



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

## St Gregory the Decapolite & Forefeast of the Entry of the Theotokos

### 20 November / 3 December

**Resurrection Tropar, Tone 1:** When the stone had been sealed by the Jews; / while the soldiers were guarding Thy Most Pure Body; / Thou didst rise on the third day, O Saviour, / granting life to the world. / The Powers of Heaven therefore cried to Thee O Giver of Life: / glory to Thy Resurrection O Christ! / Glory to Thy Kingdom; / Glory to Thy Dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind.

**Troparion of the Forefeast tone 4:** Today Anna betroths us to joy instead of grief, / having blossomed forth a fruit, the only Ever-Virgin. / She brings her with gladness into the temple of the Lord / in fulfilment of her vow. / She is the Mother and Temple of God the Word.

**Troparion of Ss Gregory and Proclus tone 4:** The twofold lamps of divine gifts, Proclus shepherd of New Rome and Gregory scion of Decapolis, / guide us by the light of grace as divinely-inspired fathers. / Let us draw near and eagerly beseech them, / that we may receive forgiveness and the salvation of our souls.

**Resurrection Kondak, Tone 1:** As God, Thou didst rise from the tomb in glory, / Raising the world with Thyself. / Human nature praises Thee as God, for death has vanished. / Adam exults O Master, Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage, and cries to Thee; / Thou art the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ.

**Kontakion of the Forefeast tone 4:** Today the world is filled with gladness / at the feast of the Mother of God, / and cries out: She is the heavenly tabernacle.

**Kontakion of St Gregory tone 3:** The Church knows thee as a sun enlightening all / with virtue and rays of healing. / We celebrate thy memory / and honour thy struggles, O blessed Father Gregory.

#### Matins Gospel IV

#### EPISTLE: Ephesians 5: 9-19

Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), Finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

#### NOT AS FOOLS, BUT AS WISE, REDEEMING THE TIME, BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL

The acquisition of God's Spirit is also capital, but grace-given and eternal, and it is gained in very similar ways, almost the same ways as monetary, social and temporal capital. God the Word, the God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, likens our life to a market, and the work of our life on earth He calls buying, and says to us all: Buy till I come, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. That is to say, economize the time for receiving heavenly blessings through earthly goods. Earthly goods are virtuous acts performed for Christ's sake and conferring on us the grace of the Holy Spirit, without whom there is not and cannot be any salvation; for it is written: 'By the Holy Spirit is every soul quickened and by purity exalted, yea, is made bright by the Three in One in holy mystery' [from Orthodox Matins hymn]. The Holy Spirit Itself enters our souls, and this entrance into our souls of Him the Almighty ...is only granted to us through our own assiduous acquisition of the Holy Spirit, which prepares in our soul and body a throne for the all-creative presence of God with our spirit according to His irrevocable word: I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people (Lev. 26:12) ...Most of all it is given through prayer; for prayer is somehow always in our hands as an instrument for acquiring the grace of the Spirit ...prayer is always possible for everyone, rich and poor, noble and simple. strong and weak. healthy and suffering, righteous and sinful ...Trade thus spiritually in virtue. Distribute the gifts of the grace of the Holy Spirit to them that ask, as a candle, burning with earthly fire, lights other candles for the illumining of all in other places, but diminishes not its own light.

*St. Seraphim of Sarov, Conversation with Nicholas Motovilov Concerning the Aim of the Christian Life. B#26, pp. 269-270.*

for the Saint: Heb. 7:26-8:2

## THE GOSPEL - LUKE 12: 16-21

Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.' " But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

### The Harvest of a Rich Man.

We read a very short parable about the harvest of a rich man and like so much of scripture it has deep theology in very few words. It appears simple on the outside. But, truly it has much more than just the external message that we know of that is obvious from it that we should not only care about ourselves and be stingy and care only and think of life as the acquiring of goods.

Our Lord said this parable because he had just been part of or been brought into a dispute between brothers two about an inheritance. So He was trying to show how silly it is, how foolish it is to be concerned about riches.

So He begins His parable by saying "the ground of a certain rich man" — he doesn't even name the man. If you notice sometimes in parables those who are great sinners don't even have a name: such as the rich man and Lazarus, and the rich man who had this plentiful harvest. They don't even mention his name. His name is blotted out of the book of the Living. It's unimportant. Perhaps, when he dies, there would be great fanfare, and people playing bugles, and paid mourners wailing and gnashing their teeth and tearing at their hair and a huge retinue of people to bury him and maybe even those from the towns people, who say, "What a great man he was..." and everything. And yet God doesn't know his name, the angels don't know his name, the saints don't know who he is.

