

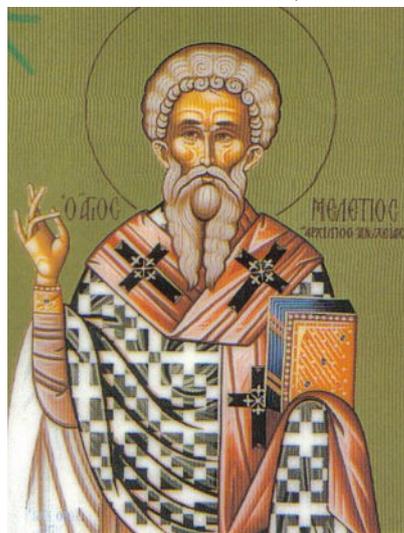
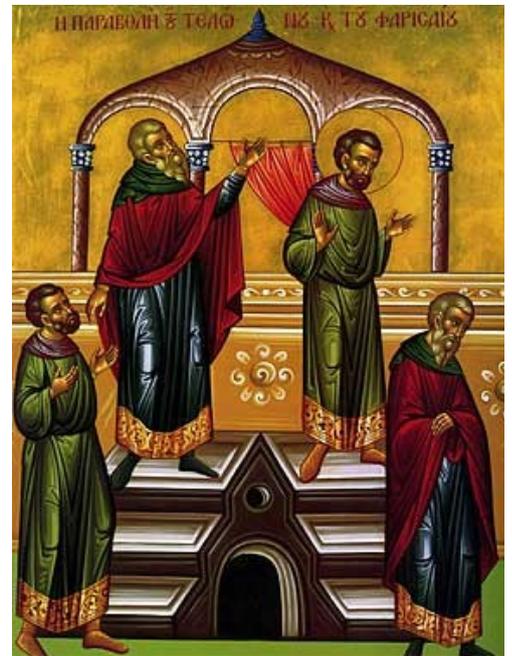
Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. St. Meletius, archbishop of Antioch, and St. Alexis, metropolitan of Moscow and wonderworker of all Russia.

12 / 25 February

Troparion of the Sunday, Tone V — 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.

Hymn to the Theotokos, Tone V — Rejoice, O impassable gate of the Lord! / Rejoice, O wall and protection of those who run to you! / Rejoice, O unshakable refuge! / Rejoice, O Virgin Mother of your God and Creator! / Do not cease praying for those who praise you and worship your Son. (1x) Blessed be the name of the Lord, henceforth and forever more.

Kontakion of the Sunday, Tone V — Thou didst descend into hell, O my Savior, / shattering its gates as almighty; / resurrecting the dead as Creator, / and destroying the sting of death. / Thou hast delivered Adam from the curse, O Lover of Man, / and we all cry to Thee: "O Lord, save us!"



St. Meletius, Patriarch of Antioch the Great, Troparion, Tone IV — The truth of things revealed thee to thy flock as a rule of faith, / a model of meekness and a teacher of abstinence / wherefore thou hast attained the heights through humility / and riches through poverty. // O hierarch Meletius our father, entreat Christ God that our souls be saved.

Kontakion, Tone VI — Fearing the boldness of thy spirit, / the apostate Macedonius fleeth; / but we, thy servants, celebrating a service of prayer to thee, / have recourse to thee with love, O Meletius, conversor with the angels, / fiery sword of Christ our God who cuttest down all the ungodly; // and we hymn thee as a beacon enlightening all.

St. Alexis, metropolitan of Moscow, Troparion, in Tone VIII — Hastening to thy precious shrine, O holy hierarch Alexis, divinely wise wonder-worker, assembling with love, we celebrate with splendor the memory of thee who art equally enthroned with the apostles, the all-good physician, the right pleasing servant; and we rejoice with songs and

hymns, glorifying Christ Who hath given thee such grace to heal and bestowed upon thy city so great a bulwark.

Another troparion, in Tone IV — Celebrating the memory of the all-blessed and holy hierarch Alexis, the careful preserver of the dogmas of the apostles, the shepherd and teacher of the Church of Russia, let us glorify with right fitting hymnody Christ our God Who hath given us His favored one as an abundant well-spring pouring forth healings, the boast and confirmation of the city of Moscow.

Kontakion, in Tone VIII, "To thee, the champion leader..." — O all ye people, hymning with faith the new wonder-worker Alexis, the godly and all-honorable hierarch of Christ, let us bless him with love, as a great pastor, an all-wise minister and teacher of the land of Russia. And hastening today to his memorial, let us joyfully give utterance to a hymn to the God-bearer: As thou hast boldness before God, deliver us from multifarious evil circumstances, that we may cry to thee: Rejoice, O confirmation of our city!

Matins Gospel V

After Matin Gospel, **Publican and the Pharisee, Troparion, Tone VIII** — Open to me the doors of repentance, O Life-giver. For my spirit rises early to pray towards Thy holy temple, bearing the temple of my body all defiled. But in Thy compassion, purify me by the loving kindness of Thy mercy.

Theotokion: Make straight for me the paths of salvation, O Mother of God. For I have profaned my soul with shameful sins, and have wasted my whole life in easy-going indifference. But by thy intercessions deliver me from all uncleanness.

Tone VI — Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of Thy compassions, blot out my transgression. When I think of the multitude of ghastly things I have done, wretch that I am, I tremble at the fearful day of Judgment. But trusting in the mercy of Thy loving kindness; like David I cry to Thee: Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy.

