



6th Sunday After Pentecost Great Martyr Euphemia & Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Olga

11 / 24 July

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 5: Let us, the faithful; praise and worship the Word, / Co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, / born for our salvation from the Virgin; / for He willed to be lifted up on the cross in the flesh, / to endure death, / and to raise the dead / by His glorious Resurrection!

Troparion of Euphemia tone 3: O Euphemia, thou didst gladden the orthodox/ and put the heretics to shame ./ Thou didst confirm the fathers' teaching at the Fourth Council./ O glorious martyr,/ entreat Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

Troparion of St Olga tone 1: Thou didst give wings to thy mind with the knowledge of God,/ and soar beyond creatures to God the Creator of all./ And when thou hadst found Him thou wast baptized and re-born./ Thou dost enjoy the Tree of Life, remaining eternally incorrupt, O ever glorious Olga.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 5: Thou didst descend into hell, O my Saviour, / shattering its gates as Almighty, / resurrecting the dead as Creator, / and destroying the sting of death. / Thou hadst delivered Adam from the curse, O Lover of Man, / and we cry to Thee, O Lord, save us.

Kontakion of St Euphemia tone 6: Thou didst struggle in faith and suffering/ for Christ thy Bridegroom./ Now, through the Mother of God,/ pray that the Orthodox may overthrow heresies, O all-famed Euphemia/ who didst receive and guard the definition/ of the six hundred and thirty Godbearing Fathers.

Kontakion of St Olga tone 4: Today let us praise God the Benefactor of all/ Who has glorified the divinely-wise Olga./ And through her prayers may He grant to our souls the forgiveness of our sins.



Matins Gospel VI

EPISTLE: ROMANS 12: 6-14

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; Or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; He who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

HAVING GIFTS THAT DIFFER ACCORDING TO THE GRACE GIVEN TO US, LET US USE THEM

He wants to make them vie with each other, and to labour more earnestly by showing that it is they themselves who give the grounds for their receiving more or less. For he says indeed that it is given by God ...But he also says that the beginnings lie with themselves in order to rouse the listless. This he does in the Epistle to the Corinthians as well, to produce these emotions. For when he says, 'covet the gifts earnestly,' (I Cor. 12:31), he shows that they were themselves the cause of the differences in what was given ...For though it is a grace, yet it is not poured forth at random, but framing its measure according to the recipients, it lets as much flow as it may find the vessel of faith that is brought to be capable of holding...

CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEEDS OF SAINTS, PRACTICE HOSPITALITY

Even the Apostleship is called a ministry, and every spiritual work is a ministry ... It is not enough to give, but we must also do it with munificence, for this always answers to the name of simplicity ...It is not enough to show mercy, but it behooves us to do it with largesse and an ungrudging spirit ... even with a cheerful and rejoicing one ...He said, 'He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully' (II Cor. 9:6) ... In this way the widow outweighed many talents by the two mites, for her spirit was large.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXI on Romans XII. B#55, pp. 501, 502.

for St Olga: II Corinthians 6: 1-10

GOSPEL: ST. MATTHEW 9: 1-8

So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, "This Man blasphemes!" But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"--then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.

JESUS HEALS THE PARALYTIC

Guilt lies at the root of many problems that confront us from day to day. It is often a feeling of guilt, deeply hidden in a person's heart and soul, that manifests itself in feelings of anxiety, of hatred and of depression

For example, there is the sad story of Anna, a good Christian woman, who took care of her mother during the last five years of her life. She loved her mother, but she was often frustrated and exhausted by the burden of caring for a terminally ill mother. Anna had feelings of hatred towards her mother which she could not explain. Sometimes her frustration became so overwhelming, that she lashed out in the angry and hateful words which she regretted almost as soon as she said them. She would then beg her mother's forgiveness, and her mother, who under stood her daughter's frustrations, would always forgive her.

After her mother died, Anna began to suffer from sleeplessness. She became overly-anxious and expressed great regrets for the five years she spent taking care of her mother, while neglecting her own husband, her children and friends. When Anna finally went to her Priest with her problem, he asked her, "Did you ask your mother's forgiveness? And didn't she forgive you?" Anna answered, "Yes, she did!" "But, did you ask God's forgiveness?" Anna answered, "Yes, every time I pray and every time I go to Confession, I do that." Then the Priest asked, "Why haven't you forgiven yourself?"

