



## 31<sup>st</sup> Sunday After Pentecost Sunday of the Holy Forefathers & The Holy Prophet Daniel and the Three Youths

17 / 30 December

*"This the second Sunday before Christmas - it calls to remembrance the ancestors of Christ according to the flesh, whether before or under the Law. The Sunday that follows is still broader in scope, commemorating all the righteous men and women who pleased God from the beginning of time, from the days of Adam the first man down to Joseph, the betrothed of the Mother of God. Approaching Christmas in this way, the worshipper is enabled to see the Incarnation, not as an abrupt and irrational intervention of the divine, but as the culmination of a long process extending over thousands of years." - the Festal Menaion.*

**Resurrection Tropar, Tone 6:** The angelic powers were at Thy tomb; / the guards became as dead men. / Mary stood by Thy grave, / seeking Thy most pure Body. / Thou didst capture hell, not being tempted by it. / Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life. / O Lord who didst rise from the Dead, / Glory to Thee!

**Tropar of the Holy Fathers, Tone 4:** Daniel, the man of divine desires, seeing Thee, the Stone uncut by human hands, O Lord, prophetically called Thee a babe born without seed, the Word incarnate of the Virgin, the immaculate God, the Saviour of our

souls.

**Troparion of the Holy Prophet Daniel and the Three Children tone 2:** Great are the achievements of faith: / In the fountain of flame, as in refreshing water, the Three Holy Children rejoiced. / And the Prophet Daniel proved a shepherd of lions as of sheep. / By their prayers, O Christ our God, save our souls.

**Resurrection Kondak, Tone 6:** When Christ God the Giver of Life, / raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His Mighty Hand, / He bestowed resurrection on the human race. / He is the Saviour of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of All.

**Kondak of the Holy Fathers, Tone 6:** O thrice-blessed ones, who did not honour an image wrought by hands, but were defended by the indescribable Essence, ye were glorified in your ordeal by fire; and, standing in the midst of unbearable flame, ye called upon God, saying: Make speed and haste Thou to help us, O Compassionate One, in that Thou art merciful; who what Thou willest, Thou canst do!

**Kontakion of the Prophet Daniel tone 3:** When thy pure heart was purged by the Spirit / thou didst become a vessel of clear prophecy; / for thou seest things afar off as though they were close at hand. / Thou didst tame the lions when thou wast cast into their den. / Therefore we honour thee, O blessed Prophet, glorious Daniel.

**Kontakion of the Three Children in Babylon tone 2:** An image made with hands you would not worship, O thrice blessed three; / but protected by the ineffable Essence you were glorified in your ordeal by fire. / From the midst of the devouring flames you called upon God, / crying: Hasten, O compassionate One, / in Thy mercy come to our aid, for if Thou willest Thou canst.

### Matins Gospel IX

**Epistle: Colossians 3: 4-11**

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, In which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, And have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

## **DO NOT LIE TO ONE ANOTHER, SINCE YOU HAVE PUT OFF THE OLD MAN WITH HIS DEEDS**

You shall destroy all those who utter a lie (Ps. 5:7). The mouth that speaks a lie will slay the soul (Wis. 1:11). Forasmuch as all sins arise through a love of pleasure or avarice or vainglory, we can say that lying has its roots in these three vices: a man has to avoid blame and humiliation to fulfil his own desires or to gain something ...And in the end no one believes him when he speaks the truth ...A man whose very life is a lie is one who is licentious and pretends to be temperate, or a miser and speaks of almsgiving and compassion, or ostentatious and goes in raptures over poverty, not wanting to acquire the virtue he praises ...'the devil changes himself into an angel of light' (II Cor.11:14) ...the man whose very life is a lie: he is not a simple but a two-faced man; he is one thing on the inside and another on the outside.