(Note: These penitential songs are sung on Sundays during the Great Fast from the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee to the fifth week.)

Epistle: II Timothy 3:10-15

10 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

ALL WHO DESIRE TO LIVE GODLY IN JESUS CHRIST WILL SUFFER PERSECUTION

True faith will be persecuted in this world. The Saviour Himself said this to His apostles clearly and publicly (Jn. 16:32). And St. Apollinarius of Hierapolis, writing against the Montanist heretics, asserts: 'Let them tell us, before God, who of all their prophets, beginning with Montanus and his wives, has been persecuted by the Jews and killed by the ungodly. No-one. Who among them has been arrested for the name of Christ, and crucified? Again, no-one ...Heresies are usually closer to the worldly and demonic spirit, and therefore the world and the demons do not persecute their own. To be constantly under persecution, with short breathing-spaces, is a distinguishing mark of the Faith and of the Orthodox Church. This persecution has existed throughout the whole of history, whether externally or internally; externally from unbelievers and internally from heretics.

The Lord Jesus both foretold this and showed it by His own example. And the apostles said it, and showed it by their own example. And all the God-bearing Fathers of the Church, and confessors and martyrs, said this, and showed it by their own example. Can we have any further doubt that it is by the narrow gate that one enters into the Kingdom of God? No; in this there is no foundation or justification for doubt. Can sheep live among wolves and not be molested by them? Can a candle burn among cross-draughts and not be bent to and fro? Can a fruit-tree grow on a high road and be left alone by passers-by? And so, can the Church of devout souls not be persecuted again and again - by pagans, by idol-worshippers, by heretics, by schismatics, by passions and vices, by sin and lawlessness, by the world and by demons? Thus, not one godly soul can remain without persecution, either external or internal, until it is parted from the body and from this world. Maybe someone will challenge this, and expound something different, according to his assessment and logic. But that would not help either the understanding or the logic of a single man. Thousands of those crucified have spoken otherwise; thousands of those burned by fire have cried otherwise; thousands of those beheaded have proved otherwise, and thousands of those drowned have testified otherwise. Oh, my brothers, the Christian faith is strong, not only when it is in accord with secular understanding and logic, but when (and even especially when) it is opposed to them. All who desire to live godly lives shall be persecuted. This the apostles foretold at the beginning of the Christian era, and twenty Christian centuries give a many-voiced echo, confirming the truth of this prophecy. O risen Lord, give us light that we may be godly to the end and strength that we may endure persecution likewise to the end. To Thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic, The Prologue, 27th April

For the Theotokos: Philippians 2:5-11

For the Saint: Hebrews 13:17-21

Gospel: Luke 18:10-14

10 Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not like other men— extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess. 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner! 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

God be merciful to me a sinner!

“Great Lent is preceded by three preparatory Sundays. The first preparatory Sunday of Great Lent is termed the “Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee”. This Sunday’s Gospel parable of the Publican & the Pharisee is read in order to demonstrate that only prayer with heartfelt tears & humility, like that of the publican, & not with a recounting of one’s virtues, like that of the Pharisee, can call down upon us the mercy of God. Starting with this Sunday & continuing until the fifth Sunday of Great Lent, following the reading of the Gospel, during the All-night Vigil, the contrite prayer is chanted, “The doors of repentance open unto me, O Giver of Life...”

Archpriest Seraphim Slobodsky, The Law Of God

And what then was the manner of their prayer? "The Pharisee, it says, prayed thus to himself. God, I thank You that I am not like the rest of mankind, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or as this publican." Many at once are the faults of the Pharisee: for first of all he is boastful, and without sense; for he praises himself, although the sacred Scripture cries aloud, "Let a neighbour praise you, and not your own mouth: a stranger and not your own lips." But, O excellent sir, one may well say to him, Behold, those who live in the practice of good and holy actions, as any one may see, are not very ready to listen to the words of flatterers: yes, and even if men extol them, they often are covered with shame, and drop their eyes to the ground, and beg silence of those that praise them. But this shameless Pharisee praises and extols himself because he is better than extortioners, and the unjust, and adulterers. But how did it escape your notice, that a man's being better than the bad does not necessarily and of course prove him to be worthy of admiration: but that to vie with those who habitually excel, is a noble and honourable thing, and admits a man into the number of those who are justly praised.

Our virtue therefore must not be contaminated with fault, but must be single-minded and blameless, and free from all that can bring reproach. For what profit is there in fasting twice in the week, if your so doing serve only as a pretext for ignorance and vanity, and make you supercilious and haughty, and selfish? You tithe your possessions, and make a boast thereof: but you in another way provoke God's anger, by condemning men generally on this account, and accusing others; and you are yourself puffed up, though not crowned by the divine decree for righteousness, but heap, on the contrary, praises upon yourself. "For I am not, he says, as the rest of mankind." Moderate yourself, O Pharisee: "put a door to your tongue, and a lock." You speak to God Who knows all things. Await the decree of the Judge. None of those skilled in the practice of wrestling ever crowns himself: nor does any man receive the crown of himself, but awaits the summons of the arbiter. Lower your pride: for arrogance is both accursed and hated by God. Although therefore you fast with puffed up mind, your so doing will not avail you: your labour will be unrewarded; for you have mingled dung with your perfume. Even according to the law of Moses a sacrifice that had a blemish was not capable of being offered to God: for it was said unto him, "Of sheep, and ox, that is offered for sacrifice, there must be no blemish therein." Since therefore your fasting is accompanied by pride, you must expect to hear God saying, "This is not the fast that I have chosen, says the Lord." You offer tithes: but you wrong in another way Him Who is honoured by you, in that you condemn men generally. This is an act foreign to the mind that fears God: for Christ even said, "Judge not, and you shall not be judged: condemn not, and you shall not be condemned." And one also of His disciples said, "There is one Lawgiver, and Judge: why then do you judge your neighbour?" No man because he is in health ridicules one who is sick for being laid up and bedridden: rather he is afraid, lest perchance he become himself the victim of similar sufferings. Nor does any man in battle, because another has fallen, praise himself for having escaped from misfortune. For the infirmity of others is not a fit subject for praise for those who are in health: nay, even if any one be found of more than usually vigorous health, even then scarcely does he gain glory thereby. Such then was the state of the self-loving Pharisee.