This is not how we want to be referred to, as a certain person, a certain rich man, a certain sinner, a certain non-entity in the Kingdom of God. Indeed we want to be named. So this nameless, foolish man has many many crops and it is a bountiful year. And he makes a great mistake. Instead of thanking God, he thinks before he's even brought his crop in, "What shall I do?"

This is a question that all of us ask all the time: "What shall I do?" The poor man asks, "What shall I do? I'm destitute. I have no funds. I have no food in the cupboard. Winter is coming and my children do not have shoes. What shall I do?" and the rich man, who is not rich toward God, who has all this bounty, says "What shall I do?" The one who has nothing and the one who has everything in a temporal sense, they both ask the same question. So what good is riches? What good is abundance unless we understand from Whom that abundance comes and what is the significance of that abundance and how we can use it for the Kingdom of God?

So he says, "I have no room in my barns so I'm going to tear down perfectly good barns and I'm going to build greater barns." And then he makes an even bigger error and that's an error that we make often so you should take note of it. He says, "My soul, soul that has much goods laid up for many years take thine ease. Eat, drink, and be merry." He speaks to his soul. What does the soul need of food? What does the soul need of raiment? What does the soul need of great barns? The soul is incorporeal. The soul communicates with God. It doesn't need food. He speaks to his soul and mistakes it for his body. This, indeed, is a great error and this is what happens in our life. People define life in terms of the pleasure that they have, or in terms of the comfort that they have, or the security that they have. It is always about taking care of their bodies. Or more than taking care of their bodies, sometimes giving their body pleasure that is illicit and unclean. But, it's always about their bodies.

This rich man makes the mistake that is very typical of those who do not have their eye on God and don't understand what the purpose of their life is all about. His soul and his body to him, he doesn't understand what his soul is. His soul is the body as far as he is concerned. Everything is the here and now, everything is the next dinner, the next dance, the next bit of entertainment. That is for him what his soul is. And we will see later in only a moment what this really means. The implications of not understanding about your soul and your body and the purpose in your life are tremendous and terrible.

So God says unto him, "Thou fool. This very night thy soul shall be required of thee." A more proper way to put it is: "This very night, they shall require thy soul." "They" are the demons. They will take the soul and cast it where it belongs: in the pit of hell. God doesn't refer to the death of a righteous man in this way. The angels take the soul which is light and ascends to God. It is not "required," that is, against the will of a man. It is natural. In this case, the rich man, his soul is required. It is torn away because everything that he had in this life was temporal, was false, and was fleeting. And when he died, he had nothing. No good works, no good thoughts. Nothing. And so his soul clung to his body. His soul became fleshly in the words of Blessed Theophylact. And so his soul was torn away for him.

I tell you, there will be no greater pain experienced by any man than when a fleshly soul is torn away from a corrupt body at the time of death. Nothing can compare. No torture, no torment. It is a moment of great tragedy that a man who has so much provided to him would have not understood it for all of his years.

There are other things in this parable that are important to understand. Perhaps, more side issues. One is that when he says, "I'm going to pull down my barns and build greater." He had barns that he could've put his foodstuffs into: the bellies of the poor. If a man has more than another, he is obligated to give to one who needs. The bellies of the poor are storehouses, abundant storehouses, infinite storehouses. And the wonder of these storehouses is that when food is put into them, it does not perish. It endures forever and every single cup of water that is given to one of these store houses, the bellies of the poor,

will be remembered according to the words of our Savior, in the last day. So, this food does not perish. Where as normally, we eat food, it goes into the belly, and it goes out, and as the Lord says "into the drop." It becomes waste in a matter of hours. But not food that is given to the poor. Not abundance that God gives to us that we distribute to others.

But you have to understand this is not just a moral teaching saying we should give to others. There is depth here as far as why we give to others. It's all God's anyway. That's another mistake the rich man made when he said, "Thou hast many goods..." Oh, rich man, thou hast no goods! Everything is of God's. And God has given some of it to you. He has given you an abundance in order so that you could give unto others. So we must understand everything is of God's. But much more critical, if we are truly to be benevolent people, is that we must understand "What is the purpose of our life?" The rich man definitely didn't understand. He called his body his soul. He didn't understand at all. In the end of the parable, the Lord said, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God."

