

# The Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)

19 March / 1 April

Extracts from the Vigil Service:

*Today the grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us together, and we all take up Thy Cross and say: Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.*

*Today the Word and co-eternal Son of God the Father, whose throne is the heaven and whose footstool is the earth, humbles Himself and comes to Bethany, seated on a dumb beast, on a foal. Then the children of the Hebrews, holding branches in their hands, praise Him saying: 'Hosanna in the highest: blessed is He that comes, the King of Israel'.*

*Let us also come today, all the new Israel, the Church of the Gentiles, and let us cry with the Prophet Zechariah: Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem; for behold, thy King comes unto thee: He is meek and brings salvation, and He rides upon the colt of an ass, the foal of a beast of burden. Keep the feast with the children, and holding branches in your hands sing His praises: Hosanna to the highest; blessed is He that comes, the King of Israel.*

*1st, 2nd 3rd Stichera of 'Lord, I have cried'*



**Tropar of The Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, Tone 1:** In confirming the common Resurrection, O Christ God, Thou didst raise up Lazarus from the dead before Thy Passion. Wherefore, we also, like the children bearing the symbols of victory, cry to Thee, O Vanquisher of death: Hosanna in the highest, blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

**Another Tropar of The Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, Tone 4:** As by baptism we were buried with Thee, O Christ our God, so by Thy Resurrection we were deemed worthy of immortal life; and praising Thee, we cry: Hosanna in the highest; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

**Kondak of The Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, Tone 6:** Being borne upon a throne in heaven, and upon a colt on the earth, O Christ God. Thou didst accept the praise of the angels and the laudation of the children as they cry to Thee: Blessed is he that cometh to recall Adam.

**Vespers:** Gen 49:1-2, 8-12; Zeph 3:14-19; Zech 9:9-15

**Matins Gospel:** Matthew 21:1-11, 15-17

**Epistle:** Philippians 4:4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

## IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND ... ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY—MEDITATE ON THESE THINGS

It is possible to grieve for our own sins and yet to rejoice in Christ. Or when your communion with God is not hindered, rejoice ...Is it best to envy, or to rejoice with one another? Let us search out all these things, and we will find that virtue, like a truly kind mother, places us in safety, while vice is a treacherous thing and full of danger ...That which is 'honourable' belongs to external virtue and that which is 'pure' to the soul ...If we will be at peace with each other, God will be with us ...Therefore we must make a beginning on our part, and then we will draw God towards us ...For he 'who digs a pit for his neighbour, falls into it' (Prov. 26:27) ...As we injure ourselves when we injure our neighbours, so by benefiting them, we benefit ourselves.

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily XIV on Philippians IV. B#57, pp. 246, 248, 249.*

## Gospel - John 12: 1-18

Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always." Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus. The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!" Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: "Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey's colt." His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him. Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign.

### THE ENTRY OF CHRIST INTO JERUSALEM

Brothers and sisters! So the Holy Church indicates for us spiritual spring. Winter is over. Ended is the state in which our heart was like ice, as if dead in languor, thirsting for Grace. And now, during the past six weeks the sun has been warming us more and more, and nature has gradually started to come back to life. And so our heart too should have come back to life.

Last night during the evening service, we sang, "Children were bearing the sign of Victory . . ." "What sign? Pussy willows, branches which had already budded, indicating that spring was coming, as if saying to us: Look here, joy is already beginning, happiness. So through the pussy willows, the Church has been saying to us: This is the beginning for you too; just be Christians, and think it over, and you will begin to see a sign. A sign of what? —that Christ is Risen.

And we, brothers and sisters, we close our eyes like an ostrich who puts his head under his wing. We don't want to think that a limit will come, just as it comes to old people: hands stop working, eyes stop seeing, ears stop hearing—a limit. The end will come. And it seems that in these moments, when we begin to recognize the approach of old age, we involuntarily compare it with winter, with snow. Yes, but after winter comes spring. And in a spiritual understanding: after our eyes close, then comes Eternal Life, the joy of Life with Christ. This is what last night's pussy willows were telling us about, "bearing the sign." Abide not in grief; turn to joy. And now comes the moment when the Lord, by a special mystery, through Passion Week which we are approaching, will give us the feeling of this joy of Eternal Life.

