



## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

### St Sergius of Radonezh

5 / 18 July

**Resurrection Tropar, Tone 3:** Let the heavens rejoice / let the earth be glad / for the Lord has shown strength with His arm! / He has trampled down death by death! / He has become the first-born of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell / and has granted the world great mercy.

**Troparion of St Sergius tone 8:** From thy youth thou didst love Christ, O Saint, and desire to leave behind thee the tumult of the world./ Thou didst bravely settle in the wilderness and thy humility bore thee children of obedience./ As a dwelling of the Trinity thou didst enlighten with miracles/ all who came to thee with faith and thou didst heal them all./ Holy Father Sergius, pray to Christ our God that He will save our souls.

**Resurrection Kondak, Tone 3:** On this day thou didst rise from the tomb, O Merciful One, / leading us from the gates of death / On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices. / With the prophets and the patriarchs they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Thy power.

**Kontakion of St Sergius tone 8:** Thou didst rise from the earth and shine like the sun;/ thine incorrupt relics healed many souls and gladdened thy flock./ As thou dost now stand before the Trinity pray for them and for all Orthodox Christians,/ that they may triumph over their enemies and cry to thee: Rejoice, holy Sergius.

#### Matins Gospel IV

#### EPISTLE: Rom 6: 18-23

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

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

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

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

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

*Christos Yannaras. The Freedom of Morality, B#81A, pp. 38-42.  
for the Saint: Gal . 5:22-6:2*

## GOSPEL – Matthew 8: 5-13

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

### THE ROMAN CENTURION

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

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

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

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

*The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei*

for the Saint: Luke 6:17,23

### Saints of the Week

**5 / 18 July — Our Holy Father Athanasius the Athonite** - born in Trebizond of God-fearing parents, he was early left destitute, but, by the providence of God, a high-ranking army officer took him, removed him to Constantinople and had him educated there. He was beloved by all his contemporaries for his meekness and humility. In their childish games, they appointed one of themselves to be Emperor, another Commander and so forth. Athanasius was always chosen Abbot, as if in prophecy. Finishing his schooling, Athanasius (called Abraham until his tonsuring) retired to Mount Kyminas in Bithynia, where he lived in asceticism as a disciple of the famous Michael Maleinos. Desiring yet stricter asceticism, he moved to the Holy Mountain, to live in silence. Many, desirous of the ascetic life, began to gather round him and he was constrained to build the famous Lavra. The Byzantine Emperors gave him generous help in this, especially Nicephorus Phocas, who himself had the intention of retiring and becoming a monk. Later, John Tzimiskes also gave him great help. Manifold temptations were visited upon Athanasius, from demons and from men, but he, as a valiant soldier of Christ, resisted and overcame them all by his immense humility and unceasing prayer to the living God. Filled with the grace of God, he was found worthy to behold the most holy Mother of God, who miraculously brought forth water from a rock and promised him that she would evermore be the abbess of his monastery. Athanasius surpassed his brethren in work and in prayer, and loved them all with the love of a

spiritual father and shepherd. Death came to him suddenly. He, together with six of his monks, had climbed up onto a newly-constructed part of the church to inspect a wall that was in building when the wall fell in and buried them all. So died this great light of monasticism in 1003. He appeared a number of times to his brethren after his death, to console or rebuke them; Our Holy Father, the Martyr Cyprian the New; Our Holy Father Lampadus; Uncovering of the relics of Sergius of Radonezh; **St. Fragan and St. Gwen (Blanche)** - 5th century. During the troubled times following the Roman departure from Britain, Saints Fragan and Gwen became refugees in Brittany, when many churches are dedicated to each of them. They are the parents of Saints Winwaloe, Jacut, Guethenoc, and Gunthiern.

Tropar of Ss Fragan and Gwen tone 4: O noble exiles Fragan and Gwen/ who fled to Brittany in troubled times:/ you established churches to God's praise and glory;/ your children brought joy and gladness to the Breton people./ We praise you, glorious Saints.