*St. Dorotheos of Gaza. Discourses, IX. On Falsehood. B#45, pp. 160-162.*

for the Prophet: Heb . 11:33-40

### **GOSPEL: ST. LUKE 14: 16-24**

Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, And sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.' "

### **Sunday of the Forefathers.**

'Many are called but few are chosen'. So says Christ in today's Gospel. If we think of the knowledge of God conserved among different peoples in the world before Christ, these words have a special significance.

Some peoples conserved a dim memory of events of the human past. In Australia the Aborigines kept a vague memory of how God created the world perfect, which they call the 'Dreamtime'.

All over the world, from Asia to South America, some 120 different peoples and cultures have kept the memory of a great, universal flood, which is known to us in detail through Noah.

In India the Hindus long ago kept an intuition of a Trinitarian God, but among them their knowledge of God became so twisted that their trinity is a trinity of destructive gods.

Other peoples fell even further and began worshipping stones and trees, rivers and mountains, mistaking creation for the Creator. For instance, in this country, thousands of years before Christ, the 'cleverest' people, not unlike some today, worshipped the stars, as we can see from the great astronomical monument that they built and called Stonehenge. At that time in Egypt too the cleverest people built huge Pyramids to worship the Sun, and through which they believed that their leaders, the Pharaohs, would become stars.

Other peoples altogether gave up on ever knowing God and declared that the way ahead consisted in following the wisest men of their cultures, Buddha in India, or Confucius in China.

In Ancient Greece, the wisest men declared that men could never know God unless God first revealed Himself to man and in Athens they set up an altar to 'the Unknown God'.

Many were called but few were chosen, for among all these peoples and cultures, there were representatives of one people who conserved the true history of mankind. This people were the Jews, the ancient Hebrews, the chosen people, and today we commemorate all the righteous among them, our forefathers and foremothers in the Faith. From Adam and Eve on, there were among that people righteous and holy men and women. In their lives they prefigured the life of Christ and foresaw Christ.

Abel, who was murdered by his brother Cain, is a prefiguration of Christ, who was also murdered by men.

Melchizedek the priest is the prefiguration of Christ the High Priest.

Enoch and Elijah, who were taken up to heaven, prefigure Christ Who was also taken up to heaven.

Noah, whose family alone survived the Flood, is a prefiguration of the baptism of purification given to us by Christ.

Job the long-suffering prefigures the longsuffering of Christ.

Abraham, who was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac, prefigures the sacrifice that God the Father made with His Son.

Jacob prefigures Christ, for he saw the ladder that connects earth to heaven, enabling heaven to come down to earth and earth to rise up to heaven.

Joseph, who was betrayed by his twelve brothers, prefigures Christ who was betrayed by His disciples.

Moses, the leader of his people, who was given the great revelation of the Ten Commandments, unsurpassed until Christ gave us the Beatitudes, prefigures Christ, for Moses saw the burning bush unconsumed, which is the Virgin's womb, which was unconsumed by the fire of Christ.

Joshua, whose name is the same as Christ's, that is Jesus, the Saviour, prefigures Jesus the Deliverer of His people.

David, related by blood to Christ, saw Christ in the Psalms which he wrote down.

Solomon expressed the Wisdom of God in his Books of Wisdom.

The Prophet Daniel saw the Holy Trinity through the Three Holy Youths in the furnace of Babylon.

The Prophet Isaiah saw Christ the suffering Servant.

The Prophet Jonah prefigures the three-day burial of Christ through his three-day stay in the belly of the whale.

All these holy forefathers together with our holy foremothers, Sarah, Rebecca, Ruth, Deborah and many, many more, whose icons are all on the back wall of our church, which is devoted to the righteous of the Old Testament, all these we commemorate today. All these are in fact our spiritual family, for they saw, long before we were born, the One Whom we confess, Christ our true God Who is Risen from the dead.

Let us in these last few days before the celebration of the Birth of the Saviour on earth, read one, or at least one part, of their writings, for example, in the Book of Genesis, the Book of Exodus, the Book of Proverbs, or simply the Psalms, and let us renew our links with our ancestors in the Orthodox Faith.