Now we worry about a piece of bread, about a roof over our heads, about our social conditions. And it seems to us that the meaning of life consists of this. But the Church says, Look at the pussy willows: leaves will sprout and later flowers and fruit. So it is even in a Christian soul. Everything we are busying ourselves with, all this will remain here. But with us there will go another stream of life—spiritual life. You should think about this. But is it so? Maybe it's not. Brothers, it is so! Today the Holy Church speaks to us through the Apostle. What does the Church say? She says: "Rejoice in the Lord always, (Phil. 4:4). Today, at the conclusion of Great Lent, she says to us, rejoice! Do you have this joy? If this is joy about Eternal Life, then yes, you will have this joy, because Christ is Risen. And all our sicknesses, our old age, our expectancy of death—all of this will dissolve. In what? In Christ. And when the moment of our departure comes (this is how we believe and what the Church says), God Almighty, the Giver of Life, will come to us and will perform for us the mystery of releasing our bonds, and we will enter eternal existence.

"Rejoice," says the Apostle, "and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). See how the Apostle is exhorting us. But what is this? There is a condition: "Let all men know your meekness," (trans. forbearance or moderation in English versions) continues the Apostle. Look here, spring has come to nature. But it will not stop here, it will go further; it will change into summer. And so it is with us—life goes on. "Let all men know your meekness." This means that our life should move in such a way that pride will depart. It should dissolve in Christ's patience, in Christ's meekness. The Apostle says: May your meekness be of the Lord. And further, "Have no anxiety about anything," but be always in prayer. Hear what promises the Lord gives. "Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your wishes (trans. requests in English version) be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). What daring is given to us!

But what kind of wishes should our prayers express? If they are the wishes which people experience in sitting rooms, theatres, worldly amusements—then of course, brothers, the Lord desires something else for us, because all of this will remain here. This senselessness, this commotion, this quarrelling, this adversity, this rage, all this will remain here. And only joy will depart with us. This is joy: if you wish for meekness, humility, prosperity, brotherly love, Christian living, quiet—then pray! The Lord will be with you. Rejoice! The Holy Day is approaching. Tomorrow there will come great moments when the Sacrament is being performed. And so in our hearts will be revealed this joy: Christ is Risen! May this joy abide with us in a joyous feeling of Eternal Life.

Let us hasten, O believers, moving from one divine festival to another; from palms and branches to the fulfilment of the august and saving sufferings of Christ. Let us watch Him, bearing His sufferings voluntarily for our sake; and let us sing unto Him with worthy praise, crying, O Fountain of mercy, O Haven of Salvation, O Lord, glory to You.

*Palm Sunday Evening Vespers.*

## **Palm Sunday.**

Commitment to the King (John 12:1-18).

**S**o they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him crying, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!'

Great crowds went forth on this day to meet Jesus. They waved palms. Thousands of men and women shouted with joy, "Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!" They hailed Jesus as King. The news that He had brought Lazarus back from the dead had spread like wildfire. They cast their robes for Him to ride over. They sang. They ran. They strewed the ground before Him with wild flowers.

Today, we, too, shall be given palm branches. For just as Christ entered Jerusalem many years ago, so He will make a triumphant entry into our hearts this Holy Week and Easter when we receive His precious Body and Blood in Holy Communion.

The important thing this Palm Sunday is not that Christ entered Jerusalem many years ago, but that He comes to us today; not how He was received 2,000 years ago on this day, but how He will be received by us.

"Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. . . the King of Israel" (John 12:13). When Christ entered Jerusalem He was hailed as a King. When He comes to us today, shall we receive Him as our King? "7 am a king," said Jesus, "and to this end was I born, that I should bear witness to the truth."

## **The King's Appeal.**

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem he used a method of action which many a prophet of Israel had used before. The prophets had often used the method of dramatic and symbolic action. Men might refuse to listen, but they could hardly fail to see; and again and again the prophets had cast their message into the form of some vivid action, as if to say: "If you will not listen, you can at least see." Jeremiah, for example, forewarned the Jewish people of the slavery that was to fall upon them, by making yokes and wearing them on his neck. Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem on this Palm Sunday was a deliberately made claim on His part to be King. The donkey, for example, on which Jesus rode was the beast on which kings rode when they came in peace; only in war did they ride upon horses. No doubt Jesus was remembering the prophecy of Zechariah which Matthew cites: "Behold your king is coming to you ... mounted on a donkey." In that triumphant entry into Jerusalem Jesus, in a dramatic, symbolic action which spoke more loudly than any words, was making one last appeal to his people, and saying to them: "Will you not, even now, accept me as your Lord and King, and enthrone me in your mind, your heart and your will?"

