

27th Sunday After Pentecost

Prophet Obadiah &

Martyr Barlaam of Caesarea

19 November / 2 December

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 2: When Thou didst descend to death, O Life Immortal, Thou didst slay hell with the splendour of Thy Godhead! And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead, all the powers of Heaven cried out: O Giver of Life, Christ our God, Glory to Thee!

Troparion of the Prophet Obadiah tone 4: According to thy name thou wast a servant of God the Word./ Found worthy of the Light that passes understanding thou didst receive the illumination of prophecy./ For thou didst discern the immaterial Glory/ and become an instrument sounded by God, O Prophet Obadiah, and foretell things to come.

Troparion of St Barlaam tone 4: Armed with youthful manliness,/ thou didst endure martyrdom in old age and glorify Christ./ Thou didst offer Him thy right hand as a whole burnt offering/ and thy holy soul as a blameless sacrifice. / Intercede that all may be granted forgiveness, O Great **Martyr Barlaam.**

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 2: Hell became afraid, O Almighty Saviour, seeing the miracle of Thy resurrection from the tomb! The dead arose! Creation, with Adam, beheld this and rejoiced with Thee! And the world, O My Saviour, praises Thee forever.

Kontakion of the Prophet Obadiah tone 8: Thou didst offer thy life as acceptable first-fruits to the Triune God, Obadiah;/ and having received the beauty of inspiration/ thou didst reveal things to come and so didst cry: Alleluia.

Kontakion of St Barlaam tone 3: Though aged in body thou didst vanquish the evil one/ by thy mighty contest, O Barlaam./ Thou didst endure the rack like one without a body,/ and manfully bear the burning of thy hand./ Wherefore God the Word has crowned thee with a crown of glory.

Matins Gospel V

EPISTLE: Ephesians 6: 10-17

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD, THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO STAND AGAINST THE WILES OF THE DEVIL

He does not speak against the fighting, nor against the hostilities, but against the 'wiles.' For this enemy is at war with us, not simply, nor openly, but by 'wiles.' To use 'wiles' is to deceive and to take by artifice or contrivance ...and stratagems in the case of those who seduce us. I mean something like this. The Devil never proposes to us sins in their proper colours ...Our conflict is with one skilled in the arts of war ...'For you were once darkness' (Eph. 5:8); so naming that wickedness which is in this present life; for beyond it, it will have no place, not in Heaven, nor in the world to come ...By 'evil day' he means the present life, and also calls it 'this present evil world' (Gal. 1:4) ...How then, you may say, are we to wrestle with the darkness? By becoming light. How with the spiritual hosts of wickedness? By becoming good ...No, if we have a mind, neither will we wrestle at all, for it is because we choose it, that there is a struggle, since so great is the power of Him who dwells in us, as He said, 'Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:9). All power He has given us, both of wrestling and of not wrestling. It is because we are slothful, that we have to wrestle with them ...Then let us trample under foot the power of the devil; let us trample under foot our sins, I mean everything that pertains to this life: wrath, lust, vainglory, every passion.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXII on Ephesians IV. B#57, pp.159-162.

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

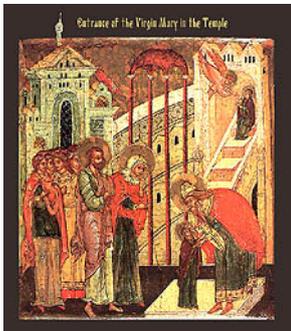
Saints of the week

19 November / 2 December — Nativity Fast - The Holy Prophet Obadiah — Obadiah lived at the court of King Ahab, but, when the king turned away from true worship and bowed down to idols, Obadiah did not follow the king's example, but continued to serve the one, true God. When the wicked Queen Jezebel, because of her feud with Elias, hunted down all the prophets of God, Obadiah took a hundred of them and hid them in two caves, feeding them till the persecution was over (I Kings 18:4). A contemporary of the great Prophet Elias, Obadiah revered him greatly and hearkened to him in all things, being a follower and pupil of his. He lived nine hundred years before Christ, and entered peacefully into rest. The Holy Martyr Barlaam; Our Holy Fathers Barlaam and Joasaph the Heir; The Holy Martyr Heliodorus;

St. Egbert, archbishop of York (766) - He was son of Eata and brother of Eadbert, King of Northumbria. Having received deacon's Orders at Rome he returned to Northumbria and was appointed to the See of York in 732. He received the pallium in 735, thus becoming second Archbishop of York, the title having been lost to that church since the flight of Saint Paulinus to Kent. He was thus placed in a position to carry out many needed reforms in which he proved himself a strict disciplinarian, but was at the same time remarkable for sweetness and gentleness. One of his greatest works was the foundation of the famous School of York and its celebrated library. Alcuin was among his pupils. Eadbert resigned his throne to enter the monastery, and the two men spent their last years in retirement and prayer. Egbert's best known work is a collection of canonical regulations.

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 track 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.