The purpose of our life is to become rich towards God. Our Lord wishes us to have everything in abundance. And in the second, there was speaking of, "All of His goods will be given to the good man of the house that watches and waits and will be seen to be so doing when his Lord comes" So there's a perfect tie in with the two gospels. All of the Lord's goods will be given, but they are not silver and gold and food and dancing, and merriment. By the way, Blessed Theophylact, says that when the rich man says "take thine eat, drink, and be merry" this word "merry" is a euphemism. When people are indulged in great excess of drinking and eating, merriment is something that you wouldn't want to see. That would be unclean and immoral. All manner of fornication, and all manner even of murders, and all kinds of infidelities and all that sort of thing. That's the merriment for a person who's glutting himself on pleasure.

The purpose of our life is to know God. God gives us things so that we can know Him. God sometimes gives us abundance so that we can know Him. Everything is of God. Therefore, we are only His stewards. We are His servants. We must have that attitude about ourselves. And then we must understand what is really treasure? God has given us many things of a physical nature and we can enjoy them. We can certainly enjoy the taste of fine and succulent food on the days when it is allowed and it is totally lawful thing to do this. And all of the other things God has given. But, we must understand where our treasure is. Our treasure is in being rich towards God, in having full faith in Him. And then He will bestow His goods to us. We can't even imagine what those goods really are. We can only speak of them in a poor way. Language can't communicate what God wants to give us. He will give it to a man who is open to Him, who is rich toward Him. Who hears of the commandments and says, "I wish to do this."

Even if a man can not do a certain commandment or can not in every way change his life, in his heart, if he is a Christian, he says, "I want to change. I want to direct my life according to that which is true, that which is perfect, that which is holy." Then a man, not matter what state he's in, is rich toward God. This is the purpose of our life: to know God, to become like Him in moral attributes, to become pure and holy. And this rich man, this nameless, wanton sinner, did not understand that. He did not understand anything of what God had given him and what the purpose of his life is.

So here we have before us, brothers and sisters, a bad example. We must learn from bad examples as much as we learn from good examples. This is an example of how not to live, how not to think. We should not live according to the flesh. We should not acquaint the flesh with our life. There are necessities of the flesh and we take care of those. There are pleasures of the flesh and when they are lawful, may it be blessed. But if we ever acquaint any pleasure of the flesh with our life, we have ceased to be a Christian. No longer are we a Christian if we think of the flesh as our life. May God help you. May God enlighten you. There is much depth here. I can't begin to plum the depths of it because I don't have the purity to see it all or the eloquence to express it all. But, there is depth here. There is in this parable a teaching trying to teach you how to live, what kind of attitude to have. That's the depth of it. May God help you and enlighten you to live according to God, to be rich toward God. Amen.

*Fr Seraphim Holland*

for the Saint: John 10:9-16

### Saints of the week

**20 November / 3 December — Forefeast of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos — Nativity Fast — Our Holy Father Gregory of Decapolis** — He was born in Isaurian Decapolis of eminent and devout parents, Sergius and Maria. When he had finished his schooling, his parents desired him to marry, but he fled to the desert and became a monk. He lived in various places: in Byzantium and Rome, and on Mount Olympus. Wherever he found himself, he made men marvel by his asceticism and miracles. It happened at times that his face was lit up with heavenly light, and that angels of God appeared to him; he looked upon the beauty of the angels and heard their blessed singing. He lived a long and godly life, and died peacefully in Constantinople in the ninth century, his soul entering into the joy of his Lord. St Proclus, Patriarch of Constantinople; The Holy Martyrs Eustace, Thespesius and Anatolius; St Isaac, Archbishop of Armenia; The Three Holy Persian Maidens;

**At Bury St. Edmund in Suffolk, St. Edmund, king of E. Anglia, martyr (869)** - On Christmas Day 855 a young man aged fourteen was acclaimed King of Norfolk by the ruling men and clergy of that county. The following year the leaders of Suffolk also made him their king. For fifteen years Edmund ruled over the East Angles with what all acknowledged as Christian dignity and justice. He himself seems to have modelled his piety on that of King David in the Old Testament, becoming especially proficient at reciting the psalms in public worship. From the year 866 his kingdom was increasingly threatened by Danish invasions. For four years the East Angles managed to keep a shaky, often broken peace with them. Then the invaders

burned Thetford. King Edmund's army attacked them there but could not defeat the marauders. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that the Danes 'killed the king and overcame all the land', adding that 'they destroyed all the churches that they came to, and at the same time reaching Peterborough, killed the abbot and monks and burned and broke everything they found there'. He thus remains the only English sovereign until the time of King Charles I to die for religious beliefs as well as the defence of his throne. For centuries the holy relics of King Edmund remained incorrupt, and innumerable miracles were wrought through his intercession. The skull of St. Edmund is at present in the basilica of St. Sernin in Toulouse, while his holy bones are in the private chapel of the Duke of Norfolk in Arundel Castle.