## **"King of the Jews."**

Even the inscription on the Cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews" — written in the three great languages of the ancient world: Hebrew, Greek and Latin proclaimed Him King. Each of these three great nations stood for three great contributions to the world: Greece taught the world beauty of form and thought; Rome taught the world law and good government; the Hebrew nation taught the world religion and the worship of the true God. The fulfillment and consummation of all these things is seen in Jesus. In Him was the supreme beauty and the highest thought of God. In Him was the law of God and the Kingdom of God. In Him was the very picture and image of God: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." All the world's seekings and strivings found their fulfillment and consummation in Christ. It was symbolic that in the three great languages of the world men called Him king: "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews!"

## **Martyrs for the King.**

When the aged Bishop Polycarp was brought to trial, the judge stood before him and shouted, "You are to renounce the faith! You are to curse the name of Christ!" St. Polycarp answered, "Fourscore and six years have I served Him, and He never did me wrong: how then can I revile my King, my Savior?" The result was that Bishop Polycarp was burned to death in the amphitheatre in Smyrna. When the young church set down in writing what happened for future generations to know, it wrote: "Polycarp was martyred, Statius Quadratus being proconsul in Asia, and Jesus Christ being King for ever!"

Out of the persecution of Christians by Diocletian has come the story of Genesius, an actor who was playing a part in a burlesque on the rites and customs of the hated Christians. In the midst of the play, as though the Holy Spirit suddenly shamed him for straying from the faith of the Christian home in which he was born, he cried out, "I want to receive the grace of Christ, that I may be born again, and be set free from the sins that have been my ruin!" The surprised crowd saw the mock baptism that was being pantomimed turn into a hallowed moment of conversion as Genesius, fearlessly proclaiming his faith, cried out towards Diocletian, "Illustrious emperor, and all of you who have laughed loudly at this parody, believe me, Christ is the true King!"

Unmoved, except to fury, Diocletian ordered that he first be ripped with claws, then burned with torches, and finally beheaded. Before the end he was heard to cry: "There is no King except Christ, whom I have seen and whom I worship. For Him I will die a thousand times. I am sorry for my sins, and for becoming so late a soldier of the true King."

## **Not a Mere Symbol.**

Someone said once, "Kings? Kings are only something to cheer for." He meant that the human heart loves parades, and that a king was merely a symbol. Christ is not that kind of King — a King we enclose in a decorated church with fragrant incense, stirring hymns and burning candles as if He were dead. He is a living King who says to us today, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." He is a King who challenges, who gives purpose and meaning to life; a King who forgives, strengthens, and heals. "No man ever spoke as this man," they said of Him. "Who is this man that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

## He Becomes My King Through Commitment.

Christ becomes King personally and existentially to those who submit to His Kingship through commitment.

What do we mean by commitment?

A certain author wrote, "Let us not fool ourselves. We will submit to some master, whether that master is work, sex, pleasure, liquor, or what-have-you. Our problem is to choose which master. The only Master worth serving is Jesus Christ, the Master we were created to serve."

We can be captured by the cheapest and the lowest in life, or we can be captured by the highest and the best that human experience knows: Jesus Christ. He can fulfill life. He can light the lamp no darkness can put out.

When Christ enters our life, we must abandon the throne of our will, our ego, our pride, and allow Him to step up to this royal chair. He will increase; we shall decrease. He will speak; we shall listen. He will command; we shall obey.

Yes, some people will object, but will I not lose my personality if I commit my life to Christ? Does the violin lose its personality when a great master takes it and runs the bow back and forth across its strings? Of course not! It becomes a symphony. Our lives, too, become symphonies when we commit them into the hands of God.