It was then that Anna realized that she hadn't forgiven herself. It took her some time, but finally she did forgive herself, and when she did, all her anxiety, her insomnia, and her depression also disappeared. Thus we have here a good example of the tremendous burden that the feeling of guilt can be for any person, especially when he tries to carry it alone. Anna ultimately sought help, and she got rid of her burden.

In today's Gospel lesson, some friends brought a paralytic to Jesus. Seeing him lying on his bed, and seeing the faith of the paralytic and his friends who brought him to Him, Jesus said: Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you (Matt. 9:2). The young man was paralysed by his feeling of guilt. Precisely the nature of his sin, we do not know. But it had completely paralysed him. When Jesus forgave him, and told him to rise, take up his bed and go home, the young man rose and went home. The Power of Forgiveness uttered by the Son of God released the man of his burden of guilt, and he was immediately healed.

The drama of this event was increased by the objections of the Scribes who felt that Jesus was blaspheming. How dare He "forgive" this man his sins? Only God has that power! But Jesus, discerning their feelings and thoughts, said to them: Which is easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven you," or to say, "Arise and walk?" But that you may know that the Son of God has power on earth to forgive sins"--then He said to the paralytic, Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house (Matt. 9:5-6).

Jesus the Son of Man has the Power to forgive, the Power to heal. The words of forgiveness can be said in a variety of ways; the important fact is that the Power is released by Jesus. When we forgive in His Name, we do so by that same power, and it is available to all men. There is no power of God more clearly defined in Scripture than the power of forgiveness given by Christ to all of His Disciples. It is a power that is given to man to be used to bring man to repentance, to reconcile him to the Church and to bring peace between man and his fellow man and between man and God.

It requires of us Faith- Faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God. It took more than the faith of the paralysed young man to bring him to the presence of God. It also required the faith of his friends (and the faith had to be translated into action). They not only believed in the power of Christ, but they carried their friend into the presence of that power. Their faith was coupled with hope, for they believed in the power of Christ and they hoped that He would heal their friend. Their hope was vindicated when they saw their sick friend arise and walk to his own home.

The paralytic's friends had been motivated by love - love of their friend - and it prompted them to seek help for this friend. Their love brought them into the presence of Christ, the son of God Who was God's Love manifested in the world. As Christ Himself testified of His coming into the world: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

God's great love is manifested in the Coming of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Love in Jesus Christ is manifested in His "Power of Forgiveness" for God's love is revealed most clearly in His mercy-the mercy of God's Son Who suffered and died on the Cross that man might be forgiven for His sin and be restored to Eternal Life in His Kingdom. It was man's sin of disobedience in the Garden that brought death to man. It was only by way of the obedience of the Son of God-manifested in His suffering and death on the Cross--that the consequence of man's first sin-death-could be overcome.

Though forgiveness ultimately belongs to God, we too have that power within our own selves to forgive--and it is important that we forgive the sins others commit against us, even as God has forgiven us. God is merciful, and we too must be merciful if we are to measure up to the Image and Likeness in which God created us. When we forgive, we manifest that great virtue of mercy which is a mark of true "sons of God.

The mercy of the friends of the young paralytic made it possible for him to come into the presence of the Son of God, and to be healed of his paralysis caused by Sin. So too, our mercy towards our neighbour who has sinned against us, makes it possible for him to approach the throne of God and to receive the Grace of forgiveness from our Father in Heaven.

Jesus reminded us how important forgiveness is if we are to come into God's presence, when He said: Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift (Matt. 5:23). That is the power of forgiveness expressed in the act of reconciliation. It validates our offering of prayer and of ourselves to God. If we fail to forgive, we can invalidate our offering; it becomes a barrier to our approaching God.

Let us, therefore, explore this great power of forgiveness that can bring us into the presence of God Himself. Let us use it frequently and wisely. By forgiveness we can lift the heavy burden of guilt from the hearts of others, as well as from our own hearts. Here is a means of healing--of reconciliation--of merciful compassion that is given to those who would be true sons of God by virtue of their calling and of their actions.

The power of forgiveness is natural to the person who knows and believes that God is love, that man is saved by God's love, even as man was created by the love of God. To the degree we live by and in God's love, to that degree will we be able to forgive, manifesting God's love in us.

To forgive others, we must first be able to forgive ourselves. We are all guilty before God, and have all fallen short of His glory. But God loves us and forgives us. Therefore, we who are sinners, who have been the recipients of the gifts of God's merciful forgiveness, should be the first to share this wonderful fortune with our hapless neighbour. How? By forgiving him, even as God has forgiven us with no strings attached--not because we deserve it, not because we earned it, but simply because God loves us.