**21 November / 4 December — The Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos —**

**Nativity Fast** — When the most holy Virgin Mary had reached the age of three, her parents, holy Joachim and Anna, took her from Nazareth to Jerusalem, to give her to the service of God in fulfilment of their promise. It was three days' journey to Jerusalem, but, going as they were on God's work, they did not find the journey difficult. Many of Joachim and Anna's kinsmen gathered to take part in this celebration, in which the invisible angels of God also took part. Maidens went ahead with lighted candles in their hands, followed by the most holy Virgin, led on either side by her father and mother. The Virgin was clad in royal and beautiful garments, like those of the 'king's daughter', the Bride of God (Ps. 44:9,10). Behind them walked many of their kinsfolk and friends, all bearing lighted candles. There were fifteen steps leading to the Temple. Her parents stood the Virgin on the first step, and she ran quickly to the top on her own, where the High Priest, Zacharias, the father of St John the Forerunner, met her and, taking her by the hand, led her not

only into the Temple but into the Holy of Holies, the holiest place of all, into which none could enter except the High Priest, and that once a year. St Theophylact of Ochrid says that Zacharias was 'out of himself, and moved by God' when he led the Virgin into the chief place in the Temple, beyond the second curtain—otherwise there could be no explanation of his action. Her parents then offered sacrifices to God, according to the Law, received the priest's blessing and returned home, leaving the most holy Virgin in the Temple. She dwelt in the Temple for nine whole years. While her parents were alive, they visited her often. When they departed this life, the holy Virgin was left an orphan, and longed to remain in the Temple for the rest of her days, without entering into marriage. This being contrary both to the Law and Israelite custom, she was confided at the age of twelve to St Joseph, a kinsman of hers in Nazareth, so that she might, under the protection of betrothal, live in virginity and thus fulfil both her desire and the demands of the Law, for it was unknown in Israel at that time for a girl to vow perpetual virginity. The holy Virgin Mary was the first to do this, and was later followed by thousand upon thousand of virgin men and women in the Church of Christ.

**Troparion — Tone 4:** Today is the prelude of the good will of God, / of the preaching of the salvation of mankind. / The Virgin appears in the temple of God, / in anticipation proclaiming Christ to all. / Let us rejoice / and sing to her: / "Rejoice, O Fulfillment of the Creator's dispensation."

**Kontakion — Tone 4:** The most pure Temple of the Savior; / the precious Chamber and Virgin; / the sacred Treasure of the glory of God, / is presented today to the house of the Lord. / She brings with her the grace of the Spirit, / therefore, the angels of God praise her: / "Truly this woman is the abode of heaven."

**St. Columbanus, abbot and founder of Luxeuil Abbey, France (615)** - Born 543 at West Leinster, Ireland, handsome and educated, Columbanus was torn between a desire for God and easy access to the pleasures of the world. Acting on advice of a holy anchoress, he decided to withdraw from the world; his family opposed the choice, his mother going so far as to block the door. Monk at Lough Erne. He studied Scripture extensively, and wrote a commentary on the Psalms. Monk at Bangor under abbot Saint Comgall. In middle age, Columbanus felt a call to missionary life. With twelve companions (Saint Attala, Columbanus the Younger, Cummain, Domgal, Eogain, Eunan, Saint Gall, Gurgano, Libran, Lua, Sigisbert and Waldoleno) he travelled to Scotland, England, and then to France in 585. The area, though nominally Christian, had fallen far from the faith, but were ready for missionaries, and they had some success. They were warmly greeted at the court of Gontram, and king of Burgundy invited the band to stay. They chose the half-ruined Roman fortress of Annegray in the Vosges Mountains for their new home with Columbanus as their abbot. The simple lives and obvious holiness of the group drew disciples to join them, and the sick to be healed by their prayers. Columbanus, to find solitude for prayer, often lived for long periods in a cave seven miles from the monastery, using a messenger to stay in touch with his brothers. When the number of new monks overcrowded the old fortress, King Gontram gave them the old castle of Luxeuil to found a new house in 590. Soon after, a third house was founded at Fontaines. Columbanus served as master of them all, and wrote a Rule for them; it incorporated many Celtic practices, was approved by the Council of Macon in 627, but was superseded by the Benedictine. Problems arose early in the 7th century. Many Frankish bishops objected to a foreign missionary with so much influence, to the Celtic practices he brought, especially those related to Easter, and his independence from them. In 602 he was summoned to appear before them for judgment; instead of appearing, he sent a letter advising them to hold more synods, and to concern themselves with more important things than which rite he used to celebrate Easter. The dispute over Easter continued to years, with Columbanus appealing to multiple popes for help, but was only settled with Columbanus abandoned the Celtic calendar when he moved to Italy and adopted Eastern Orthodox Pascha. In addition to his problems with the bishops, Columbanus spoke out against vice and corruption in the royal household and court, which was in the midst of a series of complex power grabs. Brunehault stirred up the bishops and nobility against the abbot; Thierry ordered him to conform to the local ways, and shut up. Columbanus refused, and was briefly imprisoned at Besançon, but he escaped and returned to Luxeuil. Thierry and Brunehault sent an armed force to force him and his foreign monks back to Ireland. As soon as his ship set sail, a storm drove them back to shore; the captain took it as a sign, and set the monks free. They made their way to King Clothaire at Soissons, Neustria and then the court of King Theodebert of Austrasia in 611. He travelled to Metz, then Mainz, Suevi, Alamanni, and finally Lake Zurich. Their evangelization work there was unsuccessful, and the group passed on to Arbon, then Bregenz, and then Lake Constance. Saint Gall, who knew the local language best, took the lead in this region; many were converted to the