Holy Forefathers and Foremothers of Christ, pray to God for us!

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From this Sunday of the Holy Forefathers begins a new cycle of preparation for the Birth of Christ. This is the beginning of a new life. From the manger, the light of Christ will shine on us. And in this light will be the warmth of our adoption by God. At the manger we will feel like one family.

Something wonderful happens every year at the manger of Christ. We all begin to feel like brothers and sisters, children of one Father. And these are not just words, but reality. Love becomes manifest. There is a desire to gladden one another, to help, and to love.

And again this year, from the manger of Christ our new ways will begin: family, monastic, social, domestic, business. But all of them will guide us to one goal—to the Kingdom of God, to communion with God, to the Lord's Feast.

So let us not forget our dignity, our calling, that we are invited to the Lord's Feast. And let us spend our temporary life as pilgrims, proceeding on the paths that will bring us to the Heavenly Jerusalem, where there will be "the ceaseless sound of those keeping festival." And then we will become not only those who are called, but those who are chosen. (Mt. 22:14)

*Archbishop Alexei - The One Thing Needful,*

[for the Prophet: Luke 11:47-12:1](#)

### Saints of the week

**17 / 30 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Prophet Daniel, and the Three Children: Ananias, Azarias and Misael** - All four of them were of the royal tribe of Judah. When Nebuchadnezzar destroyed and plundered Jerusalem, Daniel, as a boy, was taken off into slavery together with Jehoiachin, King of Judah, and many other Israelites. The account of his life, sufferings and prophecies can be found in detail in his book. Utterly given to God, Daniel from his early youth received from God the gift of great discernment. His fame among the Jews in Babylon began when he denounced two lecherous and unrighteous elders, and saved the chaste Susannah from an unjust death. But his fame among the Babylonians stemmed from the day when he solved and interpreted the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar. For this, the king made him a prince at his court. When the king made a golden idol in the Plain of Dura, the Three Children refused to worship it, for which they were cast into the burning fiery furnace. But an angel of God appeared in the furnace and soothed the flames, so that the Children walked in the furnace untouched by the fire, and sang: 'Blessed art Thou, Lord God of our fathers!' The king saw this marvel, and was amazed. He then brought the Children out of the furnace and did them great honour. In the time of King Belshazzar, when the king was

eating and drinking with his guests at a feast out of consecrated vessels taken from the Temple in Jerusalem, an invisible hand wrote these three words on the wall: 'Mene, Tekel, Upharsin'. No-one could interpret these words but Daniel. That night, King Belshazzar was killed. Daniel was thrice thrown into a den of lions for his faith in the one, living God, and both times God preserved him alive. Daniel saw God on His throne with the angelic powers, often saw angels, had insight into the future of certain people, of kingdoms and of the whole human race, and prophesied the time of the coming of the Saviour on earth. According to St Cyril of Alexandria, Daniel and the Three Children lived to great old age in Babylon, and were beheaded with the sword for the true Faith. When Ananias was beheaded, Azarias held out his robe and caught his head, then Misael caught Azarias's head and Daniel Misael's. An angel of God carried their bodies to Judea, to Mount Gebal, and placed them under a rock. According to tradition, these four men arose at the time of the death of the Lord Jesus and appeared to many, then fell asleep again. Daniel is counted as one of the four Great Prophets (with Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel). He lived and prophesied half-way through the thousand years before Christ. Our Holy Father Daniel; Our Holy Fathers, the New Martyrs Paisius and Habakkuk; In Wales, in Merionethshire,

**St. Tydecho, brother of St. Cadfan.** Whose tropar in Tone 8 is: By thy labours for Christ, O Father Tydecho, / thou didst win the crown of eternal glory / and didst light the way into the Ark of Salvation. / Wherefore, O Saint, intercede for us that in following thee we may be found worthy of Christ's great mercy. Born in Wales. Several Welsh churches are named for him. No other information has survived.

