

Sunday of the Paralytic

Fourth Sunday of Pascha

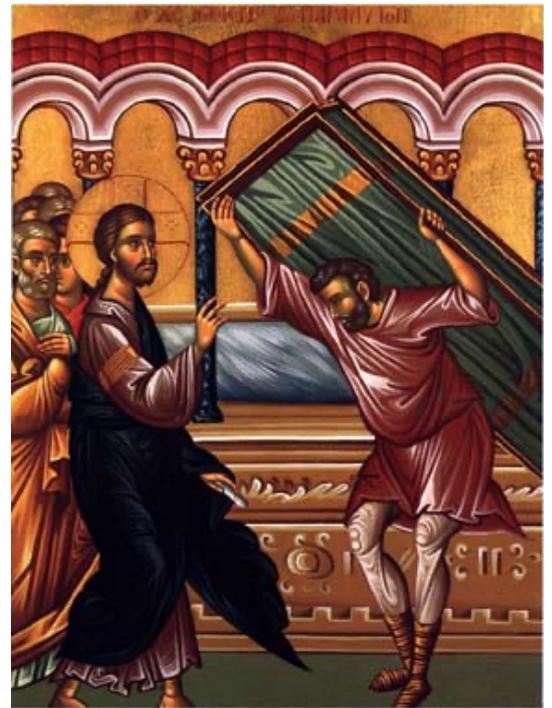
2 / 15 May

Resurrection Tone 3: Let the heavens be glad; let earthly things rejoice; * for the Lord hath wrought might with His arm. * He hath trampled down death by death; * the first-born of the dead hath He become. * From the belly of Hades hath He delivered us * and Hath granted to the world great mercy.

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.

Kondak of the Sunday of the Paralytic, Tone 3: As of old Thou didst raise the paralytic, O Lord, by Thy Divine presence, raise my soul which is paralysed grievously by all manner of sins and unseemly deeds, that being saved I may cry out: O compassionate Christ, glory be to Thy power.

Kondak of Pascha, Tone 8: Though Thou didst descend into the grave, O Immortal One, yet didst Thou destroy the power of Hades, and didst arise as victor, O Christ God, calling to the myrrh-bearing women, Rejoice, and giving peace unto Thine Apostles, O Thou Who dost grant resurrection to the fallen.



Matins Gospel IV

Epistle: The Acts of the Apostles 9: 32 - 42

Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralysed. And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.

PETER RAISES TABITHA FROM DEATH

He sends them all out, imitating his master in this also (Ref. Mk.5:40). For where tears are - or rather, where miracles are, there tears have no place. Certainly not in the celebration of such a mystery. Listen, I beseech you: although something of a similar kind is not happening now, yet in the case of our dead, a great mystery is celebrating likewise ...Angels are present, commissioned from heaven ...sent from the King Himself to call their fellow servant, and I ask you, Do you weep? Do you not know what a mystery it is that is taking place, how awful, how dread, and worthy indeed of hymns and lauds? ...For it is a very great mystery of the Wisdom of God. As if leaving the dwelling, the soul goes forth, speeding on her way to her own Lord, and do you mourn? Why then you should do this on the birth of a child: for this in fact is also a birth, and better than that... For as the sun arises, clear and bright, so the soul leaving the body with a clear conscience, shines joyously ...Think what the soul must then be! in what amazement, what wonder, what delight!

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXI on Acts IX. B#55, pp. 138, 139.

The Gospel According To St. John 5: 1-15

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralysed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise,

take up your bed and walk." And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed." He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.'" Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk?'" But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

JESUS HEALS THE PARALYTIC BY THE POOL

Great is the profit of divine Scriptures, and all sufficient is the aid which comes from them ...for the divine oracles are a treasury of all manner of medicines. Whether it be needful to quench pride, to lull passion to sleep, to tread under foot the love of money, to despise pain, to inspire confidence, to gain patience - in the Scriptures we may find abundant resource. For what man of those who struggle with long poverty or who are nailed by a grievous disease will not, when he reads the passage before us, receive much comfort? Since this man had been a paralytic for thirty eight years, and he saw others delivered each year, and himself bound by his disease, not even so did he fall back and despair, though in truth not merely despondency for the past, but also hopelessness for the future was sufficient to overstrain him ...Yes, Lord, he says, but I have no man ...to put me in the pool. What can be more pitiable than these words? ...Do you see a heart crushed through long sickness? Do you see all violence subdued? ...He did not curse his day ...but replied gently ...Yes, Lord; yet he did not know who it was who asked him.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXXVII on John V, 1. B#58, p. 128.