## What Makes a Christian.

Fr. John Meyendorff said once in a lecture to Sunday school teachers: "We are told in the Gospels that education implies a positive acceptance of Christ. This is the real conversion. // this marriage does not take place at some time during the life of a Christian, he is simply not a Christian. We have a very clear statement about this in the tradition of the Fathers. What makes a Christian a Christian is this personal commitment to Christ. One's formal belonging to the Church through Baptism and other sacramental participation remains a mere potential if the individual commitment does not take place. The sacramental gifts of Baptism and the Eucharist and of all the sacraments are essential for an objective membership in the body of Christ; but again they are pure potentials if they are not taken seriously, and if a conversion of the heart and mind does not occur at some point in one's life."

When we were baptized, God said to each one of us, "YES, I accept you as my son or daughter." There must come a time in our lives when we must say to Christ, "Yes, Jesus, I accept you as my Savior, my Lord, my King, and I commit my life to You."

## Committed Lives.

This is what commitment to Christ meant to former Governor Mark O Hatfield of Oregon, "I could not drift along as I had been doing; going to church because I had always gone. Either Christ was God, and Savior, and Lord, or He wasn't. And if He was, then He had to have all my time, all my devotion, all my life." This is what commitment to Christ should mean to us.

Tolstoy wrote, "I walked deep into the woods one day and there gave my life to the Lord. Suddenly the whole world came alive to me. All was new and different. I have come to the conclusion that God and real life are one and the same thing." Tolstoy discovered real life through commitment to God.

Ignatius Loyola was a soldier in the army of Ferdinand and Isabella in 1521. Severely wounded in a battle, he spent many months convalescing in a castle at Loyola. To help pass the time he asked for some books on romance. None was available, so he was given the lives of Christ and the Saints. These books changed his life. Instead of continuing in the service of an earthly king, he decided to devote his life to the service of his God and seek to win spiritual victories whose fruits would be everlasting. "Take, O Lord!" prayed Ignatius. "Take all — my liberty, my memory, my intellect, my will — all that I am and all that I have. You gave it all to me. I give it back again to You. All of me is Yours. Do with me whatever You will. Give me Your love and Your grace. That is enough for me."

Ignatius founded the Society of Jesus which has given the world many scholars and saints. He wrote a little book "The Spiritual Exercises" which became a classic. He achieved such eminent holiness that the Roman Catholic Church declared him a Saint. His profound influence on the world began with the personal and complete commitment of his life to Jesus as Lord and King!

Fran Tarkenton, Vikings quarterback, said, "My father is a minister and I have always been in and about the church, yet I had never felt that my life had any real direction or power until August, 1958, when I made a complete and all-out dedication of my life to Jesus Christ ... Until that time my faith had largely been something I had inherited. The confrontation with Christ made it alive, personal, powerful. There is quite a difference between a faith you accept from others and a faith you reach out for yourself."

## Benefits of Commitment.

Commitment to Christ, says St. Paul, is our response to Christ for what He did for us on the cross: "He died for all that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for Him Who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Cor. 5:15).

Another benefit of commitment is expressed in Christ's words: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall have life everlasting," said Jesus. Not to all but only to those who commit their lives to Him — who live and believe in Him — does God bestow life eternal, life with God. In other words, Christ commits Himself only to those who commit themselves to Him. He cannot commit Himself to someone who does not want Him.

Buffeted by the trials of this world a certain Christian prayed: "Lord, tie me to something eternal. I tie myself to houses and lands and stocks and bonds and by some turn of fate, I lose them. I tie myself to a loved one and a single microbe comes and death snatches her away. I tie myself to a friend and the friendship vanishes. Lord, tie me to Your program, to service in Your Kingdom, to You, God, that I might be tied to the Eternal." Commitment is that which ties us to the Eternal!

If you make Christ your King through commitment, then you are the child of a King. He will let nothing — not even death — snatch you from His hands. He will give you power to be king of yourself and your passions. He will bestow upon you one day the Crown of righteousness. He will grant you life eternal and will make you heir to the greatest kingdom in the universe.

The significance of receiving palms today is to help us renew our commitment to Christ, to salute Him as Lord and King of our lives. May this be for us the meaning of the palms we receive today: a symbol of our personal commitment to Christ as Lord of our lives. For — let us remember — the first commitment was His. He first committed Himself to us, not part of the time or with half a will, but so much so that He went to the cross!

