene was zealous in his veneration of holy icons. Because of this, he was slandered by the emperor and iconoclast Leo III the Isaurian (717-740), who informed the Damascus caliph that the Monk John was committing treasonous acts against him. The caliph gave orders to cut off the hand of the monk and take it to the marketplace. Towards evening Saint John, having asked the caliph for the cut-off hand, put it to its joint and fell to the ground before the icon of the Mother of God. The monk begged Our Lady to heal the hand, which had written in defense of Orthodoxy. After long prayer he fell asleep and saw in a dream, that the All-Pure Mother of God had turned to him promising him quick healing. Before this the Mother of God bid him toil without fail with this hand. Having awakened from sleep, the Monk John saw that his hand was unharmed. In thankfulness for this healing the Monk John placed on the icon an hand fashioned of silver, from which the icon received its name "Of Three Hands". According to tradition, the Monk John wrote a song of thanksgiving to the Mother of God - "All of creation rejoiceth in Thee, O Full of Grace", which appears in place of the Mother of God hymn "Mete it is in truth" in the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Michael, monk, of Maleinus. Martyrs Theodore and his son John of Kiev. Venerable Arsenius of Novgorod, fool-for-Christ. Venerable Simon, abbot of Volomsk. Martyr Golinduc, in holy baptism Mary, of Persia. Venerables John (998) and Gabriel (10th c.), of Georgia and Iveron, Mt. Athos. Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos "Samonapisavshaiasia". Blessed Serapion, bishop of Vladimir. Translation of the relics (1620) of St. Anthony, abbot of Leokhnov (Novgorod). New Martyrs Andrew the Soldier, Heraclius, Taustus, Menas, and others. Martyr Mamas near Sigmata. Translation of the relics (2004) of New Hieromartyr Momcilo Grgurevic of Serbia.

13 / 26 July — Fast Day - Synaxis of the Holy Archangel Gabriel - this great archangel of God is commemorated on March 26th. On this day his appearances and marvels through the whole history of the salvation of mankind are commemorated. It is reckoned that this observance was first instituted on the Holy Mountain in 982, during the patriarchate of Nicolas Chrysoverges (979-91), and was occasioned by the Archangel's appearing in a cell near Karyes, where, with his finger, he wrote the hymn to the Mother of God: 'It is meet ...'. As a result of this occurrence, the cell was named, and is called to this day, 'It is meet ...'. Linked with this, other appearances of the Archangel Gabriel are commemorated, such as his appearing to Moses when he was keeping Jethro's flocks, when he revealed to this great man, chosen by God, how the world was created and all the rest that Moses later wrote down in the Book of Genesis; his appearing to Daniel and the imparting of the mystery of the kingdoms to come and the

coming of the Saviour; his appearing to St Anna and the promise of a daughter, the most blessed and pure Virgin Mary; his very brief appearing to the holy Virgin while she was living in the Temple in Jerusalem; his appearing to Zacharias the high priest and the news of the birth of John the Forerunner, and the punishing of the same with dumbness because he did not believe the angel's words; his appearing once again to the holy Virgin in Nazareth, and the annunciation of the conception and birth of the Lord Jesus Christ; his appearing to righteous Joseph, to the shepherds near Bethlehem, to the Lord Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane when he strengthened the Lord, as man, before His Passion; his appearing to the myrrh-bearing women, and his other appearances.

St. Mildred, abbess of Minster in Thanet, England (c.700) - A daughter of Merewald, king of Mercia, and St. Ermenburga, princess of Kent, she was educated at the convent of Chelles, near Paris, to which she had retired to avoid the attentions of an unwelcome suitor. She then returned to become a nun at Minster-in-Thanet. This abbey had been founded by Ermenburga on land provided by Egbert of Kent in compensation for the murder of her brothers Ss. Ethelred and Ethelbriht. She became abbess before 694, when she attended a council in Kent. Goscelin (late 11th century) attributed to her the conventional virtues of tranquillity of temper and generosity to the poor, especially widows and children. She died after a long illness; her tomb became a place of pilgrimage. In 1035 her relics were translated to St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, whence some of them were given to Deventer (Holland). However, a rival set of relics was given by Lanfranc to his hospital of St. Gregory, Canterbury. In modern times a Benedictine nunnery has been revived at Minster by the Benedictines of Eichstatt (Bavaria), founded by St. Walburga. Feast: 13 July; translation. 18 May; also 20 February.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Stephen of St. Sabbas' Monastery. St. Julian, bishop of Cenomanis. Martyr Serapion, under Severus. Martyr Marcian of Iconium. Translation of the relics (1620) Venerable Anthony Leokhnovsky. Venerable Abbess Sarah of Seeds in Libya. Venerable Just, monk in Cornwall. Synaxis of Hilandar Saints, Mt. Athos. Virgin-martyr Juthwara of Cornwall.