Christ is Risen!

Today is the Sunday of the paralytic, in which we hear the story of a man who'd been ill for thirty-eight years and was finally healed. We have much to learn from this story. Now, the reason why it's said now, or part of the reason, is because, as the services said last night, at "mid-feast," Jesus visited this paralytic. It's almost mid-feast now, it is almost mid-Pentecost. Pentecost is a feast of 50 days, and we're in that period awaiting Pentecost. And the Jews celebrated Pentecost also; they didn't understand the same meaning as we do, it changed, but they had a 50-day feast. So Jesus came about towards the middle of that feast — mid-Pentecost — and saw this man by the pool of Siloam, with five porches there.

We can learn many things from this short story. Certainly we can learn something about patience, endurance, not complaining about what is our lot in life, what's wrong with our life, what's going on that we don't like. We complain constantly and incessantly, and our complaining is a stench that rises up to God. Because when you complain, you're showing a lack of faith, a lack of obedience, a lack of love — indeed, a lack of understanding of who the God-man Jesus Christ is. Who of all among us, if anyone, could complain and feel justified — our Lord is the only one. But of course He understood what his task was and He took it joyfully, and with obedience, in order to save us by living on the earth, showing us the way, teaching us and then backing up what He said with His actions and his resurrection from the dead after His crucifixion. Indeed, we can learn a lot about patience by seeing this man; he wasn't complaining, and he was there for 38 years.

We can also learn something about Who it is who can cure, and what it is that He really cures. Whether a man is halt, whether a man is withered, lame, blind, or whatever infirmity a man has, it is small compared to the infirmity of the soul. Jesus healed this man not just of his infirmity of being palsied, but of the infirmity of his soul. How do we know this? Because later on we see after he was healed and the man was in the temple — which is a good sign, he was thanking God — Jesus explained some things to Him. Now listen carefully! In our society we don't like to hear this, in our society this is somehow not allowed, people don't like to admit this, they almost think you're crazy or reactionary to make the connection with sin that our Savior did when He said, "Thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee." Now the fathers understand — and if you just know English you can understand — that he's making a reference to his palsy, his being a paralytic was it some measure caused by his sins.

This is not always the case. In fact, one time Christ was asked, "was it because of the sins of his parents or himself that this man was born without eyes, blind?" Christ said neither one; if was that the glory of God might be made manifest. It's not always because of sins that a person suffers some affliction, but most of the time it is because of sins. Either because sin causes the affliction — smoking, drinking alcohol to abuse, drugs, promiscuity, there's a long litany of things, diseases, that are caused by our own stupidity, by our wanton abuses. You can see fractured families because people don't deal with their anger, or their lust, or their lust, or their impatience, or their selfishness; sin causes many problems such as that in a direct way. But in an indirect way sin causes many other afflictions, because we're so thickheaded we don't see God. We don't see God in the good things, and we take advantage of those good things and fall into depravity.

So God, in His wisdom, in His love, in His mercy, chastises us in order so that we might cleave unto Him. It's the same principle with parents and their children; sometimes you must punish a child to help turn him to the right way, sometimes you must let a child suffer grievously in order to let him turn to the right way. If someone has a child that, let's say, gets involved in extremely dangerous and illicit behaviors and goes to jail, sometimes it's best not to bail the child out. God does the same thing with us. Our sins cause our suffering.

This society doesn't like to say that — "oh, how can you say this?" It does happen, to all of us. So if you have any situation in your life you're not pleased with — whether it's a physical infirmity, whether it's a relationship, whether it's job, or neighborhood, or family or whatever it is, "Physician, heal thyself. " Look the in mirror; look in the mirror of the soul. What's wrong with you? What's causing it? As I said before, it's possible that such things could be caused not through your sins at all, but because of something else. But for the most part, our sins cause our sufferings. And yet we complain, and we complain and we complain. But we always complain about that person and that person, but never ourselves. That's the person you need to complain about. Complain, ask God to help you with your sins, with that which fills you with evil.

I was reading from a wonderful sermon by Bishop Nicholaj Velimirovich, and he said “A Christian should expect to suffer.” How about that for politically incorrect speaking! He expects to suffer, and he is surprised and glad and rejoices when he does not suffer. He expects to suffer because of his sins, just as you, if you were subject to a king and had killed the king's deer, you expect that the king is going to have you executed. You're not going to complain about that, you're going to be sorry and ask for forgiveness to the king. And if the king gives you forgiveness — but you know, he'll say Don't kill any more of my deer, but I forgive you this time — then you'll rejoice. Now we can do this with an earthly king, but with our Heavenly Father we don't do this.

We seem to think we're owed so much. We breathe it in the very air, it's so polluted with Western ideas that pollute us. “We're owed something.” We're not owed anything in terms of your lot in life. Much of your lot in life is affected by God's providence. All of it actually, but some of it caused by God, and some of it allowed by God depending on your own ingenuity and your own abilities. But it all goes away in a vapor, how you lived, what you've done in this world. What matters is how your soul has developed, and if you're made whole.

I see that there are three things in this story that really jump out at me. Now you know that the water represents baptism, and that the person who was put in the water was made whole. Notice how it says “made whole”; not just their infirmity was healed, but they were made whole.. But only one person, at one time in the season.

Christianity is to make one whole. Baptism is for all men, not just for one man, at one time in the season. And the man said to Christ, when Christ said, “wilt thou be made whole?” he said, ‘I have nobody to help me.’ And he was looking at the Man who would help him; he was looking at the God-man who would help him, and he didn't know who He was yet. Christ asks us this question continually. “Wilt thou be made whole?” And for the most part we answer him with a resounding “No.” For the most part we answer Him that way.

To some extent we've answered “yes”; we've come to the waters of baptism, we make an effort to fast, to come to the services — sometimes, unfortunately, a very poor effort to come to the services and I must mention that again. Don't lose your zeal; some of you are in very great danger of losing your zeal. But we make our small efforts, so yes indeed we say, to some extent, “Yes, I want to be made whole, O Lord!” But for the most part we say, “No, I don't want to! give up what I'm doing; I don't want to give up the sweetness of sin, or the sweetness of complaining, or the sweetness of excuses.” They're so sweet, aren't they? But they cover up bitter, bitter poison.

So we must answer this question completely and totally, “Yes, I want to be made whole! I want to be cleansed of all my sins, and I don't blame Thee, the Lord, nor my friends, nor my family, nor anyone else for my sins and for my afflictions; they are mine and mine alone, and they are my fault. But Thou canst heal it; Thou art the man that can bring me into the water and can refresh me.”

He is the one. We don't fully recognize that, either — oh, we believe it with our minds, with our lips, but if we really believed it we'd make much greater effort in living the Christian life. And another things that jumps out at me: when Christ said “behold, thou art made whole; sin no more.” Christianity is a constant process of becoming whole, but it involved two free wills — God's, who is perfectly free, and we, who should be free but have enslaved ourselves to the passions and lusts and corruptible things. But we were made to be free. It was our purpose. God made us to have perfect freedom. You know the Gospel of John where it says “he will go in and out and find pasture”? The sheep, being able to go in and out, go wherever they wish, perfect freedom, but freedom in godliness, freedom in purity, freedom in perfection. This is the purpose of our life — perfect freedom! So we have to answer Christ, when He asks us the question “wilt thou be made whole?” “Yes!” And any portion which answers “no” we must confess with bitter tears.

Stop making excuses for yourself. Don't make excuses for not being able to say your prayers, for not being able to come to church, for not being able to come to confession, for not doing this, for not doing that, for this reason, for that reason, for why you do this and why you do that. You know it's all a lie. I know it is a lie in my own life, so I strive to be honest concerning these things also. It's a lie. And every time you make an excuse, you are saying “NO.” You're saying “I don't want to be made whole. I like laying in the gutter, I like laying in filth. I like wallowing in my sins.”

Don't allow yourself to do this. That's why the church has an order. This order is not rules and regulations, it is for our benefit. That's why I must speak of it over and over, and especially during this season, because during this season is the most likely time for a person to fall away. Part of that is because God has given us such great grace on Pascha, and we hardly accepted it; we accepted a few things, we accepted some of the sweet meats, but we didn't accept and take into ourselves the resurrection. We couldn't bear it and so, because of unthankfulness, we're starting to fall away. I don't really know anybody who is honest who doesn't say that this happens to them during the Paschal season. It happens to me, but I struggle against it.

So I beseech you, my brothers and sisters, struggle against this; don't make excuses, don't let your life be in the way of eternal life. Don't let your temporal life impair you, don't make excuses, don't say NO. If you understood what Christ is saying, and says, when He says “wilt thou be made whole?” you'd be begging me to serve daily Liturgies. You'd be begging me, because you wouldn't want to go away from the temple, if you knew what wholeness really is. So taste God more and more, and as you taste more and more of God, you won't want to taste depravity.

But if you don't continue to taste of Him, and to “mount up like eagles” as it says in the Scriptures, to struggle, then it'll be a gradual slide. It might not be anything you notice, it might not be anything I notice — and I tell what, I keep my eyes peeled because, although I'm unworthy, I'm called to be a shepherd here, so I watch and I worry and I wait and I pray. But you know, in the long run, I'm not responsible for your salvation. To some degree I might have to answer if my own sins have caused you to falter, but you are all responsible for your own salvation. In the context of living the Christian life in community and in obedience, you are responsible.

Think a little about what it means to be whole. Which do you prefer — the inconstancy, the depravity, the weakness, the infirmity of this life, or wholeness, completeness, perfection and freedom? You and I are paralytics to some degree, sometimes to a great degree, and tragically this is usually of our own making. So when Christ asks you — and He's

asking you today, He asks you every moment of your life — “Wilt thou be made whole?” You MUST struggle to say “YES” and then you MUST back up your promise with action, with effort, with desire. Then indeed, you will be made whole.

Fr Seraphim Holland

Saints of the Week

2 / 15 May — The Holy Martyrs Hesperus, Zoe, Cyriac and Theodulus - in the time of the Emperor Hadrian (117-138), a pagan called Catallus bought Hesperus, his wife Zoe and their sons Cyriac and Theodulus as slaves. Being convinced Christians, they refused to eat anything that had been sacrificed to idols, but threw all that had been thus offered to the dogs, and themselves went hungry. Catallus, discovering this, became very angry and began to torture his slaves cruelly. He first tortured the children, but they remained unfaltering in the Faith and sought yet harsher tortures. At last all four of them were cast into a burning furnace where, after prayers of thanksgiving, they gave their spirits into the Lord's hands. Their bodies remained whole and untouched by the fire; St Athanasius the Great, Archbishop of Alexandria - on this day are commemorated the translation of his relics and their miracles;

The Holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb - they were sons of the great Prince Vladimir, Baptiser of the Russian people. Until his baptism, Vladimir had many wives, and children by them. Boris and Gleb were brothers of one mother. Before his death in 1015, Vladimir divided the Kingdom among all his sons. But Svyatopolk, his eldest son and Prince of Kiev, desired to take the parts that were set aside for Boris and Gleb, so he sent men to kill Boris in one place and Gleb in another. Both brothers were deeply devout and pleasing to God in all things, and they met death with prayer and the lifting up of their hearts to Him. Their bodies remained uncorrupt and fragrant, and were buried in the town of Vishgorod, where to this day blessed strength flows forth from them to heal men of divers ills and sufferings;

St Michael (Boris), King of Bulgaria - born and educated as a pagan and was baptized under the influence of his uncle Bojan and his sister. At baptism, he was given the name Michael. Patriarch Photius sent him priests who gradually baptized all the Bulgarian people. Many Bulgarian noblemen opposed this new Faith but the new Faith conquered and the Cross glistened on many churches built by the devout Tsar Michael. The Faith among the Bulgarians, as among the Serbs, was especially established by the Five Followers, the disciples of St. Cyril and St. Methodius, who preached to the people the knowledge of Christ in the vernacular: the Slavonic language. In his old age Michael retreated to a monastery and was tonsured a monk. When his son Vladimir began to destroy his father's work and to exterminate Christianity, Michael again donned his military uniform, girded himself with a sword, ousted Vladimir from the throne and installed Simeon, his younger son, as Tsar. After that, he again clothed himself in the monastic habit and retreated in silence where, in mortification and prayer, he completed his earthly life "in the good faith; in the correct confession of our Lord Jesus Christ; great, honourable and devout," and took up habitation in the heavenly life on May 2, 906 A.D.