**18 / 31 December — Nativity Fast - The Holy Martyr Sebastian and those with him** - This glorious martyr of Christ was born in Italy and brought up in the city of Milan. He was destined in his youth to be a soldier, and, as an educated, handsome and courageous man, commended himself to the Emperor Diocletian, who made him captain of the imperial guard. He secretly confessed the Christian faith, and prayed to the living God. An honourable, upright and merciful man, Sebastian was greatly loved by his soldiers. Whenever possible, he saved Christians from torture and death and, when this was not possible, gave them courage to die for Christ the living God without turning back. Two brothers, Marcus and Marcellinus, who were in prison for Christ and already on the verge of denying Him and worshipping idols, were confirmed in their faith and strengthened in their martyrdom by Sebastian. As he spoke with them, exhorting them not to fear death for Christ, his face was illumined like that of an angel of God. Sebastian supported his words by marvels: he healed Zoe, the wife of Nicostratus the gaoler, who had been dumb for six years, and brought Nicostratus and his whole household to baptism; he healed the two sick sons of Claudius the commander, and brought him and his whole household also to baptism; he healed Tranquillianus, the father of Marcus and Marcellinus, of gout and pains in his legs which had troubled him for eleven years, and brought him to baptism together with his whole household; he healed the Roman Eparch, Chromatius, of the same infirmity and brought him and his son Tiburtius to baptism. Of these, Zoe was the first to suffer, being seized while at prayer beside the tomb of the Apostle Peter. After torture, she was thrown into the river Tiber. Then Tiburtius was seized, and the judge placed live coals before him, challenging him to choose life or death: to cast incense on the coals and cense the idols, or to stand himself barefoot on the coals. St Tiburtius made the sign of the Cross and stood barefoot on the coals, and remained unharmed. He was then beheaded with the sword. Nicostratus was killed with a stake, Tranquillianus was drowned and Marcus and Marcellinus were run through by spears. Then Sebastian was taken before the Emperor Diocletian. The Emperor rebuked him for his betrayal, but he said: 'I always pray to my Christ for your health, and for the peace of the Roman Empire.' The Emperor ordered that he be stripped and shot at with arrows. The soldiers then shot at him, until the martyr's whole body was so covered with arrows that it was invisible beneath them. When they thought that he was dead, he showed himself alive and healed of all his wounds. Then the pagans beat him to death with staves. He suffered gloriously for Christ his Lord and entered into the heavenly Kingdom in 287, when Gaius was Bishop of Rome. St Florus, Bishop of Aminsus; St Modestus, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

**Martyrdom of Hieromonk Nestor of Zharki (Ivanova), defender of the holy icons (1993)** - in the world Nestor Savchuk was born in Crimea in 1960. An artist, he travelled to Odessa in the early 1980's to undertake further studies. There he came in contact with Orthodox Christians, afterwards journeying to the Pochaev monastery where he was tonsured and later ordained a priest. An 'unregistered' monk, he fled the authorities and settled in Zharki, where he served in the church and ministered to the people. He struggled with great courage against the Russian Mafia which was at that time stealing the holy icons from the churches for sale abroad. He was murdered on December 18, 1993, at the age of 33, defending the church from thieves.