Therefore, let us forgive and thus prove that we truly love God--and our neighbour, even as we love ourselves. Amen.

V.S.B.

for St Olga: Luke 7: 36-50

Saints of the Week

11 / 24 July — 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.; Our Holy Father, the Martyr Nicodemus; Our Holy Father, the Martyr Nectarius.

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; Our Holy Father Michael Maleinos; The Holy Martyr Golinduc.

13 / 26 July — 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 Julian, Bishop of Cenomanis (Le Mans); Our Holy Father Stephen of St Sava's; Our Holy Mother Sarah the Egyptian.; St. Just, monk in Cornwall (5th cent.);

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.

14 / 27 July - Fast Day - 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. Our Holy Father Hellius.

15 / 28 July - Holy, Equal-to-the-Apostles, St Vladimir, Great Prince of Russia - Centuries before it was officially called 'Russia,' the vast territory inhabited by the various tribes of Eastern Slavs was sown with seeds of Christianity. But little fruit sprouted in the land's open steppes which dominated its southern reaches and provided a highroad for nomadic intruders. For over a thousand years a succession of Huns, Avars, Magyars and Pechenegs swept in from the east to establish a hegemony over an area whose waterways provided a potentially valuable trade link between the Baltic and the Black Seas. The eastern Slavs, who spread out along the great rivers as far as Lake Ladoga to the north, were a heterogeneous group which lacked the unity necessary to repel these invading hordes. They welcomed the assistance of the Varangians, Scandinavian adventurers from the north, whom they readily assimilated. According to the earliest written history of the area, the 11th century *Chronicle*, in the year 862 one of these Norsemen by the name of Rurik established himself in Novgorod as a leader with the aim of organizing a defence against the Pechenegs. The strategically superior location of Kiev to the south induced Rurik's successor Ole~ to move the capital in 882 and enabled him to consolidate most of the Eastern Slav tribes under his rule. In 912 Oleg was succeeded by Rurik's son Igor who had married a simple young countrywoman whom he had met by chance while on a hunting expedition in the area of Pskov. The unlikely match turned out to be providential; the girl's beauty was rivalled by her lofty wisdom which belied her humble origin and earned her the title 'most wise.' Olga proved to be a capable ruler when, after the death of Igor in 945, she became regent for their son Sviatoslav. As a ruler she naturally had contact with the neighbouring Greeks; the proximity of Constantinople, capital of the Christian East, may well have inspired her to examine its religion which had already gained enough adherents in Kiev to have a church. Olga's wisdom proved itself in her decision to embrace the Christian faith, and in 957 she journeyed to Constantinople to be baptized and to be instructed in its precepts. Having received divine illumination, Olga returned to the land of Rus bringing, as it were, the dawn's rays. To her sorrow, her son Sviatoslav was not interested in changing his pagan beliefs, although he was tolerant of the Christian faith and did not interfere in his mother's active missionary work. Fortunately, his frequent absence from Kiev on various campaigns gave Olga greater influence not only in administrative matters but also in the upbringing of her three grandsons, even though Sviatoslav forbade her to raise them in the Christian faith. But her life of prayer and charity commended her new religion and bore fruit in the generations that followed her blessed repose in the year 969. Sviatoslav was not interested in staying in Kiev and soon divided his realm among his three sons--Yaropolk, Oleg and Vladimir--while he himself went to Bulgaria. When he died in battle in 972, his sons began to quarrel over primacy of rule. Eventually, the cunning of the youngest son, Vladimir, gained for him the Kievan throne which he secured by having his eldest brother Yaropolk put to death. Oleg had died earlier in battle, leaving