But what of the publican? He stood, it says, "afar off," not even venturing, so to speak, to raise up his eyes on high. You see him abstaining from all boldness of speech, as having no right thereto, and smitten by the reproaches of conscience: for he was afraid of being even seen by God, as one who had been careless of His laws, and had led an unchaste and dissolute life. You see also that by his external manner, he accuses his own depravity. For the foolish Pharisee stood there bold and broad, lifting up his eyes without scruple, bearing witness of himself, and boastful. But the other feels shame at his conduct: he is afraid of his Judge, he smites upon his breast, he confesses his offences, he shows his malady as to the Physician, he prays that he may have mercy. And what is the result? Let us hear what the Judge says, "This man, He says, went down to his house justified rather than the other."

Let us therefore "pray without ceasing," according to the expression of the blessed Paul: but let us be careful to do so aright. The love of self is displeasing to God, and He rejects empty haughtiness and a proud look, puffed up often on account of that which is by no means excellent. And even if a man be good and sober, let him not on this account suffer himself to fall away into shameful pride: but rather let him remember Christ, Who says to the holy apostles, "When you have done all those things, those namely which have been commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do." For we owe unto God over all, as from the yoke of necessity, the service of slaves, and ready obedience in all things. Yes, though you lead an excellent and elect life, don't exact wages from the Lord; but rather ask of Him a gift. As being good, He will promise it you: as a loving Father, He will aid you. Restrain not yourself then from saying, "God be merciful to me the sinner." Remember Him Who says by the voice of Isaiah, "Declare you your sins first, that you may be justified:" remember too that He rebukes those who will not do so, and says, "Behold, I have a judgment against you, because you say 'I have not sinned'." Examine the words of the saints: for one says, "The righteous is the accuser of himself in the beginning of his words." And another again, "I said, I will confess against myself my transgression unto the Lord: and you forgave the iniquity of my heart."

What answer then will those make to this, who embrace the new tenets of Novatus, and say of themselves that they are pure? Whose prayer do they praise? That of the Pharisee, who acquitted himself, or that of the Publican, who accused himself? If they say that of the Pharisee, they resist the divine sentence; for he was condemned as being boastful: but if that of the Publican, why do they refuse to acknowledge their own impurity? Certainly God justifies those who know well their transgressions, and are willing to confess them: but these men will have the portion of the Pharisee.

We then say, that in many things we "all of us offend," and that no man is pure from uncleanness, even though his life upon earth be but one day. Let us ask then of God mercy; which if we do, Christ will justify us: by Whom and with Whom, to God the Father, be praise and dominion, with the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever, Amen.

St. Cyril of Alexandria. Commentary on the Gospel of Saint Luke, Homily 120.

For the Theotokos: Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28

For the Saint: Luke 6:17-23

Saints of the week

Fast Free Week



12 / 25 February — Iveron Icon (Moscow) of the Most Holy Theotokos -

During the reign of Emperor Theophilus (829-842) the Byzantine Empire raged with the heresy of iconoclasm. In accordance with the emperor's command, thousands of soldiers pillaged the empire, searching every corner, city, and village for hidden icons.

Near the city of Nicaea there lived a certain pious widow who had concealed an icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. Before long the soldiers discovered it, and one of them thrust his spear into the image.

But by God's grace his terrible deed was overshadowed by a miracle: blood flowed forth from the wound on the face of the Mother of God. The frightened soldiers quickly fled. The widow spent the whole night in vigil, praying before the icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. In the morning,

according to God's will, she took the icon to the sea and cast it upon the water. The holy icon stood upright on the waves and began to sail westward.

Time passed, and one evening the monks of the Iveron Monastery on Mt. Athos beheld a pillar of light, shining upon the sea like the sun (ca. 1004). The miraculous image lasted several days, while the fathers of the Holy Mountain gathered together, marveling. Finally they descended to the edge of the sea, where they beheld the pillar of light standing above the icon of the Theotokos. But when they approached it, the icon moved farther out to sea. At that time a Georgian monk named Gabriel was laboring at the Iveron Monastery. The Theotokos appeared to the fathers of the Holy Mountain and told them that Gabriel alone was worthy to retrieve the holy icon from the sea. At the same time, she appeared to Gabriel and told him, "Enter the sea, and walk out upon the waves with faith, and all will witness my love and mercy for your monastery."

The monks of Mt. Athos found Gabriel at the Georgian monastery and led him down to the sea, chanting hymns, and censuring with holy incense. Gabriel walked out upon the water as though upon dry land, took the icon in his arms, and obediently carried it back to shore. This miracle occurred on Bright Tuesday.

While the monks were celebrating a paraklesis of thanksgiving, a cold, sweet spring miraculously gushed forth from the ground where the icon stood. Afterwards they took the icon to a church and set it down in the sanctuary with great reverence. But the next morning one of the monks came to light a lamp and discovered that the icon was no longer where they had left it; now it was hanging on a wall near the entrance gate. The disbelieving monks took it down and returned it to the sanctuary, but the next day the icon was again found at the monastery gate. This miracle recurred several times, until the Most Holy Virgin appeared to Gabriel, saying, "Announce to the brothers that from this day they should not carry me away. For what I desire is not to be protected by you; rather I will overshadow you, both in this life and in the age to come. As long as you see my icon in the monastery, the grace and mercy of my Son shall never be lacking!"

Filled with exceeding joy, the monks erected a small church near the monastery gate to glorify the Most Holy Theotokos and placed the wonder-working icon inside. The holy icon came to be known as the "Iveron Mother of God" and, in Greek, Portaitissa. By the grace of the miraculous Iveron Icon of the Theotokos, many miracles have taken place and continue to take place throughout the world.

St. Meletius, archbishop of Antioch - Meletius, this great and holy man, was an exceptional interpreter and protector of Orthodoxy. His entire life was dedicated in a struggle against the Arian heresy which did not recognize the Son of God as god and blasphemed the Holy Trinity. On three occasions, Meletius was banished and exiled from his archepiscopal throne to Armenia. The struggle between the Orthodox and the heretics was waged so bitterly that on one occasion, when St. Meletius was preaching to the people in Church concerning the Holy Trinity in unity, his personal deacon, a heretic, raced toward him and covered his mouth with his hand. Not being able to speak with his mouth covered, Meletius spoke in signs. Namely, he raised his clenched hand in the air, opening at first his three fingers and showed them to the people. After that, he closed his hand and raised up one finger. He participated in the Second Ecumenical Council [Constantinople 381 A.D.], where Emperor Theodosius showed him special honor. At this Council, God revealed a miracle through His hierarch. Namely, when Meletius was propounding the dogma of the Holy Trinity to Arius, at first he only raised three fingers, separately one by one, and after that folded them into one. At that moment, before all those present, a light shown like lightening from his hand. At this Council Meletius confirmed Gregory the Theologian on the patriarchal throne in Constantinople. Earlier, however, Meletius had ordained Basil the Great to the deaconate and baptized John Chrysostom. After the close of the Council, St. Meletius completed his earthly life in Constantinople. His relics were translated to Antioch.

St. Alexis, metropolitan of Moscow - Alexis was a great hierarch of the Russian Church at the time of the burdensome bondage of the Russian people under the Tartars. Once as a child, he was hunting birds and, asleep in a dream, he heard a voice: "Alexis, why do you labor in vain? I will make you a fisherman of men." At age twenty he was tonsured a monk and in time became the Metropolitan of Moscow. Twice he went among the "golden horde" of the Tartars: the first time to mitigate the wrath of Khan Verdevir against the Russian people and the second time, at the invitation of the Khan Amurat, to heal his wife of blindness. She was blind for three years but her sight was restored when Alexis prayed over her and anointed her with holy water. Following a very laborious and fruitful life, Alexis died in the year 1378 A.D. in his eighty-fifth year and took up habitation in the courts of the Lord.

The Venerable Maria - Maria was a young woman with indomitable courage. After the death of her mother, her father desired the monastic tonsure. Maria did not wish to be separated from her father and they both agreed to journey to a monastery for monks: Maria with cropped hair and in masculine attire, appeared as a young man. Her father died and Maria was tonsured a monk and received the name Marius. In the proximity of the monastery, there was an inn and the daughter of the innkeeper was attracted to Marius, the alleged monk. After unsuccessfully pursuing Marius, the innkeeper's daughter

accused Marius of illicit sexual relations with her, for she had become pregnant with someone else and had given birth to a son. Maria did not defend herself and was banished from the monastery with ridicule. With someone else's child in her arms, Maria lived for three years in a grove belonging to the monastery enduring hunger, frost and every difficulty and deprivation. Meanwhile, the innkeeper's daughter went insane and soon after that Maria also died. Only after her death was it discovered that the "monk Marius" was a woman. The deranged daughter of the innkeeper, as soon as she touched the body of St. Maria, was healed and after that acknowledged her terrible sin. St. Maria died and took up habitation in eternal joy in the year 508 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: New Martyr Mitrophan, archpriest (1931). St. Anthony II, patriarch of Constantinople (895). Saint Meletios of Lardos, Founder of Ypseni Monastery (19th c.). Venerable Bassian, disciple of St. Paisius of Uglich and abbot of Ryabovsky Forest Monastery, Uglich (1509). Callia, righteous. Venerable Gertrude of Nijvel, abbess (659) (Neth.). St. Ethilwald of Lindisfarne (740) (Celtic & British). New Martyr Chrestos at Constantinople (1748) (Greek). Martyrs Saturnius and Plotonus (Greek). Hieromartyr Urbanus, bishop of Rome (223-230). Holy Fathers Prokhore the Georgian (11th c.), Luka (Mukhaidze) of Jerusalem (1277), NikolozDvali (1314), and the Holy Fathers of the Georgian Monasteries in Jerusalem (Georgia).

13 / 26 February — Our Holy Father Martinian - The life of this saint is wonderful beyond measure and is worth reading in full. What did he not endure to fulfil the Law of God? At the age of eighteen, he went off into a mountain in Cappadocia called the Ark and there spent 25 years in fasting, vigils and prayer, and struggling with manifold temptations. When a woman came to tempt him and he saw that he would fall into sin with her, he leapt barefoot into the fire and stood in it until the pain brought forth tears from his eyes and he had killed all lust within himself. When other temptations arose, he fled to a lonely rock in the sea and lived there. When, though, in a shipwreck, a woman swam to the rock, he leapt into the sea intending to drown himself. But a dolphin took him upon its back and brought him, by God's providence, to the shore. He then decided to make nowhere his permanent home but to travel incessantly. Thus he passed through 164 towns in two years, exhorting and advising the people. He finally arrived in Athens, where he died in 422.

The Venerable Simeon the Myrrh-gusher, prince of Serbia - Stefan Nemanja [Nehemiah], the great ruler [Great Zhupan] of the Serbian people, the consolidator of Serbian lands, creator of the independent Serbian state, defender of Orthodoxy and exterminator of heresy. At first, he was baptized in the Latin Church but later left this Church and embraced the Orthodox Church. In the beginning, he was dependent on the Greeks with regard to the State, but later he freed himself from this dependence and became completely autonomous. When Stefan consolidated the State and the Orthodox Faith in the State, then, following the example of his son Sava, received the monastic tonsure in Studenica Monastery in the year 1195 A.D., and received the name Simeon. His wife Anna withdrew to a convent, embraced the monastic tonsure and received the name Anastasia. After two years as a monk in Studenica, Simeon traveled to Athos, the Holy Mountain. There he took up residence in the Monastery Vatopedi together with his son Sava. Father and son spend their days and nights in prayer. There, they built six chapels dedicated to: the Savior, The Unmercenary Saints, St. George, St. Theodore, The Forerunner and St. Nicholas. They purchased the ruins of Hilendar and erected a glorious monastery in which Simeon lived only eight months and then died. When Simeon was on his deathbed, Sava, according to his father's wishes, placed him on a simple mat. With eyes directed toward the icon of the Mother of God and the Savior, the blessed elder spoke these last words: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." (Psalm 150:6), and took up habitation with the Lord on February 13, 1200 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: New Hieromartyrs Basil and Gabriel priests (1919). New Hieromartyr Silvester (Olshevsky) bishop of Omsk and Pavlodar (1920). New Hieromartyrs Zosimas, Nicholas, Basil, John, Leontius, Vladimir, Parthenius, John, John, Michael priests and Eugene deacon, and Martyr Paul, Virgin-martyrs Anna, Vera and Irina (1938). Blessed Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev) of Bogucharsk (1950). The holy woman Zoe of Bethlehem and Virgin Photina (5th c.). Venerable Eulogius, archbishop of Alexandria (607-608). Synaxis of All Saints of Omsk Metropolia. St. Martin the Merciful. St. Modomnoc, bishop of Ossory (6th c.) (Celtic & British). Apostle and Martyr Aquila, and Priscilla (Greek). St. Timothy, patriarch of Alexandria (385). St. Joseph of Volokolamsk (1515). St. Castor of Karden, hieromonk and missionary (Germany) St. Ermenhilda, abbess of Ely. St. Huna, priest-monk of Huneya. Translation of the relics of St. Edward the Martyr, King of England.

14 / 27 February — St. Cyril, Equal-to-the-Apostles, Teacher of the Slavs - brother of Methodius, originally from Salonica of eminent and wealthy parents, Leo and Maria. When the Khazarite king, Kagan, sought preachers of the Christian faith from the Emperor Michael, the Emperor commanded that these two brothers be found and sent to the Khazars. They converted Kagan and baptised him together with a great number of nobles and an even greater number of the people. After some time they compiled

a Slavic alphabet of 38 letters and began to translate the service books from Greek to Slavonic . At the invitation of Prince Rastislav they went to Moravia, where, with great devotion, they spread and confirmed the Faith. They went to Rome at the invitation of the Pope and Cyril fell ill and died there in 869. Our Holy Father Auxentius; Our Holy Father Isaac the Recluse of the Kiev Caves.

Venerable Auxentius - Auxentius was a very prominent aristocrat among the noblemen and courtiers at the court of Emperor Theodosius the Younger in Constantinople. Enflamed with love for Christ, Auxentius was tonsured a monk and remained for a short time in Constantinople. When men began to praise him, he fled from their praise and settled on a mountain called Skopa near Chalcedon, which later was referred to as Auxentius' Mountain. His desire to remain there permanently, hidden from men, was not realized for some shepherds discovered him and made his whereabouts known. They began to bring the sick to him for healing. He healed many. He restored sight to the blind; cleansed lepers anointing them with oil; he also raised the palsied and freed many who were demon possessed. All of this was reason for amazement, but his humbleness was cause for even greater amazement. Whenever he was implored to heal someone he defended himself with the words: "I, also, am a sinful man!" Compelled by many requests, he approached healing in the following manner: he either invited all present to pray to God together with him for the sick person; or he first strengthened the faith in the people and then he told them that God will give

to them according to their faith; or he prayed over the head of the sick person: "The Lord Jesus Christ heals you!" He did this so that the act of working miracles would not be attributed to him but rather to God Almighty. He participated at the Fourth Ecumenical Council [Chalcedon, 451 A.D.] and strongly defended Orthodoxy against the Eutychian and Nestorian heresies. In the year 470 A.D., the Lord took his youthful soul in his old age and his aged body remained in the earth from which it was created.

Venerable Issac, recluse of the Kiev Caves - Issac lived during the time of Saints Anthony and Theodosius. He came to the monastery as a wealthy merchant. He left all and distributed everything to the poor and dedicated himself to the most strict form of asceticism in an enclosed cell. St. Anthony himself passed one prosfora through an opening every other day. Deluded by demons who appeared to him in angelic light he bowed down to them and, after that, he bowed down before Satan himself believing that he was Christ. Because of that he became ill, and remained ill for two years after which he regained his health and became a more cautious and a more experienced ascetic. Because of this, before his death, God bestowed upon him abundant Grace. He died in the year 1090 A.D.]

Also commemorated on this day: St. Raphael, bishop of Brooklyn (1915). New Hieromartyr Onisimus bishop of Tula (1937). New Hieromartyr Tryphon deacon (1938). 12 Greek Master-Builders of the Dormition Cathedral in the Lavra of the Kievian Caves (11th C). Translation of the relics of Prince-martyr Michael and his counselor, St. Theodore of Chernigov (1578). Venerable Maron, hermit of Syria (423). St. Abraham, bishop of Charres in Mesopotamia (ca. 423). St. Ilarion the Georgian of Imeretia and Mt. Athos (1854) (Georgia). Hieromartyr Philemon, bishop of Gaza. New Martyr George the Tailor of Mitylene, at Constantinople (1693) (Greek). New Martyr Nicholas of Corinth (1554) (Greek). St. Peter, patriarch of Alexandria (380). New Monk-martyr Damian the New of Philotheou, who suffered at Larissa (1568)

15 / 28 February — Apostle Onesimus of the Seventy (ca 109) - He was a slave of Philemon, a rich and distinguished citizen of Colossae in Phrygia. He offended his master in some way and fled to Rome, where he heard the Gospel from the Apostle Paul and was baptised. By this time, Paul had brought Philemon also to the true Faith, and he reconciled the two of them, Philemon and Onesimus, master and slave, writing a special epistle to Philemon—one of the most moving writings to be found in the New Testament: 'I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds . . . Perhaps he departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever, not now as a servant, but above a servant; a brother beloved.' Deeply moved by this letter, Philemon received Onesimus as a brother indeed and gave him his freedom. Onesimus was later made bishop and received the see of Ephesus after the death of the Apostle Timothy. This is recorded in the epistles of Ignatius the God-Bearer. At the time of the persecution under Trajan, Onesimus, by then an old man, was arrested and taken to Rome. There he testified before the judge Tertylus, was imprisoned and finally slain. A wealthy woman took his body, placed it in a silver coffin and buried it, in the year 109.

Also commemorated on this day: New Hieromartyrs Michael Piataev and John Kumin priests (1930). New Hieromartyrs Nicholas, Alexis, Alexis priests, Simeon deacon, New Hieromartyr Paul and Virgin-martyr Sophia (1938). Venerable Paphnutius, recluse of the Kiev Caves (13th c). Venerable Paphnutius, monk, and his daughter St. Euphrosyne, nun, of Alexandria (5th c.). Venerable Eusebius, hermit of Syria (440). "Vilensk" (transferred to Vilnius in 1495) and "Dalmatian" (1646) Icons of the Mother of God. Venerable Dalmatus, abbot and founder of the Dormition Monastery in Siberia (1697). Martyr Major of Gaza (304). St. Oswy, king of Northumbria (670) (Celtic & British). Venerable Anthimus of Chios (1960) (Greek). Synaxis of St. John the Theologian at Diaconissa. St. Theognius, bishop of Bethelia near Gaza (523).

16 / 29 February — TWELVE HOLY MARTYRS WHO SUFFERED DURING THE REIGN OF EMPEROR DIOCLETIAN - Pamphilus, the first of the martyrs, was a presbyter of the church at Caesarea in Palestine. He was a learned and devout man who corrected the text of the New Testament from the errors of the various copiers. He alone, recopied this salvific book and gave it to those who desired it. The second was the Deacon Valentine, old in years and grey in wisdom. He was an excellent authority of Holy Scripture and knew them completely by heart. The third was Paul, an honourable and distinguished man who, during a previous persecution, was cast into the fire for Christ. Besides them, there were five brothers, according to the flesh and spirit, who were born in Egypt and were returning to their homeland after being forced to work in the mines of Cilicia. At the gates of Caesarea they declared that they were Christians for which they were brought to court. To the question: "What are your names?" They responded: "The pagan names which our mother gave to us, we discarded and we call ourselves: Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Samuel and Daniel." To the question: "Where are you from?" They responded: "From Jerusalem on High." All of them were beheaded and with them a young man Porphyrius who sought the bodies of the martyrs in order to bury them. Porphyrius they burned alive as well as Seleucus, formerly an officer who had approached and kissed the martyrs before the sword fell on their heads. Also the aged Theodulus, a servant of a Roman judge, who, during the funeral kissed one of the martyrs. Finally Julian, who revered and praised the lifeless bodies of the martyrs. And so they gave little for much, the inexpensive for the precious and mortality for immortality and took up habitation with the Lord in the year 308 A.D.