faith, and the group founded a new monastery as their home and base. However, a year later political upheaval caused Columbanus to cross the Alps into Italy, arriving in Milan in 612. The Christian royal family treated him well, and he preached and wrote against Arianism and Nestorianism. In gratitude, the Lombard king gave him a tract of land call Bobbio between Milan and Genoa. There he rebuilt a half-ruined church of Saint Peter, and around it he founded an abbey that was to be the source for evangelization throughout northern Italy for centuries to come. Columbanus always enjoyed being in the forests and caves, and as he walked through the woods birds and squirrels would ride on his shoulders. Toward the end of his life came word that his old enemies were dead, and his brothers wanted him to come back north, but he declined. Knowing that his time was almost done, he retired to a cave for solitude, and died as he had predicted. His influence continued for centuries as those he converted handed on the faith, the brothers he taught evangelised untold numbers more, and his brother monks founded over one hundred monasteries to protect learning and spread the faith. Miracles ascribed to Columbanus include: to obtain food for a sick brother monk, he cured the wife of the donor; once when he was surrounded by wolves, he simply walked through them; at one point he needed a cave for his solitary prayers; a bear lived there; when Columbanus asked, the bear left; when he needed water in order to live in the cave, a spring appeared nearby; when the Luxeuil monastery granary ran empty, he prayed over it and it refilled; he multiplied bread and beer for his community; he cured several sick monks, who then got straight out of bed to reap the monastery's harvest; gave sight to a blind man at Orleans; he destroyed a vat of beer being prepared for a pagan festival by breathing on it; when the monastery needed help in the fields, he tamed a bear, and yoked it to a plough

**22 November / 5 December — Afterfeast of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos —Nativity Fast — The Holy Martyr Cecilia** — Born in Rome of rich and eminent parents, she had a firm faith in Christ the Lord and a great zeal for the Faith. Vowing life-long virginity to God, holy Cecilia wore a rough hair-shirt underneath the costly raiment that her parents gave her. When they forced her into marriage with a pagan, Valerian, she spent the first night urging her new-wedded bridegroom to go to Bishop Urban for baptism, and then himself to live a life of virginity. Embracing the Christian faith, Valerian also brought his brother Tibertius to it. Both brothers were very soon condemned to death for their faith, but their zeal did not falter in the face of death itself. Taken to the scaffold, these two brothers succeeded in bringing the captain of the guard, Maximus, to the Faith, and they all three suffered together for Christ the Lord. St Cecilia buried their bodies together and was then herself taken for trial, having unwearingly won over many pagans to the Christian faith. In one evening, she had won over four hundred souls. When the judge asked her whence came her daring, she answered: 'From a pure conscience and an unquestioning faith'. After harsh torture, she was condemned to be beheaded with the sword. The executioner brought the sword down on her neck three times, but failed to kill her; he only wounded her and the blood ran down from her wounds, being caught in kerchiefs and bowls by the faithful to use for healing. Three days later, Christ's martyr and virgin gave her spirit into the hands of her Lord, to rejoice with him in eternity. St Cecilia suffered with the others in about the year 230. Her relics are preserved in the church dedicated to her name in Rome. In the Western Church, St Cecilia is regarded as the patron of Church Music. St Kallistos, Patriarch of Constantinople; The Holy Martyr Menignus; Holy and Righteous Michael the Soldier; The Holy Apostles Philemon, Archippus and Apphia.

**23 November / 6 December — Afterfeast of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos —Nativity Fast — St Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium** — A fellow-countryman and friend of St Basil the Great and other great saints of the fourth century, Amphilochius early forsook the bustle of the world and withdrew to a cave where, as the solitary, he lived in asceticism for forty years. The episcopal throne in Iconium then fell empty, and Amphilochius was chosen in a wonderful way and consecrated as Bishop of Iconium. He was a marvellous shepherd and a great defender of the purity of the Orthodox faith, and took part in the Second Ecumenical Council in 381. He fought zealously against Macedonius, and against the Arians and the Eunomians. He personally begged Theodosius the Great to drive the Arians out of every city in the Empire, but the Emperor did not comply with his request. After a few days, Amphilochius came before the Emperor again. When the bishop was taken into the presence-chamber, the Emperor was sitting on his throne with his son Arcadius, whom he had taken as co-Emperor, sitting at his right hand. Entering the room, Amphilochius did reverence to Theodosius, but ignored Arcadius as though he were not there. Infuriated by this, the Emperor Theodosius commanded that Amphilochius be instantly driven from court. The saint then said to the Emperor: 'Do you see, O Emperor, how you do not tolerate a slight paid to your son? In the same way, God the Father does not tolerate dishonour paid to His Son, turning with loathing from those who blaspheme against Him, and being angered at that accursed Arian heresy.' Hearing this, the Emperor understood the reason for Amphilochius's seeming disrespect towards his son, and marvelled at his wisdom and daring. Among many other works, Amphilochius wrote several books on the Faith. He entered into rest in 395 in great old age, and went to immortal life.

**St Alexander of the Neva (Nevsky)** - The son of Prince Yaroslav, his heart was drawn to God from his youth. He overcame the Swedes on the river Neva on July 15th, 1240, whence he took the name 'of the Neva'. On that occasion, Ss Boris and Gleb appeared to one of Alexander's generals and promised their aid to the great prince, their kinsman. Among the Golden Horde of the Tartars, he refused to sacrifice to idols or pass through fire. The Tartar Khan valued him for his wisdom, and his physical strength and beauty. He built many churches, and performed innumerable works of mercy. He entered into rest at the age of forty-three, on November 14th, 1263, today being the commemoration of the translation of his relics to the city of Vladimir; St Gregory, Bishop of Agrigentum; St Mitrophan, Bishop of Voronezh' St. Trudo, Abbot.

**24 November / 7 December — Afterfeast of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos —Nativity Fast — The Holy and Great Martyr Catherine** — The daughter of King Constus, she lived with her mother in Alexandria after her father's death. Her mother was secretly a Christian and, through her spiritual father, brought Catherine to the Christian faith. In a vision, St Catherine received a ring from the Lord Jesus Himself as a sign of her betrothal to Him. This ring remains on her finger to this day. Catherine was greatly gifted by God, exceptionally well-educated in Greek philosophy, medicine, rhetoric and logic, and added great physical beauty to this. When the wicked Emperor Maxentius offered sacrifice to idols and ordered everyone to do the same, St Catherine came with daring before him and denounced his idolatrous errors. The Emperor, seeing

that she surpassed him in wisdom and learning, summoned fifty of the wisest men, to dispute with her about faith and put her to shame, but Catherine was wiser than they, and put them to shame. The furious Emperor commanded that all fifty wise men be burned. These wise men, at St Catherine's prayers, all confessed the name of Christ at the moment of death, and proclaimed themselves Christians. When the martyr was in prison, she brought Porphyrius the general, with two hundred of his soldiers, to the Faith, and also the Empress, Augusta-Vasilissa. They all suffered for Christ. At St Catherine's martyrdom, an angel of God appeared to her, stopping and breaking the wheel on which she was being tortured, and after that the Lord Christ Himself appeared to her, strengthening her. After many tortures, Catherine was beheaded with the sword at the age of eighteen, on November 24th, 310. Milk flowed from her body in place of blood. Her wonderworking relics are preserved on Sinai. St. Minver, virgin of Cornwall, St. Romanus of Bordeaux (d.382)' The Holy and Great Martyr Mercurius; The Holy Maiden Mastridia.