14 / 27 July - The Holy Apostle Aquila - one of the Seventy, he was a Jew living in Italy with his wife Priscilla. When the Emperor Claudius decreed the exile of all Jews from Rome and Italy, Aquila moved to Corinth, where the Apostle Paul first made his acquaintance, staying eighteen months in his house and baptising him and his wife. Burning with zeal for the Christian faith, Aquila and Priscilla accompanied Paul to Ephesus and helped him in his apostolic work. From Ephesus, Paul wrote his first Epistle to the Corinthians, in which he says at the end: 'Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house' (16:19). After the death of Claudius, Jews were permitted to return to Italy, and Aquila and Priscilla went back to Rome. Writing the Epistle to the Romans from Corinth after this, the Apostle sends greetings to his old friends and fellow-workers: 'Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus, who have for my life laid down their own necks, unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house' (16:3-5). We later see Aquila again in Ephesus, where he is working with St Timothy. In chains in Rome, Paul wrote to Timothy in Ephesus: 'Greet Priscilla and Aquila' (II Tim . 4:19). As a bishop, Aquila baptised many and consecrated them to the Faith, destroyed idols, built churches, made priests and spread among the people the glory of the incarnate Son of God. He was finally murdered by wicked pagans, and went to the Kingdom of Christ.

Also commemorated on this day: New Hieromartyr Constantine priest. New Hieromartyr Nicholas priest. Venerable Stephen, abbot of Makhrishche. Martyr Justus at Rome. Venerable Ellius (Hellius) of Egypt. Venerable Onesimus, of Magnesia. Martyr John of Merv. Venerable Nicodemus of Mt. Athos, spiritual writer. Sts. Vladimir and Agrippina wonderworkers of Rzhev. St. Marcellinus of Utrecht, priest. St. Joseph the Confessor, archbishop of Thessalonica. St. Heraclius, patriarch of Alexandria.

‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡

Monday - Romans 12:4-5, 15-21; Matthew 12:9-13

Tuesday - Matthew 27:27-32 (Matins Gospel); Romans 14:9-18; Matthew 12:14-16, 22-30; 1 Corinthians 1:18-24 (Robe); Mark 15:16-32 (Robe); Galatians 5:22-6:2 (St. Anthony); Matthew 4:25-5:12 (St. Anthony)

Wednesday - Romans 15:7-16; Matthew 12:38-45; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10 (Saints); Luke 7:36-50 (Saints)

Thursday - Luke 1:39-49, 56 (Matins Gospel); Romans 15:17-29; Matthew 12:46-13:3; Philippians 2:5-11 (Theotokos); Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28 (Theotokos)

Friday - Romans 16:1-16; Matthew 13:4-9; Hebrews 2:2-10 (Epistle, Angel); Luke 10:16-21 (Gospel, Angel)

Saturday - Romans 8:14-21; Matthew 9:9-13

CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the miraculous changing of bitter water into sweet water (Exodus 15): 1. How the thirsty Israelites in Marah came upon bitter water and were unable to drink it and the people began to murmur against Moses; 2. How God commanded Moses to place wood in the water and the water became sweet; 3. How this wood foreshadowed the Cross of Christ by which the bitterness of our life is transformed into sweetness; 4. How my entire being is but bitter water until I bring Christ Crucified into myself.

HOMILY

About the Living Stone

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men but chosen of God and precious, You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2: 4-5).

Brethren, what does this stone signify if not stability? Brethren, what does the stone teach us, if not stability? The living stone signifies immortality. The apostle calls Christ the Lord the Living Stone because He is immortal and the giver of immortality. The apostle even calls Christians living stones as partakers of the immortality of Christ.

Brethren, what do unbelievers think concerning what happens to man at the end of time? They think that, in the end, the same thing happens to man as to a stone: man dies, becomes senseless and is transformed into dust. But a stone is already dead, senseless and, under certain conditions, is transformed into dust. So, both the unbelievers and the believers compare man with a stone; the unbelievers because of the deadness and the senselessness of the stone and the believers because of the durability and the stability of the stone. For the first [unbelievers], the stone is the symbol of death and for the other [unbelievers], the stone is the symbol of immortality.

In truth, without Christ, mankind has been and is always as a dead stone. But Christ is like a living stone. Adhere to Him only and you will become as living stones. In building a home, the builder chooses only those stones, which are chiseled out and prepared to easily lay along side the other stones in the wall. The builder rejects the unchiseled, the unprepared, the unpolished and the fragile stones. Building a home, or a temple of His Immortal Kingdom, Christ chooses men as the builder chooses stones, with one characteristic, namely alive, spiritually alive. The Lord rejects spiritually dead men as a rotten building and accepts only those who are alive, who resemble Him and who fall in place along side other living stones and they [the other living stones] are angels, prophets, apostles and saints in general. Brethren, let us endeavor to be a holy material for a holy house of the Kingdom of Christ which He builds day and night that He, by the end of time, finishes it completely.

O Lord Jesus, the builder of the Kingdom of Heaven, enliven us with Your Holy Spirit and build us also as living stones in the home of Your eternal glory.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen