

Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles

(Pentecost Sunday)

25 May / 7 June

Tropar Of Pentecost, Tone 8: Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast shown forth the fishermen as supremely wise, by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them, didst draw the world into Thy net. O Lover of mankind, glory be to Thee.

Kondak Of Pentecost, Tone 8: Once, when He descended and confounded the tongues, the Most High divided the nations; and when He divided the tongues of fire, He called all men into unity; and with one accord we glorify the All-Holy Spirit.



Vespers: Num. 11:16-17, 24-29; Joel 2:23-32; Ezek. 36:24-28

Matins Gospel John 20: 19-23

EPISTLE - ACTS OF THE APOSTLES - 2: 1-11

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, people from Crete and Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

AND THERE APPEARED TO THEM DIVIDED TONGUES AS OF FIRE... AND THEY WERE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

So that by gradual increase ...and progress from glory to glory, the light of the Trinity might shine upon the more illuminated ...for this reason it was, I think, that He gradually came to dwell in the disciples. He measured Himself out to them according to their capacity to receive Him: at the beginning of the gospel, after the Passion, after the Ascension, making perfect their powers, being breathed upon them, and appearing in fiery tongues ...You see lights breaking upon us, gradually, and knowledge of such order of theology, as is better for us to maintain, neither proclaiming things too suddenly nor yet keeping them hidden to the end ...He said that all things should be taught us by the Spirit Himself, made clear at a later time, when such knowledge would be seasonable and capable of being received after our Saviour's restoration; when it would no longer be received with incredulity because of its marvellous character. For what greater thing than this did either He promise, or the Spirit teach ...If He is not to be worshiped, how can He deify me by baptism?... And indeed from the Spirit comes our new birth, and from the new birth our new creation, and from the new creation our deeper knowledge of the dignity of Him from whom it is derived ...Look at these facts: Christ is born; the Spirit is His forerunner. He leads Him up. He works miracles; the Spirit accompanies them. He ascends; the Spirit takes His place.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus. Fifth Theological Oration, 26, 27, 28, 29. B#7, pp. 210 -211.

GOSPEL - JOHN 7:37-52 & 8:12

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" So there was a division among the people because of Him. Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him. Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?" The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?" They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee." Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

IF ANYONE THIRSTS, LET HIM COME TO ME AND DRINK

Those who come to the divine preaching and give heed to the faith must manifest the desire of thirsty men for water, and kindle in themselves a similar longing; so they will be able, very carefully, to retain what is said...For to show that men ought ever to thirst and hunger, He said 'Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness' (Matt.5:6) ... Elsewhere He calls it, 'eternal life,' but here, 'living water.' He calls that 'living' which ever works: for the grace of the Spirit, when It has entered into the mind and has been established, springs up more than any fountain, does not fail, never becomes empty ...He has represented its abundance by the expression 'springing' ...Consider the wisdom of Stephen, the tongue of Peter, the vehemence of Paul: how nothing bore, nothing withstood them, not the anger of multitudes, not the risings up of tyrants, not the plots of the devils, not daily deaths, but as rivers borne along with a great rushing sound, so they went on their way hurrying all things with them ...When He was about to send them (after the crucifixion) He said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (c.20:22) ...and then they wrought miracles.

St. John Chrysostom, Homily LI on John VII, 1. 2. B#58, p. 184.

Today we celebrate the great feast of Pentecost. Our Lord, at the time of his Ascension into heaven which we celebrated just 10 days ago, instructed his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were filled with power from on high – that is until the coming of the Holy Spirit. The disciples did not wait idly, but during this time devoted themselves to prayer, preparing themselves for this great gift which was about to be bestowed upon them by God. When the day came that the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and the other followers of Christ, they were gathered together in worship. They heard a sound like the rushing of wind and saw the Spirit descend upon the disciples as tongues of flame. At that moment the power of the Holy Spirit began to manifest itself in the disciples for they all began to glorify God in a multitude of languages showing us from the beginning that the Gospel was for all men and women regardless of nation and culture. This miracle also demonstrated that God would provide the apostles with all that was required – even the ability to speak other languages – in order to spread the Gospel to all nations. All they needed to do was to be willing to follow God and depend upon Him for all things.

This day is also called for us the “birthday of the Church” for it was with the coming of the Holy Spirit that the Apostles and the other believers were united to one another in spirit, becoming an icon of the Holy Trinity. The Godhead is a unity of persons – three persons united in one essence, undivided and yet unconfused. The Church is also a unity of persons – the whole host of believers united by the Holy Spirit into one single entity which is the Church, the Body of Christ. This unity is not merely figurative nor is it simply symbolic, but it is a real union brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit in us. The Head of the Body is our Lord Jesus Christ and we are united to Him as we are united to one another through the Holy Spirit. Through Christ we come into union and communion with God and through the action of the Holy Spirit in us we grow into union and communion with one another. We are not a group of separate individuals drawn together by some common cause or belief, but rather we are a group of persons mystically united to one another and yet remaining distinct and diverse. In this way we all together become the one Body of Christ, the One Church comprised of the choir of the saints and yet indivisible. We see this unity made manifest and actualized in the saints who have gone before us and we who are living now in the world are working to actualize that same unity in our lives through our cooperation with the transforming grace of the Holy Spirit in us.