**25 November / 8 December — Apodosis of the Entry into the Temple — Nativity Fast – The Hieromartyr Clement Bishop of Rome** - Born in Rome and of royal blood, he was a contemporary of the apostles. His mother and two brothers were caught by a storm on a voyage and driven to different places. His father then went off to find his wife and sons, and himself disappeared. Clement, being then twenty-four years old, set off eastwards to look for his parents and brothers. In Alexandria, he made the acquaintance of the Apostle Barnabas, and afterwards became a friend of the Apostle Peter, who was already being followed by his two brothers, Faustinus and Faustinian. By God's providence, the Apostle Peter found Clement's aged mother, who was living as a beggar-woman, and then his father also. Thus the whole family was reunited, and they all returned to Rome as Christians. Clement remained linked with the great apostles, who made him bishop before their death. After Peter's death by martyrdom, Linus was bishop in Rome, then Cletus—both of them only for a short time—and then Clement. He governed the Church of God with burning zeal and, from day to day, brought large numbers of unbelievers to the Faith. He set seven scribes to record the lives of the Christian martyrs who were at that time suffering for their Lord. The Emperor Trajan drove him out to Cherson, where Clement found about two thousand exiled Christians, who were all put to the hard toil of cutting stone in an arid region. The Christians welcomed Clement with great joy, and he was to them a living source of comfort. By his prayers, he brought water from the dry ground and converted so many of the pagan inhabitants to Christianity that there were seventy-five churches built in that place in one year. To prevent the further spreading of the Christian faith, Clement was condemned to death, and drowned in the sea with a stone round his neck in the year 101. His wonderworking relics were taken out of the sea only in the time of Ss Cyril and Methodius; The Hieromartyr Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria; Our Holy Father Paphnutius.

**26 November / 9 December — Nativity Fast— St Innocent of Irkutsk** - Saint Innocent was born John Veniaminov in 1797 in the village of Anginskoye in Irkutsk province. The son of a church server, he entered the Irkutsk theological seminary at the age of 20. He married, was ordained a deacon of the Church of the Annunciation in Irkutsk, and became a teacher before being ordained at the age of 24. At 26 he volunteered to travel to the distant island of Unalaska in the Aleutians as a mission priest, accompanied by his aging mother, his wife, his son, and his brother. It took them more than a year to travel from Irkutsk to the island of Unalaska. He built churches, learned the local languages, translated the gospels and hymns, and expanded his mission to the surrounding islands. In Unalaska he wrote his famous "Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven." We went on to Sitka Island, to minister to the Tlingits (or Kolushchans), who had not heard the Gospel and served there for fifteen years before returning to St. Petersburg to report on the mission. In St. Petersburg he received news of the death of his wife, and he was tonsured a monk and given the rank of archimandrite, then bishop and then archbishop of Irkutsk. In 1865, the Holy Synod issued a decree appointing Archbishop Innocent a member of the Holy Governing Synod. In 1867, after the repose of Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow, he was appointed Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna and Archimandrite of the Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra. Both in Moscow and in the Holy Synod, Metropolitan Innocent achieved, under the guidance of Divine Providence, a great deal for the missionary cause. His administration of his diocese brought fruitful results: many members of the Moscow and village clergy were provided with houses by their communities, and their standard of living improved, thanks to funds raised by Metropolitan Innocent; a home for retired clergymen was opened in 1871; a diocesan school of icon painting and other arts was opened for poor children and orphans of the clergy who were not able to attend ordinary schools (1873); a school for daughters of the clergy; and a church dedicated to the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God was built for the Moscow Theological Academy. He reposed in 1879. One of his contemporaries wrote of St. Innocent, "His Eminence, Innocent stands out magnificently among all our Orthodox hierarchs, ancient and new, for his remarkable and unique qualities. Having grown up and worked up to the age of seventy in the midst of nature, surrounded by simple children of nature, he was himself approachable, kind and welcoming, straightforward and free of partiality, caring not for show or finery, nor prone to flaunt either his knowledge or his accomplishments, and his behavior at all times was simple and humble. His great natural intelligence was enriched with a wealth of knowledge that few possess. His heart had no place for envy and cunning, ambition and vanity, desire for riches or for earthly comforts. Since early childhood he had to wage a constant struggle with severe natural conditions and people, resisting need and privation, and he taught himself patience and industry, courage and perseverance, self-control and resourcefulness, restraint and the ability to be content with little, and implicit submission to the holy will of God in all circumstances." Preaching the Gospel was St. Innocent's main task in life, accomplished at great personal sacrifice and hardship, but with great joy. He wrote to his bishop in Irkutsk about his missionary expedition to the island of Unga in 1828: "Words cannot describe the zeal with which the Aleuts received my teaching, the gratitude with which they honored me for having instructed them, or the spiritual pleasure which teaching them brought me. Thanks be to God the Word, for granting me His Word, and for enlightening and comforting them with the Word."