The Holy Venerable Martyr Roman - A simple and illiterate peasant from Carpenesion. Learning of the heroism and glory of the martyrs of Christ, the young Roman desired martyrdom for himself. He went to Thessalonica where he began to praise the Faith of Christ on the streets and referred Islam as a fable. The Turks tortured him horribly and then sold him to a galley captain. Christians ransomed him from the captain and sent him to the Holy Mountain [Athos] where he was tonsured a monk by the illustrious Elder Acacius. But Roman further desired martyrdom for Christ. With the blessing of the Elder Acacius, Roman traveled to Constantinople pretending insanity and began to lead a dog along the Turkish streets. To the question: "What are you doing?" Roman responded that he is feeding the dog as Christians feed the Turks. The Turks threw him into a dry well, where he remained without bread for forty days. They then removed him from the well and beheaded him. A light emanated from his body for three days. An Englishman removed his body and took it to England. A certain monk dipped a towel in the blood of the martyr. This towel is preserved, even today, in the Dochiariu Monastery [Mt. Athos]. This glorious soldier of Christ suffered in the year 1694 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: St. Macarius, metropolitan of Moscow, apostle to the Altai (1926). Synaxis of All Saints of Novosibirsk Metropolia. New Hieromartyrs Priests Elias Chetverukhin (1934) of Moscow and Peter Lagov (1931). New Hieromartyr Paul priest (1938). Venerable Marutha, bishop of Sophene and Martyropolis, and others with him in Mesopotamia (422). St. Flavian, Archbishop of Antioch (381-404). St. Mary the New of Byzia in Thrace (9th c.). St. Basil Gryaznov of Pavlovo-Posadsky (1869).

17 February / 1 March — St. Theodore the Tyro - 'Tyro' means 'Recruit'. No sooner had St Theodore entered the Marmarite regiment of the army in the town of Amasea than a persecution of Christians broke out under the Emperors Maximian and Maximinus. Theodore did not attempt to conceal that he was a Christian, and was brought to trial and imprisoned in a prison that was then locked and sealed. The wicked judge intended him to die of hunger, but the Lord Christ Himself appeared to Theodore in the prison and encouraged His martyr with these words: 'Fear not, Theodore; I am with thee. Take no more earthly food and drink, for thou shalt be in the other life, eternal and unending, with Me in heaven.' Then a multitude of angels appeared in the prison, and the whole place shone with light. The warders on duty saw the angels in white apparel and were filled with fear. Then St Theodore was taken out, tortured and condemned to death. He was thrown into fire, and gave his soul to the most high God. He suffered in 306.

St. Finan, bishop of Lindisfarne - Irish by birth, St. Finan of Lindisfarne became a monk at Iona and upheld the Celtic traditions against the encroachment of Roman usage. Finan baptised Penda, ruler of the Middle Angles, and Sigebert, ruler of Essex. Elected bishop of Lindisfarne in 651, Finan sent missionaries to Mercia and to Essex. He also debated Ronan, an Englishman, about the correct way to calculate the date of Easter. On the Holy Island, he built a wooden cathedral, the roof of which was thatched with seagrass. (A later abbot removed the thatching and covered the building with lead). Finan died in 661, and St. Cuthbert succeeded him as abbot.

Also commemorated on this day: St. Hermogenes, patriarch of Moscow and all Russia (1612). St. Nicholas (Planas), priest in Athens (1932). New Hieromartyrs Michael, Paul priests (1938). Virgin-martyr Anna (1940). Venerable Theodore the Silent of the Kiev Caves (13th c.). St. Mariamne, sister of Apostle Philip (1st c.). Uncovering of the relics (867-869) of Martyr Menas the Melodius of Alexandria (ca. 313). St. Auxibius, bishop of Soli in Cyprus (102) (Greek).

New Martyr Theodore of Byzantium, at Mitylene (1795) (Greek). Emperor Marcian (457) and Pulcheria, his wife (453), and the commemoration of the dedication of the Great Church in Constantinople (Greek). Venerable Theodosius the Bulgarian and his disciple Venerable Romanus, monks, of Turnovo (1362) (Bulgaria). New Martyr Michael Mavroeidis of Adrianople (1490). Holy Hieromartyr Theodore of Adjara, who suffered under the Turks on Mt. Athos (19th c.) (Georgia). St. Barnabas, elder of the Gethsemane Skete of St. Sergius Lavra (1906).

18 February / 2 March — The "Holy Night" of Russian Monasticism. The 'Holy Night', so called by the people, was on the night of the 17-18 February, 1932. It is a radiant yet terrible date, the Passion Friday of Russian Monasticism - ignored by all and almost unknown to the whole world - when all of Russian monasticism in a single night disappeared in to the concentration camps. It was all done in the dead of night and with the full knowledge of Metropolitan Alexis (later appointed Patriarch Alexis I of Moscow under the Communists) - about which there is sufficient evidence. In Leningrad there were arrested: 40 monks of the St Alexander Nevsky Lavra; 12 monks of the Kiev metochion (the other monks had all been arrested in 1930); 10 monks from the Valaam metochion; 90 nuns of the Novodevichi Convent; 16 nuns of Abbess Taisia's Leushinsky metochion; 12 monks from St Theodore's Cathedral; 8 monks from the "Kinovia" of the St Alexander Nevsky Lavra's "Big Okhotko"; a hundred or so monastics from various other Leningrad churches. In all - 318 people. That same night all the monks and brethren of the St Macarius the Roman Monastery were arrested and brought to Leningrad as vicious criminals whose very presence was a threat to society; they were treated as deadly insects whose presence must be stamped out. The wave of arrests, like thunder, rolled over the Russian land, striking chiefly the monastic population which so recently had been the glorious guardian of the nation's morals and values. It also struck many of the white (parish) clergy and laymen who, in one way or another, were close in spirit to monasticism. For example, the flaming sermons of the parish priest Father Alexander Medvedsky were the cause of his arrest. All were sent to the Kazakhstan region from where almost no one ever returned.