Today we celebrate the “birthday of the Church” – today we celebrate our union with our Lord Jesus Christ and with one another, a union brought about by the descent of the Holy Spirit first upon the Apostles and through them upon the whole world. It is therefore apparent that we are not saved alone, but we are saved together – together with one another and together with the choir of the saints and of all those believers who have gone before us. For this reason we pray for one another and especially we ask the saints to pray for us – no longer does death separate us, but death is defeated and overcome by the Resurrection of the Lord and within the embrace of the Church we have come into a living unity with the whole choir of saints. Therefore do not delay to help one another for in helping your brother or sister to work out their salvation, you also work out your own salvation. In coming to the aid of one who is weak or ill or despondent, you come to the aid of yourself, for that person is joined to you and their weakness, their pain, their despair is yours. By strengthening them, you yourself are strengthened as well. When you are the one facing difficulty, do not hesitate to reach out to your brothers and sisters in Christ so that they might support you and lift you up. This is the nature of the Church that we work out our salvation together. No one is left alone, no one is abandoned, but we are all joined together in Jesus Christ by the work and transforming grace of the Holy Spirit. Today we celebrate our unity, our one-ness with each other. Today we have become the Church, the Body of Christ, through the descent of the Holy Spirit Who enters into our souls and empowers us to follow Christ as He leads us into His heavenly kingdom.

*Archpriest David Moser
St Seraphim of Sarov Orthodox Church (ROCOR)
Website: <http://stseraphimboise.org>*

**On this Sunday the Kneeling prayers are said at Vespers which follows immediately after the Liturgy –
the three long prayers are:**

The First Prayer: Priest: O Lord most pure, spotless, who art from everlasting, invisible, ineffable, unsearchable, unchanging, unsurpassable, immeasurable, longsuffering, who alone hast immortality; who dwellest in light unapproachable, who hast made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that therein is; who grantest unto all men their petitions before they ask: We pray thee, and beseech thee, O Master who lovest mankind, the Father of our Lord, and God, and Saviour Jesus Christ, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of Mary the ever-virgin and exceeding-glorious birth-giver of God; who first did teach in words and afterwards did manifest himself in deeds, when he suffered his redeeming Passion; who hast given unto us, thy humble, and sinful, and unworthy servants, a command that we should offer supplications unto thee with bending; of the neck and of the knees, both for our own iniquities and for the ignorances of the people: Do thou, the same all-merciful God who lovest mankind, hear us in that day when we shall call upon thee, and more especially upon this day of Pentecost, whereon, after that our Lord Jesus Christ has ascended up into heaven, and had sat down at the right hand of thee, who art both his God and his Father, he did send down the Holy Spirit upon his holy disciples and apostles: which also did rest upon each one of them, so that they were all filled with its inexhaustible grace, and did declare thy majesty in divers unknown tongues, and did prophesy. Wherefore hearken now to us who pray unto thee, and remember us humble and condemned as we are, and turn again the captivity of our souls, exercising thy loving kindness toward us who now offer up our petitions unto thee. Accept us who fall down before thee, and who cry aloud unto thee, We have sinned! We have cloven unto thee even from our mother's womb: thou art our God. But because we have passed our days in vanity, we have stripped ourselves of thine aid, we have deprived ourselves of every valid defence. But confidently trusting in thy bounties, we call unto thee. Remember not the sins of our youth and our ignorances; and cleanse thou us from our secret sins; and forsake us not in the days of our old age, when our strength faileth us. Even until we return again into the earth, abandon us not, vouchsafe us grace to have recourse unto thee; and receive us, because of thy favour and graciousness. Measure our wickedness according to the measure of thy bounties. Set over against the multitude of our transgressions the abyss of thy compassions. Look down from thy holiness on high, O Lord, upon thy people now present before thee, who await thy rich mercies. Visit us with thy loving-kindness: deliver us from the assaults of the Devil. Establish our life in thy holy and sacred commandments. Commit thy people unto an Angel, a faithful guardian. Gather us all into thy kingdom. Grant pardon unto those who put their trust in thee. Put away from them and from us all sins. Purify us by the operation of thy Holy Spirit; bring to naught the machinations of the enemy against us.

And thereto is added the following Prayer: Blessed art thou, O Lord, Master Almighty, who hast illumined the day with the light of the sun, and hast made bright the night with the brilliant flashes of the lightning; who hast graciously enabled us to pass through the long day, and to draw near to the beginning of the night. Hear our petitions, and the petitions of all thy people, and granting pardon unto us for all our sins, both voluntary and involuntary, accept our evening prayers, and send down the multitude of thy mercy and thy bounties upon thine inheritance. Guard us with thy holy Angels. Arm us with the armour of thy righteousness. Encompass us round about with the ramparts of thy truth. Guard us by thy might. Deliver us from every assault, and from every treacherous plot of the adversary. And grant unto us that this present evening and the approaching night, and all the days of our life, may be perfect, holy, peaceful, sinless, without stumbling, untroubled of dreams; through the prayers of the holy Birth-giver of God, and of all the Saints, who, in all the ages, have been acceptable in thy sight.