**St. Morwenna, patron of Morewenstow, England (6th c.)** – her name means ‘maiden’ in Cornish.

**6 / 19 July — Our Holy Father Sisoës the Great** - an Egyptian by birth, he lived at first in Scetis then, after St Antony's death, settled on the desert mountain on which Antony had earlier lived in asceticism and which was named after him. He learned humility through great struggles with himself, becoming meek and guileless as a lamb. Therefore God gave him the great gifts of healing the sick, driving out unclean spirits and raising the dead. Sisoës lived in the desert for sixty years, and was a fount of living wisdom for all the monks and lay folk who came to him for advice. At the time of his death, his face shone like the sun. The monks stood around him and marvelled at this sight and, when the saint gave up his soul, the whole chamber was filled with a wonderful fragrance. He entered into rest in great old age, in about 429. St Sisoës taught his monks: 'When temptation comes to a man, that man must give himself over to the will of God, and acknowledge that the temptation comes upon him because of his sins. If something good comes to pass, he must acknowledge that it comes about by the providence of God.' A monk asked him: 'How can I please God and be saved?' The saint replied: 'If you desire to please God, withdraw from the world, separate yourself from the earth, leave aside creation and draw near to the Creator, unite yourself to God with prayers and tears, and you will find rest in this world and in the next.' A monk asked Sisoës: 'How can I acquire humility?' The saint replied: 'When a man learns to regard every man as better than himself, he thus acquires humility.' Ammon complained to Sisoës that he could not memorise the wise sayings that he had read, to be able to quote them in conversation with others. The saint replied: 'It is not necessary. That which is necessary is to acquire purity of mind and to speak from this purity, placing one's hope in God.' The Holy Martyrs Marinus and Martha, with their sons, Audifax and Habakkuk, the Priest Valentine, Cyrinus, Asterius and many others; The Finding of the Relics of St Juliana the Virgin; The Holy Martyr Lucy; St. Monenna, foundress of Killeevy Monastery, Ireland (c.518).

**7 / 20 July — Our Holy Father Thomas of Mt. Maleon** - was a general, famed for his courage and wealth. He was massive of body and a source of fear to his enemies. But, when he came to love Christ more than the world or anything in the world, he left everything and retired to the desert, where he became a monk and gave himself to asceticism. St Elias the Prophet appeared to him, and led him to the mountain called Malea, near the Holy Mountain. There he lived in solitude, alone with God, in unceasing prayer day and night. Although he hid from the world, he could not succeed in concealing himself. Learning of the holiness of his life, people began to go to him, bringing their sick. St Thomas healed them of all ills and weaknesses. When he went to God (in the tenth century), his relics continued to give aid to all who drew near to them in faith; St. Acacius of Sinai, who is mentioned in The Ladder;

**Our Holy Fathers, the Martyrs Epictetus and Astius** - Astius, the only son of his parents, was persuaded to love the Faith of Christ by Epictetus the priest who baptized him and tonsured him a monk. After that they moved from somewhere in the eastern regions of Scythia and settled in the Scythian town of Almirida (now Ramzina) on the mouth of the Danube on the Black Sea. They were tortured and beheaded for the Faith of Christ about 290 A.D. After their deaths, they both appeared in great radiance to the parents of St. Astius, Alexander and Marcellina, who were converted to Christ and who were baptized by Bishop Evangelus who himself, then was beheaded for Christ: "Evangelus, another angel" as is sung about him

**St. Illtyd, founder of the Llantwit abbey in Wales** - (c. 425 to c. 505), the founder of the great school/seminary/abbey of Llan Illtyd Fawr (English, "Llantwit Major") in the west of South Glamorgan. Illtyd was considered the most learned person in Britain, expert alike in Maths, Grammar, Philosophy, Rhetoric and Scripture. One of the *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, or Welsh Triads, refers to him as one of the "three knights of the Court of Arthur who kept the Holy Grail". In an age when any schooling was available only to a very few privileged people, perhaps Illtud's seminary was the closest approximation in existence to an institution of higher education. Among Illtyd's pupils were Saints Pol Aurelian (in Latin, *Paulinus Aurelianus*), Samson, Gildas and Dewi (English, *David*).

**8 / 21 July — Fast Day - Appearance of the "Kazan" Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos** - The celebration of the Most-holy Theotokos, in honour of her Icon known as the Kazan Icon, was established in thanks for the saving of Moscow and all Russia from the attack of the Poles in 1612. The late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries are known in Russian history as the Time of Troubles. The nation was attacked by Polish armies, who mocked the Orthodox Faith, and who looted and burned churches, towns and villages. By means of deceit, they succeeded in seizing Moscow. In response to the appeal of His Holiness Patriarch Hermogenes (commemorated on May 12) the Russian people rose up in defence of the homeland. The miraculous Icon of the Most-holy Theotokos was sent from Kazan to join the militia led by Prince Dimitry Mikhailovitch Pozharsky. In his "Homily on the day of the appearance of the Icon of the Mother of God in Kazan" (celebrated July 8), Holy Hierarch Dimitry of Rostov (commemorated September 21) said: The Mother of God saves from great misfortunes and evils not only the righteous, but also the sinful, but what manner of sinners? Those, who like the prodigal son, return to their Heavenly Father; who lament [over their sins]; who, like the publican, beat their breasts; who are like the sinful woman that wept at the feet of Christ and washed His feet with her tears; those who, like the thief on the cross, confess Him. The Mother of God looks after such sinners and rushes to help them, and saves them from great misfortunes and evils. Recognizing that the misfortune had been

permitted because of their sins, the entire people and militia observed 3-day fast, and turned to the Lord and His most-pure mother for divine help. Their prayers were heeded. Holy Hierarch Arseny (later to become bishop of Suzdal), who was a prisoner of the Poles, sent word that he had had a vision revealing by the intercession of the Most-holy Virgin, God's judgment been had turned to mercy. Inspired by this news, the armies on October 22, 1612 liberated Moscow from the Polish occupiers. The celebration in honour of the Kazan Icon of the Most-holy Theotokos was established in 1649. To this day, that Icon is highly venerated by the Russian Orthodox people;

**The Holy and Great Martyr Procopius** - born in Jerusalem of a Christian father and a pagan mother, at first bearing the name Neanias. After his father's death, his mother brought him up entirely in the spirit of Roman idolatry. When he had grown up, the Emperor Diocletian saw him at sometime and was so pleased with him that he took him to court to serve in the army. When this wicked Emperor launched a persecution of Christians, he ordered Neanias to go with a detachment of soldiers to Alexandria and exterminate the Christians there. But, on the road, there happened to Neanias something similar to that which happened to Saul. At three o'clock in the morning there was a violent earthquake, the Lord Jesus appearing to him and saying: 'Neanias, where are you going, and against whom are you rebelling?' In great fear, Neanias replied: 'Who are you, Lord? I cannot recognise You.' Then a brilliant Cross, as of crystal, appeared in the sky and a voice came from the Cross: 'I am Jesus, the crucified Son of God.' The Lord went on: 'By this sign that you have seen, overcome your enemies, and My peace will be with you.' This event utterly changed Neanias's life. He caused a cross such as he had seen to be made, and, instead of moving against the Christians, set off with his soldiers against the Agarians, who were attacking Jerusalem. He entered Jerusalem victorious and told his mother that he was a Christian. Brought to trial, he took off his army belt and sword and cast them before the judge, demonstrating by this that he was a soldier only of Christ the King. After harsh torture, he was thrown into prison. There Christ the Lord appeared to him again, baptising him and giving him the name Procopius. One day twelve women came to the window of his cell and said to him: 'We also are the servants of Christ.' Arrested for this, they were thrown into the same prison, where St Procopius instructed them in the Christian faith and carefully prepared them to receive the crown of martyrdom. (\*) These twelve women were then harshly tortured. Beholding their sufferings and courage, Procopius's mother also came to faith in Christ, and then all thirteen were put to death. When St Procopius was led to the scaffold, he raised his hands towards the East and prayed to God for all the poor and needy, the destitute and the widowed, and especially for the holy Church, that it might grow and spread and that Orthodoxy might shine to the end of time. He was assured from heaven that his prayer was heard, after which he joyfully laid his head under the sword and went to his Lord, to eternal joy. St Procopius suffered with honour in Palestinian Caesarea, and was crowned with an eternal wreath of glory, on July 8th, 303. \*Author's note: Therefore those in the married state ('crowned'), invoke St Procopius, together with the God-crowned Constantine and Helena; St Procopius the Fool for Christ; Our Holy Father Theophilus the Outpurer of Myrrh; Blessed King Edgar the Peaceable (975).