**Our Holy Father Alypius the Stylite** - Born in Hadrianopolis, a city in Paphlagonia, he was from his youth dedicated to the service of God. As a deacon, he served in the church in that city with Bishop Theodore. But, desiring a solitary life of prayer

and meditation, Alypius withdrew to a Greek cemetery outside the city, from which people fled as from a place of terror, as demonic visions had been seen there. Here he erected a Cross, and built a church in honour of St Euphemia, who had appeared to him in a dream. Near the church, he built a high pillar, climbed up onto it and spent fifty-three years there in fasting and prayer. Neither the mockery of men nor the evil demons could drive him away or shake his purpose. This saint endured endless assaults from the demons. They not only tried to terrify him with demonic apparitions, but also stoned him and gave him no peace day nor night for a long time. But Alypius courageously defended himself against this diabolical power with the sign of the Cross and the name of Jesus. Finally, the vanquished demons left him and fled, and men began to revere him and to come to him for his prayers, comfort, teaching and healing. Two monasteries were built beside his pillar, on one side for men and on the other for women. His mother and sisters lived in the women's monastery. St Alypius guided the monks and nuns from his pillar by word and example, and shone like the sun in the sky for them all, showing them the way of salvation. This man of God had such grace that he was often bathed in heavenly light, and a pillar of this light stretched above him to heaven. Alypius was a great and mighty wonderworker, both in his lifetime and after his death. Living for a hundred years, he entered into rest in the year 640, in the time of Emperor Heraclius. Of his holy relics, the head is preserved in the monastery of Koutloumousiou on the Holy Mountain. Our Holy Father James the Solitary; Our Holy Father Stylianus; Our Holy Father Nikon the Preacher of Repentance; St Innocent of Irkutsk.

## REFLECTION

No mortal has interpreted the Epistles of the Apostle Paul with greater love and depth than St. John Chrysostom. Had St. Paul himself interpreted them, he could not have interpreted them better. Behold, history tells us that it was Paul himself who interpreted them through the mind and the pen of Chrysostom. When St. Proclus was a novice under Chrysostom, during the time that he was patriarch, it was his duty to announce visitors. A certain nobleman was slandered before Emperor Arcadius and the emperor had expelled him from the court. This nobleman came to implore Chrysostom to intercede with the emperor on his behalf. Proclus went to announce him to the patriarch but, looking through the partly opened door, saw a man bent over the patriarch, whispering something in his ear while the patriarch wrote. This continued until dawn. Meanwhile, Proclus told the nobleman to come back the next evening, while he himself remained in amazement, wondering who the man with the patriarch was, and how he managed to enter the patriarch's chamber unannounced. The second night the same thing happened again, and Proclus was in still greater amazement. The third night the same thing happened again, and Proclus was in the greatest amazement. When Chrysostom asked him if the nobleman had come by, he replied that he had already been waiting for three nights, but that he couldn't announce him because of the elderly, balding stranger who had been whispering in the patriarch's ear for three nights. The astonished Chrysostom said that he did not remember anyone entering to see him during the previous three nights. He asked his novice what the stranger looked like, and Proclus pointed to the icon of the Holy Apostle Paul, saying that the man was like him. Therefore, it was the Apostle Paul himself who was directing the mind and pen of his greatest interpreter.

## CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the wondrous creation of the world (Genesis 1): 1. How the Holy Trinity took counsel together about the creation of man; 2. How God created man in His own image.

## HOMILY - on behaviour in accordance with one's calling

*... that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering* (Ephesians 4:1-2). Be not proud, be not angry, be not faint-hearted; for these are unworthy of a Christian calling. This calling is so elevated and wonderful that it is difficult for a man to safeguard himself from pride; yet it is difficult to keep oneself above faint-heartedness when dangers and losses occur. Against these three unhealthy states, the Apostle emphasizes three healthy states: against pride, lowliness; against anger, meekness; against faint-heartedness, longsuffering. It must be said that these three virtues—lowliness, meekness and longsuffering—do not express in full measure the loftiness of the Christian calling. But then, nothing in this world can fully express the height of the Christian calling. The preciousness and richness of this calling cannot be seen here on earth: it is like a closed chest that a man carries through this world, but only opens it and avails himself of its riches in the other world. Only someone who could raise himself to the highest heavens and see Christ the Lord in glory with the angels and the saints could assess the loftiness of the Christian calling; for there is the victorious assembly of all God's chosen ones from earth who were made worthy of this exceedingly high honor.

O Lord Jesus Christ our God, Thy name is the name most dear to us.

**To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.**

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