Papa-Nicholas Planas - was born on the island of Naxos, the only son of a well-to-do family. He moved to Athens with his mother and sister at the age of 14 following the death of his father. He married at the age of 17, but his wife died giving birth to their first child. Soon afterwards, in 1879, he was ordained a deacon, and five years later, a priest. For fifty years without a break he celebrated liturgy daily from eight in the morning till three in the afternoon. His joy and his life was to celebrate Liturgies, Vigils, Vespers, Canons, Blessings of the Waters, Holy Unction, and Memorial Services. Many times he would say with simplicity, "I will chant unto the Lord for as long as I have my being". He was a great faster, eating only once a day, in the evenings. He would commemorate names for hours on end - sometimes 2000 at a time. First deceased patriarchs, metropolitans, priests, deacons, monastics, and the people of Naxos & Athens. He would tie the lists of names into a big bundle and carry them close to his heart. He was patient & long-suffering, enduring all manner of trials and insults. He quietly observed the Old Calendar and the ways of True Orthodox Christianity. He had no attachment to earthly things, and passed his whole life without acquiring anything. There were many miraculous occurrences during his life, as those close to him have testified, and there are many reports of healings through his prayers and contact with his relics after his repose. He reposed in February 1932 at the age of 81, following a short illness. He shines forth as one of the great saints of the 20th Century. Holy Papa-Nicholas, pray for us!
Tropar of Papa-Nicholas Planas, Tone 5: Let us praise our protector, the godly Nicholas; as one endowed with blest virtue, he shone forth as a true priest of the Most High God, and was his fervent worshipper. For, by his holy life on earth, he hath left us most sublime, divine and unfailing teachings of long suffering, meekness, patience, unfeigned humility and true God-like love.
Kondak of Papa-Nicholas Planas, Tone 3: Humble of spirit and pure of heart, illustrious in life and dispassionate of a truth, wast thou, O wise one. Thou didst illumine all by thy virtues and dost grant grace unto them that draw nigh unto thee; and by thine intercessions, thou dost heal them that call upon thee, O Father Nicholas.

St. Colman, bishop. of Lindisfarne - An Irish bishop of Lindisfarne, England, a disciple of St. Columba. He was born in Connaught, Ireland. At the Synod of Whitby Colman defended the Celtic ecclesiastical practices against St. Wilfrid and St. Agilbert.

Also commemorated on this day: St. Leo the Great, pope of Rome (461). New Hieromartyrs Alexander (Medvedsky) (1932) priest and Benjamin hieromonk (1938). New Hieromartyr Vladimir priest (1933). Virgin-martyr Anna (1940). Venerable Cosmas, monk, of Yakhromsk (1492). St. Agapitus, bishop of Synnada in Phrygia (4th c.). St. Flavian the Confessor, patriarch of Constantinople (449). Martyrs Victor, Dorotheus, Theodulus, and Agrippa, who suffered under Licinius (4th c.). Martyrs Leo and Parigorius of Patara of Lycia (258) (Greek). St. Blaise, monk of Mt. Athos (9th c.). Finding of relics (1961) of New Martyr Irene of Lesbos (1463).

‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡

Monday - 2 Peter 1:20-2:9; Mark 13:9-13

Tuesday - 2 Peter 2:9-22; Mark 13:14-23

Wednesday - 2 Peter 3:1-18; Mark 13:24-31

Thursday - 1 John 1:8-2:6; Mark 13:31-14:2

Friday - 1 John 2:7-17; Mark 14:3-9

Saturday - 2 Timothy 3:1-9; Luke 20:46-21:4

HYMN OF PRAISE

TO THE HOLY MARTYRS

*Martyrs of Christ, flowers bountiful,
Which will never and forever not fade away.
Martyrs of Christ, an evergreen living in the winter,
You who stretched toward heaven stained with blood,
Martyrs of Christ, aromas of incense,
And the votive light of oil, illumined by God.
You ran the race for the beauty of Christ
In Paradise, met with Christ forever.
The world will be and then cease to be and you will always be
With the Lord in Paradise, to rejoice eternally.*

Words of Wisdom

Afflictions bring blessings to men: self esteem and sensual pleasure evil. To accept an affliction for God's sake is a genuine act of holiness; for true love is tested by adversities. Without affliction virtue has not been tested. Consider the outcome of every voluntary affliction, and you will find it has been the destruction of sin. Accept present afflictions for the sake of future blessings and you will never weaken in your struggle. Do not think that every affliction is a consequence of sin. For there are some who do God's will and yet are tested. He who does not choose to suffer for the sake of truth will be chastened more painfully by suffering he has not chosen.

St. Mark the Ascetic. On the Spiritual Law, Texts 42, 65, 66, 67, 156, 174, 187. B#9.

Available on the net at <http://www.saintjonah.org/bltn/> or at <http://www.roq.org.au/bulletins.html> where you can subscribe to the email list.