**19 December / 1 January — Nativity Fast - The Holy Martyr Boniface** - Martyrdom for Christ makes sinners into saints. This is shown by the example of St Boniface. He was at first servant to a wealthy and dissolute woman, Aglais, in Rome, and had unclean and unlawful relations with her. They were both pagans. Aglais evinced the desire to have the relics of some martyr in her house as an amulet against evil, so she sent her servant to Asia to find and buy for her what she desired. Boniface took some slaves with him and a fair amount of money and, at the moment of parting, said to Aglais: 'If I can't find any martyrs and if they bring you back my body, martyred for Christ, will you receive it with honour? Aglais laughed, and called him a drunken old sinner, and so they parted. Coming to the city of Tarsus, Boniface saw many Christians undergoing torture: some were having their legs cut off, some their hands, others their eyes put out, yet others were dying on the gallows and so forth. Boniface's heart was changed, and he repented of his sinful life with tears. He called out among the Christian martyrs: 'I too am a Christian!' The judge took him for interrogation and ordered that he be harshly flogged, then that boiling lead be poured into his mouth and, as this did him no harm, that he be beheaded. The slaves then took his body back to Rome. An angel of God appeared to Aglais and said: 'Take him who was at one time your servant, but is now our brother and fellow-servant; he is the guardian of your soul and the protector of your life.' Aglais went in wonder to meet them, took Boniface's body, built a church for his relics and placed them there. She then repented, gave away all her goods to the poor and withdrew from the world, living a further fifteen years in bitter penitence. St Boniface suffered in the year 290. St Gregory, Bishop of

Omir; St Boniface the Merciful, Bishop of Ferentino; Our Holy Father Elias of Murom; St. Manirus, b, apostle of Nth. Scotland; St. Winebald the Pilgrim, abbot and missionary of England and Heidenheim, Germany (761).

**20 December / 2 January — Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ - **Nativity Fast** - **Rest** of St John of Kronstadt.** - a great luminary of the Russian Church. A married priest, he served in the Cathedral of St. Andrew's in Kronstadt, a busy port near St. Petersburg. A great man of prayer, he served Divine Liturgy every day and read the entire cycle of daily services. He visited the poor and the sick, generously giving alms, himself often going without. He and his matushka lived as brother and sister. He taught and advised all those who came to him, young and old, rich and poor. Such was the love of the people for him throughout Russia that the Kronstadt post office had a special section just for St. John! Even during his lifetime hundreds were healed through his holy prayers. In 1906, he became very ill and suffered with this sickness until his death. Nevertheless, he continued to serve daily. On December 20, 1908, he quietly reposed in the Lord. A crowd of 60,000 attended his funeral, an unprecedented event in Russia. He was formally glorified as a saint by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad on June 3, 1964. Holy blessed Father John, pray to God for us!

Tropar, 4th Tone: With the apostles thy sound hath gone forth unto the ends of the world; / with the confessors thou didst endure sufferings for Christ; / thou didst liken thyself unto the holy hierarchs in the preaching of the Word; / and with the venerable hast thou shone forth in the grace of God. / Therefore, the Lord hath exalted the depths of the humility higher than the heavens, / and hath given us thy name as a source of most wondrous miracles. / Wherefore, O wonderworker, who livest in Christ forever, / lovingly have mercy upon those amid misfortunes, / and hearken unto thy children that call upon thee with faith, / O Righteous John, // our beloved pastor.

Kontakion, 4th Tone: O thou who from infancy wast chosen by God, / and in childhood didst miraculously receive from Him the gift of learning, / and wast gloriously called to the priesthood in a vision during sleep, / thou didst prove to be a wonderful shepherd of the Church of Christ, / O Father John, namesake of grace. / Pray to Christ our God // that we all be with thee in the kingdom of the heavens.

**The Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-Bearer** - This holy man was named the 'God-Bearer' because he always carried the name of the living God in his heart and on his lips. Also, by tradition, he was thus named because he was held in the arms of God incarnate, Jesus Christ. On a day when the Lord was teaching His disciples humility, He took a child and set it among them, saying: 'Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:4). This child was Ignatius. He was later a disciple of St John the Theologian, together with Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna. As bishop in Antioch, he governed the Church of God as a good shepherd, and was the first to introduce antiphonal singing into the Church, in which two choirs alternate. This way of singing was revealed to St Ignatius from among the angels in heaven. When the Emperor Trajan passed through Antioch on his way to battle with the Persians, he heard about Ignatius, summoned him and urged him to offer sacrifice to idols, so that he could be made a senator. The Emperor's urgings and threats being in vain, holy Ignatius was put in irons and sent to Rome, escorted by ten bestial soldiers, to be thrown to the wild beasts. Ignatius rejoiced to be suffering for his Lord, and prayed to God that the wild beasts should be the tomb for his body, and that none should hinder his death. After a long and difficult journey from Asia through Thrace, Macedonia and Epirus, Ignatius reached Rome, where he was thrown to the lions in the circus. They tore him to pieces and devoured him, leaving only a few of the larger bones and his heart. This glorious lover of the Lord Christ suffered in the year 106 in Rome, in the time of the Emperor Trajan. He appeared many times from the other world and worked wonders, helping to this day all who call on him for help. St Danilo, Archbishop of Serbia.