The Second Prayer: Priest: O Lord Jesus Christ our God, who hast bestowed upon men thy peace and the gift of the Holy Spirit; who, while thou wast yet with us in the present life, didst give unto thy faithful people an inheritance which shall not be taken from them forever; who this day didst send down thy grace upon thy disciples and apostles, in manner most clear, and didst furnish their lips with fiery tongues; by whom now, we also, together with all mankind, having received, through the hearing of our own ears divine knowledge in our own tongues, have been illumined with the light of the Spirit, and have put away the delusion of darkness by the distribution of the material and visible tongues of fire, as also by the marvellous operation of the same, whereby we have been inspired with faith toward thee, and to glorify thee, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit in one Godhead and might, and have been enlightened with power: Do thou who art the Brightness of the Father, of his Essence and his Nature the Express and Immutable Image, the Fountain of Wisdom and of Grace, open the lips of me, a sinner and teach me in what manner and for what needs I ought to pray; for thou knowest the great multitude of my sins, but thy loving-kindness shall overcome the enormity thereof. For lo! I stand in awe before thee, and have cast into the great deep of thy mercy the despair of my soul. Govern my life, O thou who governest all creation by a word, with the unutterable might of thy wisdom, O tranquil Haven of the storm-tossed; and make known unto me the way in which I should walk. Grant unto my understanding the spirit of thy wisdom, bestowing upon my ignorance the spirit of thy understanding. Overshadow my deeds with the spirit of thy fear, and renew a right spirit within me; and by thy sovereign Spirit make stable the instability of my thoughts. That being daily guided by thy good Spirit in that which is profitable for me, I may be enabled to keep thy statutes, and ever bear in mind thy glorious Coming-again, and those things worthy of torment which I have committed. And give me not over to be led astray by the corrupt pleasures of this present world, but strengthen in me the desire to strive for the treasures to come. For thou hast said, O Master: whatsoever a man shall ask in thy Name, that shall be freely received from thy God and father, who is from everlasting. Wherefore, I, also, a sinner, at this descent of thy Holy Spirit, do entreat thy goodness, that thou wilt grant me whatsoever things I have asked which are unto salvation. Yea, O Lord, the bounteous Giver of every benefit; and the Distributor of blessings,—for its thou who givest most bountifully unto those who ask of thee,—thou art pitiful and gracious, and also wast made a partaker of our flesh, yet without sin, and doest incline thine ear with infinite loving-kindness unto those who bow the knee before thee; who, also, wast made the Propitiation of our sins. Wherefore, O Lord, grant thy bounties unto thy people. Harken unto us from thy holy heaven. Sanctify us by thy saving

might of thy right hand. Cover us with the shelter of thy wings; and despite thou not the work of thy hands. Unto thee alone have we sinned, but thee alone so we serve. We know not to adore a strange god, neither have we stretched out our hands, O Lord, unto any other god. Pardon our iniquities, and accept this our prayer, which we make unto thee on bended knees. Extend unto us all the hand of thine aid. Receive our petitions of all men, as it were incense well-pleasing, acceptable before thine all-blessed kingdom. O Lord, Lord, who deliverest us from all the arrows that fly by day, deliver thou us, also, from all things that infest the darkness. Accept our evening sacrifice, even the lifting-up of our hands. Grant that we may pass through the course of the night without sin, untempted of evil things; and deliver us from every alarm and cowardice that cometh to us from the Devil. Grant unto our souls contrition, and unto our minds anxiety concerning that strict searching out of the thoughts which shall come in the dread and just Day of Judgment. Nail our flesh to the fear of thee, and mortify our earthly members: that, in the quietness of sleep, we may be illuminated by the vision of thy judgments. Remove from us, also, every unseemly imagination and hurtful carnal passion. Raise us up again at the hour of prayer, fortified in the faith, and advancing in thy commandments.