3 / 16 May — The Holy Martyrs Timothy the Reader and his wife Maura of Antinoe in Egypt - Strange was the destiny of these wonderful martyrs, husband and newly-wedded wife. Twenty days after their wedding, they were taken for trial for their Christian faith before Arrianus, governor of the Thebaid, in the time of the Emperor Diocletian. Timothy was a reader in the church where he lived. 'Who are you?', the governor asked him. Timothy replied: 'I am a Christian and a reader in the Church of God.' The governor said to him further: 'You see, don't you, the instruments prepared for torture?' Timothy replied: 'But you don't see the angels of God, which are strengthening me.' Then the governor commanded that he be pierced through the ears with iron rods, so that the pupils of his eyes leapt out with the pain. They then suddenly hanged him by the feet and stuffed his mouth with wood. Maura was at first afraid of torture but, when her husband gave her courage, she also confessed her steadfast faith before the governor. He commanded that, first, her hair be torn out, then all her fingers cut off. After many other tortures, to which they would quickly have succumbed had they not been strengthened by the grace of God, they were both crucified, one in sight of the other. And thus, hanging on their crosses, they remained alive for nine full days, counselling each other and encouraging each other in endurance. On the tenth day they gave their spirits into God's hands, the God for whom they had suffered crucifixion, and thus became worthy of His Kingdom. They suffered with honour for Christ in 286. 'Maura' means 'black', from which it comes that in Macedonia the day of these saints is known as 'Black Day'. On the island of Zakynthos there is a church of Saints Timothy and Maura, in which many miraculous healings have taken place; Our Holy Father Theodosius of the Kiev Caves.

4 / 17 May — The Holy Martyr Pelagia of Tarsus - born in the town of Tarsus of pagan but noble and wealthy parents, she heard about Christ and the salvation of the soul from Christians, became inflamed with love for the Saviour and was a Christian in her soul. There was at that time a terrible persecution of Christians. It happened that the Emperor Diocletian himself stopped in Tarsus and that, during the time of his stay in the town, his son, the heir, fell deeply in love with Pelagia and wanted to make her his wife. Pelagia replied through her mother—a wicked woman—that she was already promised to her betrothed husband, Christ the Lord. Fleeing from the foul heir and her wicked mother, Pelagia sought and found Bishop Linus, a man renowned for his holiness. He instructed her in the Faith and baptised her. Then Pelagia gave away her luxurious clothing and great wealth, returned home and confessed to her mother that she was already baptised. Hearing of this, the Emperor's son, losing all hope of getting this holy maiden as his wife, ran himself through with a sword and died. Then the wicked mother denounced her daughter to the Emperor and she was taken for trial. The Emperor marvelled at the girl's beauty and, forgetting his son, burned with an impure passion for her. But when Pelagia remained unfaltering in her faith, the Emperor condemned her to be burned in a metal ox heated by fire. When they stripped the martyr, she signed herself with the sign of the Cross and, with prayers of thanksgiving to God on her lips, went into the ox, where, in the twinkling of an eye, she melted like wax. She suffered with honour in 287. Bishop Linus hunted for the remains of her bones and buried them on a hill under a stone. In the time of the Emperor Constantine Copronymos (741-775), a beautiful church was built on that site in honour of this holy virgin and martyr Pelagia, who was sacrificed for Christ to reign eternally with Him; The Hieromartyr Silvanus, Bishop of Gaza; Our Holy Father Nicephorus the Hesychast;

St. Ethelred, king of Mercia and monk in England (716) - abdicated to become a monk at Bardney, where he was later elected abbot (Benedictines). Saint Ethelred is depicted as a Benedictine abbot with royal regalia at his feet. He is venerated at Leominster.

