

7th Sunday After Pentecost

St. Anthony of Kiev Caves

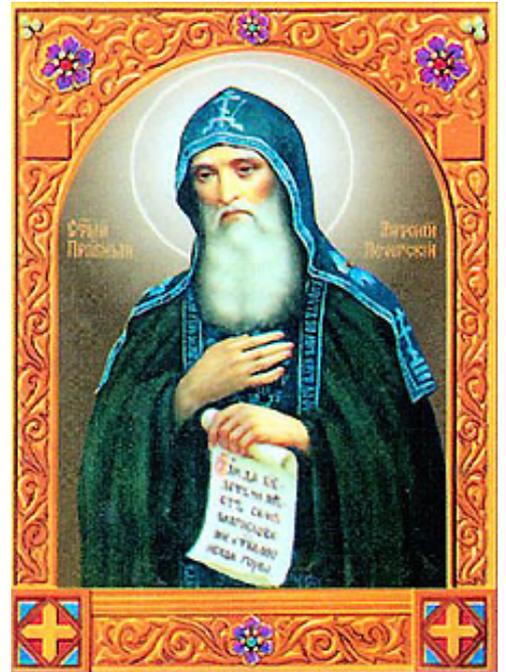
10 / 23 July

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 6: The angelic powers were at Thy tomb; / the guards became as dead men. / Mary stood by Thy grave, / seeking Thy most pure Body. / Thou didst capture hell, not being tempted by it. / Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life. / O Lord who didst rise from the Dead, / Glory to Thee!

Troparion of St Anthony tone 4: Thou didst leave the tumult of the world to follow Christ according to the Gospel; / thou didst lead a life equal to the Angels and reach the haven of Mount Athos. / From thence with thy father's blessing thou didst illumine thy fatherland at Kiev, / where thou didst lead a multitude of monks along the path to Christ and His kingdom. / Pray to Him, O Saint Anthony, that He may save our souls.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 6: When Christ God the Giver of Life, / raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His Mighty Hand, / He bestowed resurrection on the human race. / He is the Saviour of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of All.

Kontakion of St Anthony tone 8; Thou didst surrender to God, having loved Him from thy childhood, / and follow Him with all thy heart and soul, O Saint Anthony. / Thou didst despise worldly goods and live in a cave in the earth, / fighting the good fight against the wiles of the enemy. / Having illumined the ends of the earth thou didst fly rejoicing to heaven / where thou dost stand among the angels before the throne of God; / remember those who honour thee that we may cry: rejoice, O Anthony our Father.



Matins Gospel VII

Sunday: Rom. 15:1-7

We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, That you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

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 the Saint: Gal . 5:22-6:2

MATT 9: 27-35

When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See that no one knows it." But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never seen like this in Israel!" But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons." Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

JESUS HEALS THE BLIND AND THE DUMB

The first Sunday readings after Pentecost showed us the Commandments of God according to which all the saints of the universal Church and our Russian Church lived. These commandments were like steps into the Kingdom of Heaven. And the Kingdom of Heaven the Merciful God has prepared for all. This means that these steps are leading there; these commandments of God are a must for every one of us. So with such a purpose the Holy Church presented them to us. But now for the last several weeks the Holy Church has begun to show us not what we should cultivate in ourselves, but things which we should avoid, against which we should fight. These readings told about the power of evil, about being possessed by it, about passions, sins, slavery to sin, bodily paralysis which is the result of sin; and this pointed out to us our spiritual paralysis, which is always the result of sin. In the same way, today's Gospel tells us: "When Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed Him.... As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil" (Mt. 9:27,32). And Christ healed all of them. Yes, there is physical blindness, but there is also spiritual blindness. This is our unbelief, our stoniness of heart. Such a state may be temporary, as a storm cloud rushes in and goes away, with God's help. This is a terrible feeling of being forsaken by God, a horrible loneliness. And there is another condition: this is when we can talk about anything, but not about spiritual things, Godly things. Or when before us a brother is suffering, is living through some terrible grief, and we don't have even one word of comfort. Or again, a state of mind when we cannot even pray. Are these not states of spiritual dumbness? And Christ alone can heal us, heal our blind and dumb soul. But how does it happen? Well, in order to answer this question I would like to relate one example, one experience from my personal life. Here it is: I will tell just how this experience was inscribed on my heart. This was a very difficult period of my life. It seemed there was no way out. My church in the town of Romni was closed, I was exiled from Romni, my family was left to the mercy of fate. To be registered in any church in Kiev was impossible. I had to live from day to day, hiding out with friends, knowing that by doing this I could harm them. At church services I could only be present secretly, hiding somewhere in a corner of the altar. And not even in every church would they let in an unregistered priest. Before me there seemed to be impenetrable darkness. I was losing heart. I felt both blind and dumb, in a spiritual sense. Then came a bright thought: go to Lavra, to the cave Church of St. Anthony, to the early Liturgy. I wanted to believe that maybe there at the relics of the saints the veil would fall from my eyes and I would be able to see the Providence of God for me. I stopped for the night in Lavra and stayed with a close friend of mine. At three in the morning the gong was struck. We dressed quickly and went out. It was absolutely dark. But from all sides stretched lines of little lights; these were monks with lanterns going to the service in the caves. Everything was quiet, reverent, mysterious. And the two of us proceeded. Now we started to go down into the cave. And as we descended I grew more and more oppressed. The Liturgy started. I saw how everyone was praying. And I.. .1 could not pray. Something terrible was happening to me; the ceiling of the cave pressed down on me. I was suffocating. And not so much physically, as spiritually. Anguish was simply tearing my chest apart. If I could have run away, I would have. But with an unbelievable effort of will I forced myself, at least outwardly, to remain at the service, which came over to me only automatically. I was both blind and dumb. Minutes seemed like hours. I felt that I was perishing, and as one who was dumb, without words. I cried out in my heart: "Lord have mercy!" not even understanding the meaning of these words. If the service had lasted for one more minute, I could not have stood it. But here was the end. I simply ran out onto the surface of the ground. And then a miracle happened to me. The sun was high already, the grass, the leaves, the trees, covered with morning dew, seemed to be strewn with diamonds. In the distance I could see the blue Dnieper River, and this blue was broken up by the bright reflection of the rising sun. This reflection was like gold which had fallen from heaven; and beyond the Dnieper were fields, forests — the world of God! I breathed deeply. Before me was hope. God had taken the stone away from my heart. I had been blind, but suddenly I recovered my sight: all these earthly beauties were now just symbols for me — symbols of unearthly beauty and Eternal Life. I wanted to live for eternity, and I wanted to share this joy with those around me. The dumbness passed and I began talking to people again who were all now near and dear to me. See how God heals our spiritual blindness and dumbness! So let us go in His Way. Let us endure. Let us imitate the blind men. After all, they did not see Christ. And what is more, they had never seen the image of a human being; but they knew that Christ was there, nearby, and believed that He could heal them. This is the classic image of prayer. The Orthodox Faith never forms any images, but only knows that Christ is, and He is near and can do anything. But let us be attentive, because He will ask us too: "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" (Mt. 10:28). Then let our answer to Him be: "Yes, Lord! We believe."

for the Saint: Matt. 4:25-5:12

Saints of the Week

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. During this appearance, the Mother of God foretold

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 Mtskheth. 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 Mtskheth. 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 Mtskheth, 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.

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 — 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 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-Thalet. 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 – 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 - Fast Day - 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 countrywomen 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 - 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.)