The Third Prayer: Priest: O Fountain, ever-flowing, living, illumining; Power creative, coeternal with the Father, O Christ our God, who hast most excellently fulfilled all the plans for the salvation of mankind; who didst shatter the bonds indestructible of Death, and the bolts of Hell, and didst trample under foot a host of evil spirits; who didst offer thyself a blameless victim for us, giving thine all-holy Body for a sacrifice inviolate, and unassailed of every sin, and who, through that terrible and ineffable act of sacrifice, didst bestow upon us life eternal; who didst descend into Hell, and break the everlasting bars, and show a way up unto those who abode in the lower world; and having enticed, by divinely wise allurements, the origin of mischief and the serpent of the abyss, and bound him with cords of nethermost gloom and fire unquenchable in Tartarus, and confined him in outer darkness, by thine infinite and fettering might, O Wisdom greatly glorified by the Father, thou didst manifest thyself as a mighty helper of the assailed; and didst enlighten those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, Do thou, O Lord of the everlasting glory and Son beloved of the Father most high, Light Eternal of Light Eternal, the Sun of Righteousness, hear us, who now make our fervent supplications unto thee, and give rest to the souls of thy servants our fathers and brethren, and other kinsmen after the flesh, and of all of the household of faith, who have fallen asleep, and whom we now call to remembrance. For thou hast power over all things, and in thy hand thou upholdest all the ends of the earth. O Master Almighty, the God of our fathers and Lord of mercy, Creator of the race of mortals and immortals, and of every nature of man; of that which is brought together and is again put asunder; of life and death; of sojourn in the world that now is, and of translation to the world which is to come; thou meetest out the years of life, and appointest the time of death; thou bringest down to Hell, and again raisest up; thou bindest unto impotency and loosest unto power, ordering things present according to their necessity, and appointing things to come as is expedient, quickening with the hope of Resurrection those who were smitten with the sting of death. For thou art, of a truth, the Master of all men, O God our Saviour, the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of those who are afar off upon the sea; Who, on this last, and great, and redeeming day of the Pentecost feast, didst reveal unto us the mystery of the Holy Trinity, one in Essence, coeternal, undivided and unmingled; and didst pour out the indwelling and descent of thy holy and life-giving Spirit, in the form of tongues of fire, upon thy holy apostles; and didst appoint the same to be the heralds of the glad tidings of our holy faith; and didst make them confessors and teachers of the true divine knowledge; who, also, on this all-perfect and saving Feast, art graciously pleased to accept propitiatory prayers for those who are imprisoned in Hell, promising unto us who are held in bondage great hope of release from the vileness that doth hinder us and did hinder them; and that thou will send down thy consolation. Hear us, thy humble ones, who make our supplications unto thee, and give rest to the souls of thy servants who have fallen asleep, in a place of light, a place of verdure, a place of refreshment whence all sickness, sorrow and sighing have fled away: and establish thou their souls in the mansions of the Just; and graciously vouchsafe unto them peace and pardon; for the dead shall not praise thee, O Lord, neither shall they who are in Hell make bold to offer unto thee confession. But we who are living will bless thee, and will pray, and offer unto thee propitiatory prayers and sacrifices for their souls. O God great and eternal, who art holy and lovest mankind; who hast vouchsafed unto us at this present hour to stand before thine ineffable glory, and to sing and to praise thy wonders: Purify us, thine unworthy servants, and grant us grace that, with a contrite heart, and without presumption, we may offer unto thee the Thrice-Holy hymn of praise and thanksgiving for thy great gifts, which thou hast bestowed and always dost bestow upon us. Remember, O Lord, our weakness, and destroy us not in our iniquity, but show great mercy upon our humility; that, fleeing from the darkness of sin, we may walk in the daylight of righteousness; and that, putting on the armour of light, we may remain unassailed by any despiteful attack of the Evil One, and with boldness may glorify in all things thee, the only true God, who also lovest mankind. For thine, O Lord and Creator of all men, is that great and veritable mystery, the dissolution of thy creatures for a season, and thereafter their restoration to wholeness and their rest forever. We acknowledge thy grace in all things; for our coming into this world and our going out of it; for our hopes of resurrection and of the life immortal faithfully pledged unto us through thine unfailing promises, the which we shall receive hereafter in thy Second Coming. For thou art the Chieftain of our Resurrection, and the Judge impartial and gracious to the dead, and the Master and Lord of recompense, who didst become a partaker, on equal terms, of our flesh and blood, because of thine exceeding great condescension; and when, of thine own will, that thou mightest place thyself under temptation, thou didst accept our congenital passions, because of thy compassion, and didst suffer through them, being thyself tempted thereby, thou didst become for us who are tempted the helper which thou thyself hadst promised; and thereby hast thou led us to thy passionlessness. Wherefore, O Master, receive thou our prayers and supplications, and give rest unto the fathers, mothers, children, brothers, and sisters, blood-relations and kinsfolk of each and all of us, and unto all souls which have fallen asleep before us; and establish their spirits in the hope of Resurrection unto life eternal, and inscribe their names in the Book of Life, in the bosom of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, and in the land of the living, in the kingdom of heaven, in the Paradise of sweetness; by thy radiant Angels guiding all into thy holy mansions; raising up with thee, also, our bodies, in that day which thou hast appointed by thy holy and faithful promise. Because there is no death, O Lord, for thy servants when we depart from the body and come unto thee, our God, but a change from things very sorrowful unto things most salutary and most sweet, and unto repose and gladness. If, therefore, we