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

**The Hieromartyr Cyril, Bishop of Gortyna** - as an old man of eighty-four, he was tortured for Christ during Decius' reign. Cast into the flames, he was saved by the providence of God. Then the judge pronounced this sentence: 'Just judgement cannot tolerate that Cyril, having been delivered from fire, remain among the living. I therefore command that he be killed with the sword.' The old man joyfully laid his head under the sword and was beheaded, to live eternally in the Kingdom of Christ; The Holy Martyrs Theodore and John; Our Holy Fathers, the Martyrs Paternuthius and Copres; Our Holy Fathers Paternuthius and Copres; St Theodore, Bishop of Edessa; St. Everild, nun of England (c.700).

**10 / 23 July — Fast Day - Saint Anthony of the Kiev Caves** -born in the year 983 at Liubech, not far from Chernigov, and was named Antipas in Baptism. Possessing the fear of God from his youth, he desired to be clothed in the monastic schema. When he reached a mature age, he wandered until he arrived on Mt. Athos, burning with the desire to emulate the deeds of its holy inhabitants. Here he received monastic tonsure, and the young monk pleased God in every aspect of his spiritual struggles on the path of virtue. He particularly excelled in humility and obedience, so that all the monks rejoiced to see his holy life. The igumen saw in St Anthony the great future ascetic, and inspired by God, he sent him back to his native land, saying, "Anthony, it is time for you to guide others in holiness. Return to your own Russian land, and be an example for others. May the blessing of the Holy Mountain be with you. Returning to the land of Rus, Anthony began to make the rounds of the monasteries about Kiev, but nowhere did he find that strict life which had drawn him to Mt. Athos. Through the Providence of God, Anthony came to the hills of Kiev by the banks of the River Dniepr. The forested area near the village of Berestovo reminded him of his beloved Athos. There he found a cave which had been dug out by the Priest Hilarion, who later became Metropolitan of Kiev (October 21). Since he liked the spot, Anthony prayed with tears, "Lord, let the blessing of Mt. Athos be upon this spot, and strengthen me to remain here." He began to struggle in prayer, fasting, vigil and physical labor. Every other day, or every third day, he would eat only dry bread and a little water. Sometimes he did not eat for a week. People

began to come to the ascetic for his blessing and counsel, and some decided to remain with the saint. Among Anthony's first disciples was St Nikon (March 23), who tonsured St Theodosius of the Caves (May 3) at the monastery in the year 1032. The virtuous life of St Anthony illumined the Russian land with the beauty of monasticism. St Anthony lovingly received those who yearned for the monastic life. After instructing them how to follow Christ, he asked St Nikon to tonsure them. When twelve disciples had gathered about St Anthony, the brethren dug a large cave and built a church and cells for the monks within it. After he appointed Abbot Barlaam to guide the brethren, St Anthony withdrew from the monastery. He dug a new cave for himself, then hid himself within it. There too, monks began to settle around him. Afterwards, the saint built a small wooden church in honor of the Dormition of the Mother of God over the Far Caves. At the insistence of Prince Izyaslav, the igumen Barlaam withdrew to the Dimitriev monastery. With the blessing of St Anthony and with the general agreement of the brethren, the meek and humble Theodosius was chosen as igumen. By this time, the number of brethren had already reached a hundred men. The Kiev Great Prince Izyaslav (+ 1078) gave the monks the hill on which the large church and cells were built, with a palisade all around. Thus, the renowned monastery over the caves was established. Describing this, the chronicler remarks that while many monasteries were built by emperors and nobles, they could not compare with those which are built with holy prayers and tears, and by fasting and vigil. Although St Anthony had no gold, he built a monastery which became the first spiritual center of Rus. For his holiness of life, God glorified St Anthony with the gift of clairvoyance and wonderworking. One example of this occurred during the construction of the Great Caves church. The Most Holy Theotokos Herself stood before him and St Theodosius in the Blachernae church in Constantinople, where they had been miraculously transported without leaving their own monastery. Actually, two angels appeared in Constantinople in their forms (See May 3, the account of the Kiev Caves Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos). Having received gold from the Mother of God, the saints commissioned master architects, who came from Constantinople to the Russian land on the command of the Queen of Heaven to build the church at the Monastery of the Caves. During this appearance, the Mother of God foretold