## Saints of the Week

**19 March / 1 April — The Holy Martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria** - Chrysanthus was the only son of a great noble, Polemon, who moved from Alexandria to Rome. As the son of rich parents, Chrysanthus studied all the secular disciplines, having the most learned men as his teachers. But worldly wisdom confused him, and he was left ignorant of the truth. And he grieved over this. But God, who provides for each and all, assuaged the grief of the young Chrysanthus by putting copies of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles into his hands. The truth was revealed to him in the reading of these. But he wanted a teacher, and found one in the person of Carpophorus, a priest, who instructed and baptised him. But this did not please his father, who did all in his power to turn him back from the Christian faith. Then, in no way succeeding, the wicked father tried to corrupt him by shutting him up alone with shameless girls, but Chrysanthus gained the victory over himself in that, and preserved his virginity. Then his father compelled him to marry the pagan Daria, but Chrysanthus persuaded Daria to receive the Christian faith and to live with him as his sister although appearing to be married. When his father died, Chrysanthus began openly to confess Christ and to live as a Christian, both he and his whole house. In the time of the Emperor Numerian, both he and Daria were terribly tortured for their faith. The torturer Claudius himself, though, seeing the endurance of these martyrs and the wonders that were revealed at their martyrdom, embraced the Christian faith with all his house. For this, Claudius was drowned, both his sons were beheaded and his wife died on the gallows with prayer on her lips. Daria showed such endurance under martyrdom that the pagans cried out: 'Daria is a goddess!' Finally it was decreed that Chrysanthus and Daria be buried in a deep pit and covered with stones. A church was later built on the site. Near this pit was a cave, in which some Christians at one time met together for prayer and communion in memory of the holy martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria. Discovering this, the pagans rolled a stone across the entrance to the cave, and thus by death drove those Christians from this world into that better world where Christ the Lord reigns in eternity. These glorious martyrs, Chrysanthus and Daria and the others with them, among whom are Diodorus the priest and Marianus the deacon, suffered for Christ in Rome in 283 and 284;

**The Holy Martyr Pancharius.**- born in Villach, Germany [present day Austria]. He was a high-ranking officer at the court of Diocletian and Maximian. At first, he denied Christ but, being counselled by his mother and sister, he returned to the Faith of Christ and died for it in the year 302 A.D.

**20 March / 2 April — Our Holy Father John and those martyred with him** - This glorious monastery, which still exists today, was visited by our own Serbian St. Sava and endowed by several Serbian rulers. Many times it was attacked by brutal Arabs, pillaged and laid waste. But, by the Divine Providence of God, it was always restored and is preserved until today. During the reign of Constantine and Irene, it was attacked and pillaged by the Arabs. The monks did not want to flee but, counselling with their abbot Thomas, they said, "We have fled from the world into this wilderness for the sake of our love for Christ and it would be shameful if we fled from the wilderness out of fear of men. If we are slain here, we will be slain because of our love for Christ for Whose cause we came to live here." Having decided, they awaited the armed Arabs, unarmed as lambs before wolves. Some of the monks the Arabs killed with arrows and some they sealed off in the cave of St. Sabbas. They lighted a fire at the entrance of the cave and all were suffocated by the smoke. Thus many of them died as martyrs for the sake of Christ and were translated into the Kingdom of Him Whom they loved and for Whose love they perished. They suffered honourably prior to the Feast of the Resurrection in 796 A.D., during the reign of Constantine and Irene and Elijah, the Patriarch of Jerusalem. A just punishment quickly befell these savage attackers. Returning to their tents, they began to quarrel among themselves and in mutual combat all were slain. This occurred in the year 796 A.D.;

**The Holy Martyr Photina** - This was the Samaritan woman who had the rare fortune to converse with the Lord Christ Himself at the Well of Jacob, near Sychar (St. John 4:4-31). Believing in the Lord, Photina afterwards went to preach His Gospel with Victor and Josiah her two sons, and with her five sisters, Anatolia, Phota, Photida, Parasceve and Cyriaca. They had gone to Carthage in Africa. There they were arrested and taken to Rome during the reign of Emperor Nero and were thrown into prison. By God's Divine Providence, Domnina, the daughter of Nero, came into contact with St. Photina and was converted to the Faith of Christ by her. After imprisonment they all suffered for the sake of Christ. Photina, who for the first time was enlightened with the light of truth at the well of Sychar, was now thrown into a well where she died and entered into the eternal kingdom of Christ;