**21 December / 3 January — Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ - **Nativity Fast** - **The Holy Martyr Juliana and the 630 martyrs with her**** - This glorious virgin martyr was born in Nicomedia of pagan parents. Hearing the Gospel preached, she turned to Christ with all her heart and began to live in exact observance of the Lord's commandments. A certain senator, Eleusius, was her betrothed. In order to free herself from him, Juliana told him that she would not marry him unless he became eparch of that city. She said this thinking that the young man would not be in the least likely to attain to such a high position, but Eleusius worked at it, and, by flattery and bribes, gained the post of Eparch of Nicomedia. Juliana then revealed to him that she was a Christian, and could not enter into marriage with him unless he accepted her faith, saying: 'What would it profit us to be united physically but divided in spirit?' Eleusius was exasperated, and denounced her to her father. Her furious father poured scorn on her and whipped her, and then handed her over to the eparch for torture. The eparch ordered that she be harshly beaten, then she was thrown into prison all torn and bleeding. But the Lord healed her in the prison, and she appeared before the eparch whole and unharmed. He then put her into a glowing furnace, but the fire did not burn her. Seeing this wonder, many came to believe in Christ the Lord. Five hundred men and a hundred and thirty women were converted. The eparch condemned them all to death, and ordered that they be beheaded with the sword, and their souls entered into Paradise. Then the wicked judge condemned holy Juliana to be beheaded with the sword. Rejoicing in spirit, Juliana went out to the scaffold, prayed on her knees to God and laid her head on the block. Her head was cut off, and her soul went to Christ's eternal Kingdom of light, in the year 304. God's punishment quickly fell on Eleusius: sailing over the sea, his ship broke up and he fell into the water. He did not find death in the waves, but swam to an island, where the dogs tore him to pieces and devoured him. St Peter the Wonderworker, Metropolitan of Russia; The Holy Martyr Themistocles; In England near Oxford at the village of Bampton, St. Berenwald, priest, m. and at Shaftesbury, St. Elgiva, queen, nun.

**22 December / 4 January — Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ - **Nativity Fast** — **The Holy and Great Martyr Anastasia, the Deliverer from Bonds, and those with her**** - This great heroine of the Christian faith was born in Rome into a wealthy senatorial family, her father being a pagan and her mother a Christian. From her early youth, she clave in love to the Lord Jesus, guided in Christian teaching by a devout teacher, Chrysogonus. Under pressure from her father, Anastasia married a pagan landowner, Publius, but, using the pretext of woman's weakness, she never had physical relations with him. For this,