**The 45 Holy Martyrs: Leontius, Maurice, Alexander, Sisinius and the rest** - in the time of the wicked Emperor Licinius, who ruled over the eastern half of the Byzantine Empire, there was a great persecution of Christians. In Armenian Nicopolis, Leontius came before the imperial governor, Lysius, together with several of his friends, and told him that he was a Christian. 'And where is your Christ?', asked Lysius. 'Was he not crucified and did he not die?' To this, St Leontius replied: 'If you know that our Christ died, know that He also rose from the dead and ascended into heaven.' After much harassment for their faith, Lysius had them whipped and thrown into prison, where they were given neither food nor drink. A noble Christian woman, Vlassiana, brought them water and gave it to them through the window of the prison, and an angel of God appeared to them there, to comfort and encourage them. When their trial was held, two of their warders came before Lysius as Christian converts, and many others, numbering forty-five in all. The judge condemned them all to death, ordering that their arms and legs be hacked off and that they then be thrown into the flames. This vicious punishment was carried out, and the souls of the holy martyrs flew off to their Lord, to eternal life. They suffered with honour and inherited the Kingdom in the year 319;

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

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

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

## HYMN OF PRAISE

### TO THE HOLY BIRTH-GIVER OF GOD

On Mt. Athos, a Lavra glows, Wondrous monastery of Athanasius One thousand years have slid by it But the spirit and bread did not run out It was neither lacking in spirit or bread Nor the glowing vision of God's heaven. Thus it was written in books of old: About the Lavra, the Abbess - Ikonomisa worries, Mount Athos is her state, The most fortified wall of Orthodoxy; That mystical Abbess - Ikonomisa Is it not the All-pure Birth-giver of God? The Lavra, She upholds and Iveron feeds, And Hilendar protects and Rusikon defends, Karakallou and Zograph, Simonpeter, And Pandocrator, all She protects Those fortifications, to Her citizens they belong But peace and defense to all She is.

## HOMILY

### About the sobriety of the mind

*"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).*

Brethren, the mind is the guide of the soul and the advisor to the soul. God gave only a soul to the animals [an irrational soul] that is why He did not give them freedom but guides them with His mind. God gave man a soul [a rational soul] and mind and with the mind, freedom. The mind and freedom are inseparable. From this, are all the empty tales of certain philosophers concerning how man truly has a mind but does not possess freedom. For it is clear from daily experience that freedom is an inseparable companion of the mind. But, as man does not possess a perfect mind, so he does not possess perfect freedom but, nevertheless, stands under the direction and guidance of God. God alone has a perfect mind and perfect freedom. We, therefore, are only the "image and likeness" of the mind and the freedom of God. We possess a sufficient enough mind that we may know the will of God and enough freedom that we can decide to fulfill the will of God. When the mind loses the absolute guiding power over the soul then, what follows in the soul is many guiding principles which result in the confusion, chaos and destruction.

What do the words of the apostle mean: "gird up the loins of your mind and be sober" They mean: do not allow your mind to fantasize but concentrate the mind on the contemplation on the law of God. They also mean: do not allow your mind to abuse the God-given freedom of plunging the soul into the slavery of the flesh, the world and the devil but nail the mind to Christ as to a cross so that your soul may resurrect in Christ. Further they mean: close your mind off from all self-willed imaginations from which it becomes intoxicated and falls into the booty of the devil and keep the mind girded in the narrowness of your heart where it will become sober through prayer and become pure through tears. Briefly, it means: exercise your mind not to abuse your freedom by ridiculing the Living and Merciful God and deadening the soul by passions.

O Lord Jesus, the Mind of God and the Wisdom of God, help us to gird our mind so that it would think only of what is from You and that what is Yours, so that the mind would lead our soul soberly to salvation.

**To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.**