5 / 18 May — Fast Day & Mid Pentecost - The Holy and Great Martyr Irene - She lived in the Balkans in apostolic times, in the town of Magedon where her father Licinius was governor of a small region. Some think that she was a Slav. She was born a pagan of pagan parents. Penelope—for that was her pagan name—learned the Christian faith from her teacher, Appelianus. St Timothy, the disciple of the Apostle Paul, baptised her and her lady-in-waiting, and brought her a letter from the Apostle Paul to read. She infuriated her father by her refusal to marry, and he intended to torture her, but she brought him to Christianity in a miraculous way. She was tortured in different ways by four kings, other than her father, but God saved her through His angels. King Sedechias buried her up to the neck in a pit full of snakes and scorpions, but an angel of God neutralised the poison of the reptiles and preserved the holy maiden untouched. Then the same king attempted to saw her in two, but the sword broke against her body as against stone. This same king once again bound her to the wheel of a water-mill, then let the water in to drown her, but the water would not flow, but stood still, and the maiden remained whole and alive. King Sapor, Sedechias's son, shod her with nails, loaded a sack of sand onto her, put a bridle on her and commanded that she be led like an animal far outside the city. 'Truly I am as a beast before Thee, O Lord!', said the holy martyr as she ran bridled behind her torturers. But an angel of God caused an earthquake, and the earth opened and swallowed up her tormentors. Surviving all these tortures, by which an enormous number of pagans were brought to Christianity, Irene went to the city of Kallinikos, where she preached the Christian faith. The local king, Numerian, tried to kill her, throwing her into three burning metal oxen one after the other. But the maiden was preserved and remained alive, and many saw and believed. The Eparch, Vaudon, took her to the city of Constantina, where he thought to kill her by putting her onto a burning grid. But this did not harm St Irene, and many were brought to the true Faith. Finally, Irene came to the city of Mesemhria, where the king killed her but God restored her to life. And the king, seeing this, together with many of the people, believed in Christ and was baptised. And thus St Irene, by her sufferings and miracles, brought over 100,000 pagans to faith in Christ. At last she laid herself in a grave and commanded Appelianus to close it. After four days, when the grave was opened, her body was not in it. Thus God glorified forever the maiden and martyr Irene, who had sacrificed all and endured all, that God should be the more greatly glorified among men; Ss Martin and Heraclius.

6 / 19 May — Holy, Righteous and Longsuffering Job - a descendant of Esau, the grandson of Abraham, and lived in Arabia about 2,000 years before Christ. His father's name was Zareth and his mother's Bosora; his full name was Jobab. He was an honourable and God-fearing man, and was very rich. But when he reached the age of seventy-nine, God permitted heavy temptation from Satan to fall on him, as is written in detail in the Book of Job. In one day, Job lost all his great possessions and his sons and daughters. Then a great sickness fell on him, from which his whole body was covered with sores from top to toe, and Job lay on a rubbish heap outside the town and scoured his boils with sherds of broken pottery. But Job did not complain of God, but patiently endured all his sufferings to the end. Therefore the Lord restored his health and gave him riches greater than he had had before, and there were born to him seven sons and three daughters; as many as he had had before. And Job lived for 248 years, glorifying and praising God. Job is regarded as the model of patient endurance of every suffering that God sends us, and is a type of the suffering Christ;

The Holy Martyr Barbarus - a soldier during the reign of Julian the Apostate. When the emperor's commander Bacchus led the Roman army against the Franks, Barbarus, who was secretly a Christian, was serving in the army. In battle there appeared a certain hero on the side of the Franks, similar to Goliath of old and he challenged the Romans to send one of their men to come out to do battle. Commander Bacchus advised Barbarus to go. Barbarus prayed in his heart to the Living Lord, went out and defeated that giant. As a result, the Frankish army became confused and fled. Then the commander prepared a great celebration and ordered that sacrifices be offered to the idols. During the sacrificial offerings, the commander learned that Barbarus kept himself apart. When he was asked about that, Barbarus declared that he is a Christian. The commander informed the emperor and the emperor ordered that Barbarus be subjected to the most severe tortures. But Barbarus endured all with rare courage and composure. During his tortures, many miracles were manifested and many soldiers, witnessing this, accepted the Faith of Christ. Among them was the Commander Bacchus along with Callimachus and Dionysius. All three were beheaded for the Name of Christ and, after them, Barbarus was also beheaded in the year 362 A.D. Their souls took up habitation in the kingdom of Christ the Immortal King; St Barbarus the Robber; Martyrdom of Father John (Karastamatis) of Santa Cruz (1985); St. Edbert, bishop of Lindisfarne (698).

7 / 20 May — Fast Day - Commemoration of the Appearing of the Precious Cross over Jerusalem - In the time of the Emperor Constantius, St Constantine's son, and Patriarch Cyril of Jerusalem, the Precious Cross appeared one day at nine o'clock in the morning above Golgotha, and spread as far as the Mount of Olives. This Cross was brighter than the sun and more beautiful than the loveliest rainbow. The whole people—believers and unbelievers—left their work and watched this heavenly sign in fear and wonder. Many unbelievers were converted to faith in Christ, and also many Arians abandoned their wicked heresy and returned to Orthodoxy. Patriarch Cyril wrote a letter to the Emperor Constantius about this sign, the Emperor himself being inclined towards Arianism. This took place on May 7th, 357. Thus was it demonstrated by this means that the Christian faith does not lie in the worldly theorising of the sensual understanding of men, but in the power of God, shown forth through wonders and signs without number; The Holy Martyr Acacius; Our Holy Fathers of Georgia;