Vladimir sole ruler over a loose federation of city states whose geographical territory was widespread and ill-defined. Vladimir began his rule in the full tradition of his pagan predecessors, indulging in a warring and passionate life. Once, after a successful campaign, Vladimir wished to render special thanks to the pagan gods by offering a human sacrifice. The lot fell upon a young Varangian boy by the name of John who was a Christian together with his father Theodore. Theodore refused to give up his son, explaining to those who had come to fetch the boy that the pagan gods were lifeless idols and that the people should turn to the one true God of the Christians. The crowd became enraged and killed them both there in their own home. Truly it has been said that the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christianity, for as accustomed as Vladimir was to bloodshed, he was strangely affected by the martyrdom of this father and son. He began to think seriously about religion. Feeling less and less satisfied with the paganism of his forebears, Vladimir thirsted for a knowledge of truth. This news spread abroad and attracted to Kiev advocates of various faiths in hopes of winning the Grand Prince to their respective persuasions. There came Bulgar Moslems, papal envoys from Germany, Jews from Taurid and finally an Orthodox Greek--each praising their religion as the best. Vladimir was predisposed to favour the wise arguments of the Greek, a righteous philosopher who gave a thorough explanation of the Orthodox faith beginning with God's creation of the World, the fall of man and his banishment from paradise, the promise of the Messiah, His humble birth, His miracles and teaching of an everlasting Kingdom beyond this world, His sufferings and death on the Cross for man's salvation, and His glorious Resurrection. He then unrolled before the Prince a scroll on which was depicted the last and dread Judgment. Vladimir was struck with the fear of God and said: "How good it will be for those on the right, but woe to them who are wicked and are cast to the left!" The Greek urged Vladimir to accept the truth of holy Orthodoxy and be baptized, but Vladimir recognized the importance of the decision he was to make and was not to be rushed. He summoned together his retinue and the Kievan elders to take counsel, explaining what he had heard from the various ambassadors. "Every man," they replied, "will commend his own religion. But send out your own envoys to examine how the different religions are practiced and the manner of worship," This suggestion seemed most judicious and ten men were promptly dispatched on this mission. On their return they related to the Grand Prince what they had witnessed: the Moslem religion was grim and full of fear; the Germans lacked beauty; but the Greek worship no tongue can describe, 'for during the service in their temple we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. No man, having tasted what is sweet, has any desire for what is bitter. So too, having experienced the Greek faith, we want no other.' The elders supported the recommendation of the envoys: "If the Greek religion were not the best, your wise grandmother would not have adopted it." Vladimir needed no further persuading. Memories of his grandmother's righteous life and the witness of Kiev's Christian inhabitants settled his mind in favour of what he had heard. But it still remained for his heart to be converted. Pride hindered Vladimir from asking the Greeks outright for instruction and baptism. Applying a typically pagan solution, he went to war with the Greeks and captured their city of Kherson. As terms of peace, he demanded the hand of the Byzantine emperors' sister Anna in marriage. They agreed on condition that Vladimir accept the Christian faith. This accorded neatly with Vladimir's ultimate objective. But God was more interested in possessing his heart than his calculating mind. A few days before Princess Anna arrived in Kherson with her retinue of clergy and servants, Vladimir was struck with an eye disease which extinguished his sight. Fearing this to be a punishment from the pagan gods whom he was about to renounce, Vladimir wavered in his decision. Anna, upon hearing of this crisis, encouraged the Grand Prince to be baptized at once, and thereby to be healed not only of his physical blindness, but also of his spiritual blindness. Humbled by his helpless state, Vladimir sent immediately for the bishop of Kherson and, after a thorough preparation, the ceremony of baptism took place. No sooner had the bishop laid his hand on Vladimir's head and invoked the name of the All-holy Trinity than Vladimir's vision was restored, and he cried out: "Now have I come to know the true God!" This miracle confirmed the faith of the Grand Prince who became radically transformed. Returning to Kiev with his new Christian spouse and several priests, he set about cleansing the city from idolatry with orders to destroy the pagan statues and urging all to prepare for holy baptism. On August 1, 988, a countless multitude of young and old assembled in the waters of the Dneiper River. Vladimir stood on the bank and prayed for his people: "Creator of heaven and earth! bless these Thy new children, grant them to know Thee, the true God; strengthen them in the right faith! Be unto me a helper against evil temptation that I might worthily praise Thy holy name!" Vladimir's former passions were transformed into a zeal for good. From Constantinople he engaged skilled artisans to construct a magnificent church on the spot where, until so recently, the statue of Perun had stood. Another church, 'dedicated to the Theotokos, was built where the two Varangians, Theodore and John, had been martyred. The Prince shared the apostolic work of the Greek bishops and priests who went about the towns and villages spreading the true Faith which thousands willingly embraced, although many remained stuck in the mire of paganism. Vladimir grieved for them, but knew that enlightenment was not to be achieved with a sword. Instead, he established schools where even children of the poorest families could learn to read the Scripture and be trained as priests; The Holy Martyrs Cerycus and Julitta;