have in aught transgressed against thee, be merciful unto us and unto them; because there is no one pure from stain in thy sight, even for a single day of his life, save thou alone, who didst manifest thyself sinless upon earth, O our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we all trust to receive mercy and the remission of our sins. Wherefore, in that thou art a gracious God and lovest mankind, do thou, both to them and to us, pardon, remit, forgive our sins, both voluntary and involuntary, which we have committed whether wilfully or through ignorance; whether those which are manifest or those which have escaped our notice; whether of deed, or of thought, or of word, whatsoever they may be, in all our acts and lives. And unto the departed also grant thou release and pardon; and bless us who are here present, granting unto us, and to all thy people, a good and peaceful ending, and opening unto us the tenderness of thy mercy and love toward mankind at thy dread and terrible Coming-again; and make us worthy of thy kingdom. O great and most high God, who alone hast immortality, and dwellest in light unapproachable; who hast made all creation in wisdom; who hast divided the light from the darkness, and hast appointed the sun to rule the day, the moon and stars also to rule the night; who hast vouchsafed unto us sinners at this present hour also to come before thy presence with confession, and to offer unto thee our evening sacrifice of praise: Do thou thyself, who lovest mankind, direct our prayer as a censer before thee, and accept it for a savour of sweet incense; and grant that we may pass this present evening and the coming night in peace. Endue us with the armour of light. Deliver us from the terror of the night, and from everything that walketh in darkness; and grant that the sleep, which thou hast appointed for the repose of our weakness, may be free from every imagination of the Devil. Yea, O Master, Bestower of all good things, may we, being moved to compunction upon our beds, call to remembrance thy holy Name in the night season: that, enlightened by meditation on thy statutes, we may rise up in joyfulness of soul to glorify thy goodness, offering up prayers and supplications unto thy tender love for our own sins and for those of all thy people: whom do thou visit in mercy, through the intercessions of the holy Birth-giver of God. For thou art a gracious God, and lovest mankind, and unto thee do we ascribe glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now, and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Holy Spirit provides every gift: He inspires prophecy, perfects the priesthood, grants wisdom to the illiterate, makes simple fishermen to become wise theologians, and establishes perfect order in the organisation of the Church. Wherefore, O Comforter, equal in nature and majesty with the Father and the Son, glory to You...

In the days of old, pride brought confusion of tongues to the builders of the tower of Babel, but now the diversity of tongues enlightened the minds and gave knowledge for the glory of God. There, God punished infidels for their sin, while here Christ enlightened fishermen through the Spirit; there the confusion of tongues was for the sake of vengeance, while here there was variety so that voices could be joined in unison for the salvation of our souls.

Stichera of Pentecost for Vespers, B#10, pp. 891, 894.

Saints of the Week *Fast Free Week*

25 May / 7 June — The Third Finding of the Head of St John the Baptist - in the eighth century, during a period of fierce iconoclasm, the head of St John the Baptist was taken to Comana, the place of St John Chrysostom's exile. When the iconoclast persecution ended in 850, in the time of the Emperor Michael and Patriarch Ignatius, the honoured head of St John was taken to Constantinople and placed in the church at the imperial court.

The Hieromartyr Therapon, Bishop of Cyprus - Therapontus was a monk and an ascetic on the island of Cyprus. He was found worthy of the episcopal rank, but during the time of the persecution of Christians, he was found worthy of an even greater wreath, the crown of martyrdom. His body reposed in a church on Cyprus. When, during the reign of Emperor Nicephorus in the year 806 A.D., the island of Cyprus was attacked by the Hagarenes, the saint appeared to the sexton of that church and told him that the infidels will attack Cyprus and ordered him to remove his relics to Constantinople. The sexton did this immediately. While the boat was travelling on the sea with the reliquary, a great storm arose but the sea was calm around the boat and a sweet-smelling fragrance emitted around the entire boat in all directions. The sexton opened the reliquary and everyone witnessed that it was filled with myrrh [oil] which flowed from the saint's relics. By rubbing themselves with this oil, many of the sick were healed. A church was built in Constantinople over the relics of this miracle-worker, who continued to grant healing to all those who with faith touched them. By the Grace of God, the gravest illness of possession, of cancer, of haemorrhaging, of insanity, of blindness, of barrenness and of various other maladies were cured by the relics of St. Therapontus

The Holy Martyrs Pasicrates, Valentian, Julius and others - They were all Roman soldiers. They all suffered for Christ in Macedonian Dorostol about the year 302 A.D. When Pasicrates' brother Papian, who apostatized from Christ because of fear, began to persuade him to deny Christ and remain alive, St. Pasicrates answered him: "Depart from me, you are not my brother!" Pasicrates and Valentian were beheaded together. At the trial, St. Julius said: "I am a veteran; for twenty-six years I have faithfully served the emperor and since I was faithful to a lesser one, how can I not be faithful to a greater one?" i.e., to the Heavenly King. After that, Nicander was brought before Maximus the Perfect. Nicander's wife encouraged her husband to die for Christ. "Foolish old woman" Maximus said to her angrily, "You just want a better husband." The woman answered him: "If you think that of me, give the order and let them kill me now before my husband!" Marcian was also slain with Nicander. Marcian's wife approached the scaffold carrying her son in her arms. Marcian kissed his son and prayed to God: "O All-powerful Lord, You take care of him!" Following that, they were beheaded and were translated into the kingdom of Christ