St. John of Beverley, bishop of York (721) - Born in Harpham (Humberside), Yorkshire, England; died at Beverley, England, May 7, 721; canonized in 1037; feast of translation, October 25. Saint John trained for the priesthood and monastic life in Kent under the direction of SS. Adrian and Theodore, but returned to Yorkshire upon completing his studies to become a monk at Whitby Abbey, which was then under the rule of Saint Hilda. John founded a monastery in Humberside, England, on the site of a small church dedicated to Saint John the Evangelist, where he asked to be buried. In 687, after the death of Saint Eata, John

he was consecrated bishop of Hexham. He is said to have shown special care for the poor and the handicapped. Whatever time he could spare from his episcopal duties he spent in contemplation. At regular seasons, especially during Lent, he retired to pray in a cell by the church of Saint Michael beyond the Tyne, near Hexham. He would take with him some poor person, whom he would serve during his retirement. He was transferred York as archbishop upon the death of Saint Bosa in 705, and Saint Wilfrid succeeded him at Hexham as part of the final settlement of the latter's long dispute with the Northumbrian kings. He continued his practice of periodic retirement for spiritual refreshment. His chosen retreat was an abbey that he had built at Beverley, then a forest. Not until old age had worn him out did he resign his office to Saint Wilfrid the Younger in order to spend the last four years of his life in the peace of his beloved abbey at Beverley.

8 / 21 May — The Holy Apostle and Evangelist John - The main commemoration of this great Apostle and Evangelist is on September 26th, but on May 8th is commemorated a wonderful revelation about his grave. When St John was more than a hundred years old, he took seven of his disciples, went outside the city of Ephesus and told the disciples to dig a grave in the form of a cross. Then the old man went down alive into the grave and was buried. When the faithful later opened John's grave, they did not find the body in it. And on May 8th each year a dust arose from the grave, from which those suffering from many diseases were healed;

Our Holy Father Arsenius the Great - This glorious saint was born of a patrician family in Rome and was well educated in the secular sciences and philosophy as well as in spiritual wisdom. Abandoning all the vanity of the world, he dedicated himself to the service of the Church and was a deacon of the great church in Rome. Unmarried, withdrawn, quiet and devout, Arsenius thought to live that way his entire life. But the Providence of God directed his path in life otherwise. Emperor Theodosius took him as a tutor and teacher of his sons Arcadius and Honorius, and installed him as a senator surrounding him with great wealth, honours and luxury. But all of this burdened Arsenius' heart rather than pleasing him. It happened that Arcadius committed a wrong and for that Arsenius punished him. The offended Arcadius conceived a terrible revenge against his teacher and when Arsenius found out he changed into the clothes of a beggar, left for the seashore, boarded a boat and sailed to Egypt. When he arrived at the renowned Scete, he became a disciple of the glorious John Colobus [The Short] and dedicated himself to a life of asceticism. He considered himself dead and when someone informed him that a wealthy relative died and willed his entire estate to him, Arsenius replied: "But I died before him, how is it therefore that I could be his heir?" Withdrawn in a hermit's cell as in a tomb, throughout the entire day, he wove baskets of palm leaves, and at night, he prayed to God. He avoided men and all conversations with them. Only on feast days did he leave his cell and attend church to receive Holy Communion. In order not to become lazy, he often asked himself the question: "Arsenius, why did you come to the wilderness?" He remained in the wilderness for fifty-five years as a "desert dweller" and for that entire time was a model to the monks and a glory to monastics in general. In all, Arsenius lived one hundred years and died peacefully in the year 448 A.D. after prolonged labour and voluntarily imposing hardships upon himself and took up habitation in the kingdom of Christ the Lord, Whom he loved with all his heart, all his mind and all his soul;

St Emilia - the mother of Saint Basil the Great. In her youth she desired to remain a virgin for life but was forced into marriage. Emilia gave birth to nine children and so inspired them with the Spirit of Christ that five of them became Christian saints: Basil the Great, Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, Peter, Bishop of Sebaste, Macrina and Theosevia. In her old age Emilia established a convent where she lived with Macrina her daughter and where she died in the Lord on May 8, 375 A.D.; Our Holy Father Arsenius the Lover of Labour; St. Wiro, monk-missionary of the Netherlands (c.753).