**St. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, bishop (687)** - one of the greatest English saints and missionaries, became a monk of Melrose abbey on the River Tweed 'then ruled by Abbot Eata, the gentlest and simplest of men,' as the Venerable Bede observed. The prior of Melrose, named Boisil, taught Cuthbert the Bible and the pattern of a devout life, and when Boisil died, Cuthbert became prior in his place. He would preach throughout the surrounding countryside, riding many miles on horseback to win the erring for Christ. 'Cuthbert was so great a speaker and had such a light in his angelic face,' wrote Bede, 'he had also such a love for proclaiming his good news, that none hid their innermost secrets from him.' But the saint preferred the life of a hermit and secured Eata's permission to live as one for eight years on the island of Farne. In the year 684 he was appointed, unwillingly, Bishop of Hexham. Cuthbert preferred Lindisfarne, where Eata was bishop, to Hexham and the two men exchanged bishoprics. He had two more years to live.

**21 March / 3 April — St James, Bishop and Confessor** - Neither his birthplace nor the place of his episcopate are known. It is known only that he fulfilled the Law of Christ, living in strict asceticism, in fasting and prayer and that, in the time of Copronymos, he endured much hardship and suffering at the hands of the iconoclasts: hunger, imprisonment and ridicule of every sort. He finally gave his soul to God, whom he had faithfully served in this life. He lived and suffered in the eighth century. Our Holy Father Cyril (Beryllus), Bishop of Catania; St Thomas, Patriarch of Constantinople; Our Holy Father Serapion; St. Enda, earliest leader of Irish monasticism.



**22 March / 4 April — The Hieromartyr Basil, Priest of Ancyra** - Under the Emperor Constantius there was much suffering at the hands of the Arians. At that time, Basil became known as a staunch defender of Orthodoxy and a true shepherd of his flock in Ancyra. When, after Constantius, Julian the Apostate came to the throne and began to persecute the Christians, Basil openly denounced this new wickedness and encouraged his people in the Faith. For this he was thrown into prison. When the Emperor Julian came to Ancyra, Basil was brought before him and he began to urge Basil to abandon the Christian faith, promising him honours and wealth. Then Basil answered him: 'I believe in my Christ, whom you have denied and who gave you this earthly kingdom, but He will shortly take this from you. How can you have no shame before the altar under which you were saved from death as an eight-year-old child when they sought to kill you? Therefore He will soon take this earthly kingdom from you, and your body shall not be buried when you have spewed forth your soul in bitter torments.' Julian was furious and ordered that seven strips of skin be torn from his body every day. And his torturers carried this out for seven days. When Basil was brought out again before the Emperor, he tore a strip of his own flesh off and threw it into Julian's face, shouting: 'Take this and eat it, Julian, if such food is sweet to you, but Christ is life for me!' This occurrence was noised in the town, and the Emperor left Ancyra in secret out of shame and went to Antioch. And they continued to torture Basil with red hot irons until he surrendered his soul to his Lord for whom he had suffered so much. This was in the year 363; St Drossida; Our Holy Father Euthymius the Martyr.

**23 March / 5 April — The Hieromartyr Nikon** - Born in Naples of a pagan father and a Christian mother, he was an officer in the Roman army in Naples. He was not baptised, although his mother, unbeknown to his father, had instructed him in the Christian faith. Once, when he was setting off with his company to war, his mother advised him, if he were in trouble, to make the sign of the Cross and call on Christ to help him. And so, when Nikon's company was surrounded during the battle and close to final extermination, Nikon made the sign of the Cross and began to call upon Christ. At that moment he was filled with exceptional strength and rushed upon his opponents, killing some and putting the others to flight. Returning home, Nikon could not stop exclaiming in wonder: 'Great is the God of the Christians!' After he had brought joy to his mother with his report of the victory by the aid of Christ's Cross, he set sail in secret for Asia, where the Bishop of Cyzicus, Theodosius, baptised him. After his baptism, he shut himself up in a monastery and devoted himself to study and to asceticism. However, Bishop Theodosius had a vision before his death, in which he was told to consecrate Nikon as his successor. The aged Theodosius summoned Nikon immediately and ordained him deacon, and then priest and bishop. By divine providence Nikon came soon after this to Neapolis, where he found his mother still alive. On her death, he went to Sicily with nine disciples, one-time comrades in battle, and devoted himself to preaching the Gospel. There was a terrible persecution of Christians at that time, and Prince Quintianus seized Nikon and his companions and gave them over to great torture. One hundred and ninety of his disciples and friends were slain. The torturer tied Nikon to the tails of horses, threw him from a high cliff into a ravine, beat him and flayed him, yet Nikon survived all these tortures. He was finally slain with the sword and his body was abandoned in a field for the birds to eat, but a shepherd boy, possessed by a raging evil spirit, fell on the dead body of Christ's martyr, took hold of it, and was immediately healed. He spread the news about Nikon's body, and Christians came and buried it. St Nikon suffered and went to the Lord in the reign of the Emperor Decius; Our Holy Father Nikon of the Kiev Caves.