St. Aldhelm, bishop of Sherbourne. - 639-709. Born in Wessex in England, he became a monk at Malmesbury and taught there. In 675 he became abbot and in 705 first Bishop of Sherbourne. Aldhelm was the first Englishman to attain distinction as a scholar

May 26 / June 8 — Holy Apostle Carpus - One of the Seventy, he was a follower and companion of the Apostle Paul, who installed him as Bishop of Varna in Thrace. But he also preached the Gospel in Crete, where he was host to St Dionysius the Areopagite. St Dionysius testifies that he was a man with an exceptionally pure mind, of great humility and guilelessness. He further relates how the Lord Jesus Himself appeared to Carpus in a vision with His angels, and how he never began the Liturgy without first receiving a heavenly vision. He endured many assaults for the name of Christ, and finally suffered at the hands of the faithless Jews and was murdered. His soul entered into the Kingdom of God, to delight forever in the vision of the Lord in glory; The Holy Apostle Alphaeus - the father of two of the Twelve Apostles: James the son of Alphaeus and Matthew the Evangelist. He entered peacefully into rest; Our Holy Father John of Psychaita ; The Holy New Martyr Alexander of Salonica; **St. Augustine of Canterbury, evangeliser of England (c.605)** — a native of Italy and a disciple of Felix, Bishop of Messina. He became prior of the Monastery of St Andrew on the Celian Hill in Rome, and was chosen by Saint Gregory the Great to lead a mission of forty monks to evangelise the Anglo-Saxon peoples of Britain. He arrived in 597A.D., landing at Ebbsfleet in Kent. He was given a guarded welcome by King Ethelbert, being allowed to centre his mission on the ancient church of St Martin in Canterbury. Subsequently he brought the pagan king to the Christian Faith, baptising him and many thousands of his people. He was consecrated Bishop by St Virgilius of Arles, built the first cathedral in Canterbury and founded the Monastery of Sts Peter and Paul there, which, now in ruins, is more commonly called St Augustine's. He was instrumental in founding the English dioceses at Rochester and London, consecrating Sts Justus and Mellitus as their bishops. He also helped the king draft the earliest Anglo-Saxon written laws and founded a school in Canterbury. He was known as a miracleworker in his lifetime, and he reposed in the Lord in the year 604 on 26th May. He was laid to rest near the as yet unfinished monastery Church of Sts Peter and Paul, and in 613 A.D., when it was dedicated, his sacred relics were placed within the church. Along with his Elder, the Pope St Gregory, he is rightly called the Apostle of the English. He was the founder of the English Church and hierarchy which remained Orthodox in faith and an integral part of the One Church founded by our Saviour for four and a half centuries. The many saints of that period are his spiritual children. Through his prayers may the Lord grant that those people of England who are now returning to the Apostolic and Orthodox faith receiving the one Baptism of the Church, might in this life and in the next be counted among that company of saints, the flock of St Augustine; Queen Bertha, apostle to the Anglo-Saxons at Kent.

May 27 / June 9 — The Hieromartyr Therapon, Bishop of Sardis - he brought many Greeks to the Christian faith and was cruelly persecuted by the pagans, being starved, imprisoned and flogged. They stripped him and threw him to the ground, bound him to four posts and beat him mercilessly, until they had stripped the flesh from his bones. However, the martyr still remained alive and the four dry posts became green and grew into tall trees from which many of the sick received healing. Finally St Therapon was slain like a lamb and entered into the Kingdom, to behold the glory of God in eternity. He suffered with honour in the time of Valerian, m about 259; The Holy Martyrs Theodora and Didymus; St David of Garesjei; **St. Bede the Venerable** - 673-735. Born in Wearmouth in the north of England, as a child he entered the monastery of Sts Peter and Paul at Wearmouth-Jarrow, and spent his whole life there, 'always praying, always writing, always reading, always teaching'. He wrote many commentaries on the Scriptures. His work The History of the English Church and People earned him the title of the Father of English History. He reposed on Ascension Eve and his dying words were Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

May 28 / June 10 — St Nicetas the Confessor, Bishop of Chalcedon - he renounced the world in his youth and withdrew to follow the path of monastic asceticism. He shone like the sun with virtue and came to the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities, being raised to the episcopal throne of Chalcedon. He was, as a hierarch, particularly compassionate to the poor and cared for many orphans, widows and beggars. When the wicked Emperor Leo the Armenian made his stand against the icons, St Nicetas came courageously to their defence, denouncing the Emperor and expounding their meaning. He was finally driven into exile for his confession of the Faith, and, after much hardship and suffering, went to the Lord to receive a wreath of glory in the Kingdom of God;