Translation of the relics of St. Swithun, bishop and wonderworker of Winchester (862) - St. Swithun had been Prior of the monastery attached to the cathedral, before he was made Bishop of Winchester in AD 852. He was, say the chroniclers, a diligent builder of churches in places where there were none before and a repairer of those that had been destroyed or ruined. He also built a bridge on the east side of the city and, during the work he made a practice of sitting there to watch the workmen, that his presence might stimulate their industry. One of his most edifying miracles is said to have been performed at this bridge where he restored an old woman's basket of eggs, which the workmen had maliciously broken. It is more certain that Swithun was one of the most learned men of his time and the tutor, successively, of King Aethelwulf of Wessex and of his son, the illustrious Alfred. He died on 2nd July AD 862 and was buried, according to his own desire, in the churchyard of the Old Minster (Cathedral) at Winchester, where "passers by might tread on his grave and where the rain from the eaves might fall on it." His reputation as a weather saint is said to have arisen from the translation of his body from this lowly grave to its golden shrine within the Cathedral, having been delayed by incessant rain. Hence the weather on the festival of his translation (15th July) indicated, according to the old rhyme, what it would be for the next forty days: "St. Swithun's day, if thou dost rain, For forty days it will remain; St. Swithun's day, if thou be fair, For forty days 'twill rain na mair."

16 / 29 July - Fast Day - The Hieromartyr Athenogenes, Bishop of Sebaste - He lived in a monastery near the town with ten of his disciples. In the time of Diocletian, a fierce persecutor of Christians called Philomarchus came to Sebaste. He arrested and killed many of the Christians in the town. When he saw Athenogenes and his disciples, he told the elder to sacrifice to idols, that they should not perish as had the other Christians. Athenogenes replied: 'O Torturer, those whom you describe as having perished have not perished, but are in heaven and make merry with the angels!' There was a touching moment when a deer, which had been hand-fed by the compassionate Athenogenes, ran up to him, and, seeing him in such

straits, shed tears. Wild animals of the hills had more pity on the martyrs than did the pagans! After harsh torture, during which an angel of God comforted them, they were all beheaded, first the priests and fellow-workers of Athenogenes and then Athenogenes himself, and went to their heavenly home in the year 311. The Holy Martyr Julia the Virgin; The 15,000 Holy Martyrs in Persia; The Holy Martyr Athenogenes; Martyr Helier of Jersey (6th c.)

17 / 30 July - The Holy Martyr Marina (Margaret) - born in Pisidian Antioch of pagan parents, Marina only heard of the Lord Jesus at the age of twelve, of His incarnation of the most pure Virgin, His many miracles, His death by crucifixion and His glorious Resurrection. Her little heart was inflamed with love for the Lord, and she vowed never to marry and, further, desired in her soul to suffer for Christ and be baptised with the blood of martyrdom. Her father hated her for her faith, and would not regard her as his daughter. The imperial governor, Olymbrius, hearing of Marina and learning that she was a Christian, at first desired her for his wife. When Marina refused, he ordered her to sacrifice to idols. To this, Marina replied: 'I shall not worship nor offer sacrifice to dead idols, lacking the breath of life, which have no awareness of themselves and are not even aware of our honouring or dishonouring them. I will not give them that honour that belongs to my Creator alone.' Then Olymbrius put her to harsh torture, and threw her into prison all wounded and bleeding. Marina prayed to God in the prison, and, after she had prayed, there appeared to her first the devil in the form of a terrible serpent, which twined itself about her head. When she made the sign of the Cross, the serpent split asunder and disappeared. Then she was bathed in heavenly light; the walls and roof of the prison disappeared and a Cross was revealed, resplendent and lofty. On the top of the Cross was perched a white dove, from which there came a voice: 'Rejoice, Marina, thou dove of Christ, daughter of the Sion that is on high, for the day of thy joy is drawing near!', and Marina was healed by the power of God of all her wounds. The demented judge tortured her the next day by fire and water, but Marina endured it all as if not in her own body. She was finally sentenced to death by beheading. At the moment of her death, the Lord Jesus appeared to her, accompanied by angels. She was beheaded in the time of the Emperor Diocletian, but remains alive in soul and in power in heaven and on earth. One of her hands is preserved in the monastery of Vatopedi on the Holy Mountain. Even in Albania, in the Langa mountains overlooking Lake Ochrid, there is a monastery of St Marina with some of her wonderworking relics. Numerous miracles have been wrought in this monastery and still are, witnessed not only by Christians but also by Moslems. The Turks have such a veneration for this holy place that they have never laid hands on either the place or the monastery's possessions. At one time, a Turk was caretaker of the monastery; Our Holy Father Leonid;

Child Martyr Prince Kenelm of Wales (c.821) - Son of King Coenwulf of Mercia in England. By tradition he was murdered in the forest of Clent and buried in Winchcombe.