her husband tortured her harshly by imprisonment and starvation, and laid even heavier tortures on her when he discovered that she went secretly to the prisons of the Christian martyrs, ministering to their needs, washing their wounds and loosening their bonds. But, by God's providence, she was freed from her wicked husband. Publius was sent to Persia by the Emperor, and was drowned on the voyage. Then St Anastasia began to minister openly to the Christian martyrs and, from her great inheritance, helped the poor with alms. The Emperor Diocletian was once in the town of Aquileia, and commanded that Chrysogonus, the confessor of Christ, be brought to him. As he was being brought, Anastasia followed him on the way. Holy Chrysogonus was beheaded at the Emperor's command, and then three sisters, Agapia, Chionia and Irene (April 16th) suffered, the first two being cast into fire and the third shot through with arrows. St Anastasia took their bodies, wrapped them in white linen and, anointing them with aromatic spices, gave them burial. Then Anastasia went to Macedonia, where she ministered to those who were suffering for Christ. There, she became widely-known as a Christian, for which she was seized and taken for interrogation before various judges. Desiring to die for her beloved Christ, Anastasia constantly clung to Him in her heart. A certain pagan high priest, Ulphian, tried to touch St Anastasia's body out of lust, but he was suddenly blinded and gave up the ghost. Condemned to death by starvation, St Anastasia lay in prison for thirty days, nourishing herself only with tears and prayers. After that she was put in a boat with several other Christians to be drowned, but God saved her from this death. She was finally tied hand and foot to four wheels over a fire, and thus gave her holy soul into God's hands. She suffered and entered into Christ's Kingdom in 304. The Holy Martyr Theodota with her three Children; In Wales, St. Amaethlu, founder of Llanfaethlu in Anglesey.

**23 December / 5 January — Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ - Nativity Fast** — The Ten Holy Martyrs of Crete - They suffered for Christ the Lord during Decius's persecution, in the year 250. Their names were: Theodulus, Saturninus, Euporus, Gelasius, Eunician, Zoticus, Pompey, Agathopous, Basilides and Evaristus. They were all honoured and eminent citizens, the cream of the cream. When they were taken to the scaffold, they were filled with joy and discussed among themselves who would be the first to be beheaded, because each wanted to be the first to go to his beloved Christ. Then they prayed: 'O Lord, forgive Thy servants and accept our outpoured blood on our own behalf and that of our kinsfolk and friends and all our fatherland, that all may be released from the darkness of ignorance and come to know Thee, the true light, O eternal King!' They were beheaded and entered into the Kingdom of glory, to eternal rejoicing. St Niphon the Wonderworker; Our Holy Father Nahum, the Wonderworker of Ochrid; At Hexham, St. Frithbert, b. At Abernethy. St. Mazota, virgin

### **HOMILY on Joshua the son of Nun**

*Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left ... be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest* (Joshua 1:7, 9).

Joshua the son of Nun obeyed the Lord in everything to the end, not turning either to the right or to the left of the Lord's commandments. He was surrounded by great horrors and fears while leading the people through an unknown land and through thick ranks of enemies, but he was neither afraid nor dismayed. He considered himself the weapon of God, and knew that his battles were God's battles. As a faithful soldier obeys the commands of his commander, so Joshua listened for and hearkened to the will of the Living God. He did not ascribe any good thing, any power, any merit to himself, but he ascribed all to God and only to God. He did not depend in the least on his own army, his own weapons and his own wisdom, but he depended on God and only on God, the Almighty and All-wise. See, brethren, with what sort of men God walks. Oh, if only Christian rulers and commanders could see this and learn from God's servant Joshua how to serve God! Oh, if they would understand, once and for all, that the people are best served when God is served; and that the people cannot be served if God is not served! The Lord God fulfilled His promise and was with Joshua the son of Nun to the end of his labors and life. And that the Lord was with him is shown by the great and awesome miracles that He manifested through His faithful servant. God divided the river Jordan so that the people crossed over on dry land without a bridge; God made the walls of Jericho fall at the sound of the trumpet; God delivered powerful enemies into the hands of the Israelites; God caused the sun to stand still over Gibeon and the moon to stand still over the valley of Ajalon. Truly, never and nowhere did God forsake His servant Joshua, for Joshua did not leave unfulfilled a single commandment of God. A witness of the Living God and a type of the Savior of the world, when he was old and stricken in years, he instructed his people as God had taught him in the beginning: *Turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left ... but cleave unto the Lord your God* (Joshua 23:6, 8). O Lord Jesus, Son of God, Who showed most glorious wonders through Joshua, the son of Nun, Thy faithful servant, strengthen and encourage us that we not turn away from Thee, either to the right or to the left, for the sake of Thy glory and our salvation.

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