The Holy Martyr Heliconis - born in Thessalonica and was educated in Christian piety. During the reign of Gordian and Philip, she moved to Corinth where she openly denounced all those who offered sacrifices to the idols. When Perinus the mayor counselled her to offer a sacrifice to the idol Aesculapius, this martyr of Christ said to him: "Hear me, I am a handmaiden of Christ and who Aesculapius is, I do not know. Do with me what you will." For this, she was brought to trial and endured terrible tortures. She was cast into fire and much blood poured from her body which extinguished the fire and she remained alive. She was cast before lions but the lions did not touch her but fawned around her. Admitted into the temple, allegedly to offer sacrifices to the idols, she destroyed the idols, and by this, embittered the torturer even more. Lying wounded in prison, the Lord Himself appeared to her with the Archangels Michael and Gabriel. He healed her wounds, comforted and strengthened her. After that she was led to the scaffold to be beheaded. Before her beheading, Heliconis raised her arms high and prayed that God receive her and unite her with His lambs in the heavenly enclosure. When she completed her prayer, a voice was heard from heaven: "Come daughter, a wreath and a throne is prepared for you!" Finally, she was beheaded and received the wreath of glory from God to Whom, out of love, she sacrificed herself as an innocent and pure lamb;

St Ignatius,

Bishop of Rostov - As a hierarch, he governed the flock of Christ for twenty-six years with great love and compassion. When he died and as his body was being placed in church, some of those who were present witnessed as his body rose from the coffin into the air above the church and from the heights, he blessed the people and the to the Lord on May 28, 1288 A.D.; St. Germanus, bishop of Paris, St. William of Toulouse.

May 29 / June 11 — Commemoration of the First Ecumenical Council - the Commemoration and eulogy of the holy fathers of the First Ecumenical Council, which was held in Nicaea in 325 in the reign of Constantine the Great—held during the week before Pentecost, or the seventh week after Easter. It was summoned to remove the confusion which Arius, an Alexandrian priest, had created by his false teaching. He had been spreading the teaching that Christ was created from God in time, and that He is not the pre-eternal Son of God, equal in being with God the Father. Three hundred and eighteen holy fathers took part in this Council. It condemned the Arian teaching, and anathematised Arius when he would not repent. This Council also definitively confirmed the Symbol of Faith (the Creed) which was later amplified at the Second Ecumenical Council. Many bishops were present at the First Ecumenical Council, among whom the following stood out: St Nicolas of Myra in Lycia, St Spiridon, St Athanasius, St Acillius, St Paphnutius, St James of Nisibis, Macarius of Jerusalem, Alexander of Alexandria, Eustathius of Antioch, Eusebius of Caesarea, Mitrophanes of Constantinople, John of Persia, Aristarchus of Armenia and many others from the East. And from the West: Hosius of Cordova, Theophilus the Goth, Cecilianus of Carthage, and others. The most important work of this Council was the confirmation of the Symbol of Faith. The Council also confirmed the time of the celebration of Easter, and prescribed twenty Canons.

The Holy Martyr Theodosia of Tyre - One day during the reign of the Emperor Maximian, many Christians were standing bound before the Praetor in Palestinian Caesarea. The pious virgin Theodosia came to comfort them and encourage them in their death by martyrdom. The soldiers heard her words and brought her also before the judge. The enraged judge ordered that a stone be tied round her neck and that she be cast into the deep. But angels carried her up onto the shore alive. When she appeared before the judge again, he gave orders to have her beheaded. The following night, Theodosia appeared to her parents in the brightest heavenly light, surrounded by many other virgins, and said: 'Do you see how great is the glory and grace of my Christ, of which you wished to deprive me?' She spoke thus to her parents because they had turned back from confessing Christ and from martyrdom. She suffered with honour and was glorified in the year 308;

Our Holy Mother, the Martyr Theodosia - born as the result of the prayers of her mother to the holy martyr Anastasia who appeared to her and said that she will give birth. Her parents dedicated her to God and at an early age presented her to a convent. After the death of her parents, Theodosia inherited a vast estate, and from that estate, she ordered three icons from a goldsmith: The Savior, The Mother of God [The Theotokos] and St. Anastasia. The rest she distributed to the poor. She suffered in the year 730 A.D. during the reign of the evil Emperor Leo the Isaurian, the iconoclast, and received a two-fold wreath: virginity and martyrdom; St Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria; St John the Fool for Christ of Ustiug; The Holy Martyr Nannus (John) of Salonica; The Holy Martyr Andrew of Chios; The Fall-of Constantinople.