**24 March / 6 April — Forefeast of the Annunciation — St Artemon, Bishop of Seleucia;** Our Holy Father James the Confessor; The Hieromartyr Parthenius, Patriarch of Constantinople;

**Commemoration of the miracles at the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev** - Two friends, John and Sergius, swore brotherhood before the icon of the holy Mother of God in this monastery. John was a rich man, with a five-year-old son, Zachariah. John fell ill, and at his death commended his son to the care of Sergius, and left in Sergius's keeping a large sum of silver and gold for him to hand over to Zachariah when he had grown up. When Zachariah came of age, however, Sergius denied receiving anything from the deceased John. Then Zachariah said: 'Let him swear before the same icon of the most holy Mother of God, in front of which he accepted brotherhood with my late father, that he received nothing from John, and then I will seek nothing more from him.' Sergius agreed, but when he had sworn this and went up to kiss the icon, some force held him back and would not allow him to come near. Then, tormented all at once by a demon, he began to cry out: 'Holy fathers Antony and Theodosius, do not let this merciless angel destroy me!' The demon had attacked him by God's permission. He then told them of all the money which John had left. But when they opened the box, they found double the amount. Taking it, Zachariah gave it to the monastery and was himself tonsured as a monk. He lived a long time and was worthy of God's great gifts, entering peacefully into eternity; Our Holy Father Zacharias.



**25 March / 7 April — GREAT FRIDAY - The Annunciation of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary** — when the most holy Virgin had lived and served in the Temple at Jerusalem for eleven years, and was by then fourteen years old— when, that is, she was entering on her fifteenth year—the priests informed her that, according to the Law, she could no longer remain in the Temple but must be betrothed and marry. But, to the great surprise of all the priests, the most holy Virgin replied that she had dedicated herself to God and wished to a maiden remain till death and enter into wedlock with no-one. Then, by God's providence and under His inspiration, Zacharias, the high priest and father of the Forerunner, in consultation with the other priests, chose twelve unmarried men from the tribe of David so that they might entrust the Virgin Mary to one of them to preserve her virginity and care for her. She was thus entrusted to Joseph, an old man from Nazareth and a kinsman of hers. In his house, the most holy Virgin continued to live in the same manner as in the Temple of Solomon, passing her time in the reading of the sacred Scriptures, in prayer, in pondering on the works of God, in fasting and in handwork. She scarcely ever left the house, nor took an interest in worldly matters or events. She generally conversed very little

with anyone, and never without a particular need. She was close friends only with the two daughters of Joseph. But when the time prophesied by the Prophet Daniel had come and when God was pleased to fulfil the promise made to Adam when He drove him out of Paradise, and to the prophets, the mighty Archangel Gabriel appeared in the chamber of the most holy Virgin, at the precise moment (as some priestly writers have related) that she was holding open on her lap the book of the Prophet Isaiah and pondering on his great prophecy: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son'. Gabriel appeared to her in angelic light and said to her: 'Rejoice, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee!', and so forth, just as is related in the Gospel of the divine Luke. With this angelic greeting and the descent of the Holy Spirit, the salvation of mankind and the renewal of creation were set in motion. The Archangel turned the first page of the story of the New Testament with the word 'Rejoice!', to show by this the joy that the New Testament signifies for mankind and for all things created. And therefore the Annunciation is looked upon as a joyous, as well as a great, feast;