May 30 / June 12 — Our Holy Father Isaac the Confessor - in the time of the Emperor Valens, the Arians persecuted Orthodoxy fiercely with the Emperor's encouragement. Isaac, a hermit somewhere in the East, heard of the persecution, left his desert and went to Constantinople to encourage the faithful and denounce the heretics. Valens arrived in the north at that very time with his army, to meet the Goths who had come down from the Danube into Thrace. Isaac went out and stood before him, saying: 'Open the churches to those of the true Faith, O Emperor, and God will bless thy path', but the Emperor turned a deaf ear to the elder and went on his way. Isaac spoke out before the Emperor on the next day also, repeating his warning, and the Emperor almost hearkened to him, but one of his advisors, a follower of the Arian heresy, thwarted him. Isaac spoke before the Emperor again on the third day, seizing the Emperor's horse by the reins and pleading with him to grant freedom to the Church of God and to escape divine punishment by acceding to his request. The enraged Emperor ordered that the elder be thrown into a waste place full of thorns and mud, but three angels appeared and pulled him out of the swamp. St Isaac appeared before the Emperor on the fourth day, and foretold a terrible death if he did not give the Orthodox freedom: 'I tell thee, my Emperor, that thou shalt lead thy troops out upon the barbarians, but thou shalt not be able to withstand them. Thou shalt flee before them, but shalt thyself be taken captive and burned alive.' And so it all came to pass. The barbarians mowed the Greek force down like grass, and the Emperor fled with his Arian counsellor, and hid in a hamper. The barbarians arrived at the spot and realised where the Emperor was hiding. They surrounded the hamper and set fire to it, burning both the Emperor and his counsellor. The Emperor Theodosius the Great then came to the throne. He heard of Isaac and of the prophecy that had been fulfilled, and, sending for him, prostrated himself before him. And so peace came to reign in the Church and the Arians were banished. Isaac desired to return to his desert, but he was persuaded to remain in Constantinople. A certain influential citizen, Saturninus, built him a monastery where the elder laboured in asceticism until his death, performing many wonders. The community overflowed with monks and became a great monastery. Before his death, Isaac appointed a pupil of his, Dalmatus (after whom the monastery was later named), as abbot. The elder Isaac, who had found such favour with God, entered into eternity in the year 383, to rejoice forever in the vision of the face of God.;

St Macrina - the grandmother of St. Basil the Great. She was wonderful in mind and in her piety. She was a disciple of St. Gregory Neo-Caesarea the miracle worker. During the reign of Diocletian, Macrina abandoned her home and, with her husband Basil, hid themselves in the forests and wilderness. Their property was confiscated but they did not grieve over it. Deprived of everything except their love for God, they settled in a primeval forest where they spent seven years. By God's providence, goats descended from the mountains and offered themselves to them and so they were nourished. They both died peacefully in the fourth century following great suffering for the Faith of Christ.

May 31 / June 13 — The Holy Apostle Hermes - one of the Seventy, he is mentioned in the Epistle of St Paul to the Romans (16:14). A Greek by birth, he spent a long time in Rome. He was bishop in Philippoupolis, and finished his life a martyr. He compiled the very instructive book 'The Shepherd' through revelations from the angels of God. Hermes was a rich man, but fell into extreme poverty through his own sins and those of his sons. A man appeared to him, clad in white and with a staff in his hand, and told him that he was the angel of repentance, sent to him before the end of his life. The angel gave him twelve commandments: 1. To believe in God. 2. To live in simplicity and innocence. 3. To love truth and flee from falsehood. 4. To guard his thoughts in chastity. 5. To learn patience and magnanimity of soul. 6. To know that a good and an evil spirit attend every man. 7. To fear God, but not the devil. 8. To perform every good deed and to restrain himself from every evil one. 9. To pray to God in faith from the depths of his heart, so that his prayer might be heard. 10. To preserve himself from melancholy, the daughter of doubt, and from anger. 11. To try true and false prophecies. 12. To preserve himself from every evil desire;

The Holy Martyr Hermeas - Hermeas grew old as an imperial soldier and in his old age suffered for Christ the King. Since the evil judge tried in vain to dissuade him from the Faith of Christ and counseling him to offer sacrifices to the idols, the judge then gave orders that his teeth be knocked out with a stone and the skin peeled from his face with a knife. After that they threw him into a fiery furnace but, by the Grace of God, he was saved and stood up. Following that, by order of the judge he drank a bitter poison which was given to him by a magician, but the poison did him no harm. Witnessing this, the magician was so amazed that he openly confessed Christ for which he was immediately beheaded. Afterwards, they gouged out both of Hermeas' eyes but he did not grieve and cried out to the judge: "Take for yourself these bodily eyes that gaze upon the vanity of the world. I have eyes of the heart by which I clearly see the light of the truth." He was hung then by the feet upside down and those who did this to him were blinded and staggered around him. St. Hermeas beckoned them to come to him, laid his hands on them and, by prayer to the Lord, restored their sight. Witnessing all of this, the judge became as enraged as a lion, drew a knife and severed the head of this godly-man. Christians secretly removed the body of Hermeas and honorably buried it. His relics gave healing to all the sick and to the afflicted. St. Hermeas suffered in the year 166 A.D., during the reign of Emperor Antoninus;

The Holy Martyr Philosophus - This martyr of Christ was born in the vicinity of Alexandria. During the time of the persecution of Christians, St. Philosophus did not want to deny Christ the Lord before the pagan princes and judges. For that, the pagans subjected him to violent tortures. Since he was tortured in various ways, they finally placed him on a soft bed, tied his legs and hands and permitted an immoral woman to come to him and to lure him into sin. When St. Philosophus sensed that the sin of passion was being aroused in him from the touch of the woman's hand, he placed his tongue between his teeth, bit it off and spit it in the face of the depraved one. Because of that, the passion subsided in him and the immoral woman was so horrified that she immediately fled from him. He was beheaded after that about the year 252 A.D. in his youth and took up habitation in the kingdom of eternal youth.