**Patriarch Tikhon** (in the world, Vassily Ivanovich Bellavin) was born in 1865 in the district of Pskov. He was very religious and a good pupil, always willing to help his fellow students. When he entered seminary at the age of 19, his fellow students prophetically nicknamed him "the patriarch". He was tonsured in 1891, and in 1898, at the tender age of 33, he was consecrated Bishop of the Aleutian-Alaskan Diocese in North America. He laboured tirelessly for his flock, earning their great love and respect. In 1907 he was recalled to Russia and raised to the rank of Archbishop. When war broke out Archbishop Tikhon was based in Vilno, Poland. He participated eagerly in all organisations which helped soldiers and the wounded, and visited the injured and dying at the front lines. In 1914 he was elected Archbishop of Moscow and in 1917 he was raised to the rank of Metropolitan. Shortly thereafter he was chosen by lot to be the first patriarch for 217 years. The consecration was performed in the ancient Patriarchal Cathedral. What a burden the new patriarch had to bear! Patriarch Tikhon was probably the greatest martyr of the Russian Church during the period of its persecution by the communists. As Patriarch of All Russia for eight years, he was invested with tremendous power and consequent responsibility. During that period he lived a selfless life, scarcely a free man, and in the end became another victim, for the sake of his faith and the whole Russian Church. He died on March 25, 1925. Holy New Martyr Tikhon, pray for us!

**Our Holy Father Justin, Abbot of Chelije Monastery in Valjevo, Serbia** - was born into a pious & priestly family on the Feast of the Annunciation, 1894. His name in the world was Blagoje. A church-minded youth, he entered seminary at the age of 11, where he studied under the then Hieromonk Nikolai Velimirovic, who was also his Father Confessor, and who was the most influential person throughout his life. After his graduation, the young Blagoje served as a student nurse during WW1. He was tonsured in 1916, receiving the name Justin. He then studied in Russia, forming a great love for Russian spirituality and piety, especially that of the common people. He then studied at Oxford, England, afterwards returning to teach in Seminary in Serbia, and undertake further study in Greece. He was ordained deacon in 1920 and priest in 1922. Many were attracted to this humble priestmonk, coming to him for confession and spiritual guidance. Father Justin had close contact at this time with two luminaries of the Russian Church: Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) and the then Bishop John Maximovitch. A great intellect and ascetic, his labours enriched the Serbian Church. Worthy of special mention is his three volume exposition of the Orthodox Faith in Serbian, *The Dogmas of the Orthodox Church*, published in 1932. After WW2, Father Justin was exiled from Belgrade by the communists. He lived in several monasteries before settling in Chelije in 1948., where he remained until his repose on March 25, 1979. This women's monastery flourished under his guidance. Many pious people travelled from all over the world to hear him preach and teach the correct Orthodox Faith. He was a pillar of Orthodoxy and a true Holy Father of the 20th Century.

### The Passion Gospels:

- 1) Jn. 13:31-18:1 (Farewell conversation of the Savior with His disciples and His high-priestly prayer for them).5
- 2) Jn. 18:1-28 (the Seizure of the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane and His suffering at the hands of the high priest Annas).
- 3) Mt. 26:57-75. (Suffering of the Savior at the hands of the high priest Caiaphas and Peter's denial of Christ).
- 4) Jn. 18:28-19:16 (Suffering of the Lord in the court of Pilate).
- 5) Mt. 27:3-32 (The despair of Judas by the new suffering of the Lord by Pilate and the judgment for His crucifixion).
- 6) Mk. 15:16-32 (Leading the Lord to Golgotha and his suffering on the cross).
- 7) Mt. 27:33-54 (The continuation of the narrative about the Lord's suffering on the cross, the wonderful signs accompanying His death).
- 8) Lk. 23:32-49 (The Prayer of the Savior on the cross for His enemies and the repentance of the wise thief).
- 9) Jn. 19:25-37 (Words of the Savior from the cross to the Theotokos and Apostle John and the repetition of the narrative of His death and perforation).
- 10) Mk. 15:43-47 (Removal of the body of the Lord from the cross).
- 11) Jn. 19:38-42 (Participation of Nicodemus and Joseph in the burial of the Savior).
- 12) Mt. 27:62-66 (Posting of the guards at the tomb of the Savior and the sealing of the tomb).