

The Second Sunday of Great Lent /

St Gregory Palamas,

Archbishop of Thessalonica

2 / 15 March

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!

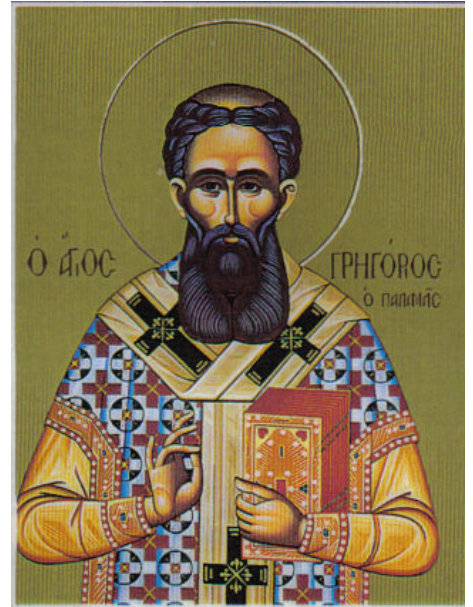
Tropar of St. Gregory Palamas, Tone 8: Light of Orthodoxy, pillar and teacher of the Church, adornment of monastics, invincible champion of theologians, O Gregory thou wonderworker, boast of Thessalonica, herald of grace, ever pray that our souls be saved.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 5: Thou didst descend into hell, O my Saviour, / shattering its gates as Almighty, / resurrecting the dead as Creator, / and destroying the sting of death. / Thou hadst delivered Adam from the curse, O Lover of Man, / and we cry to Thee, O Lord, save us.

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.

Kontakion from the Triodion, Tone 4: The season of the virtues hath now been revealed / and judgement is at the doors / therefore let us arise and keep the Fast / offering tears of compunction together with our alms / and let us cry: our sins are more than the sands of the sea / but do Thou pardon us, O Creator of all // that we may receive incorruptible crowns.

St. Gregory Palamas — Gregory's father was an eminent official at the court of the Emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus. The gifted Gregory, completing his secular studies, did not want to go into imperial service at court, but withdrew to the Holy Mountain and became a monk, living in asceticism at Vatopedi and the Great Lavra. He waged war against the heretic Barlaam, and finally overcame him. He was consecrated Metropolitan of Salonica in 1347, being glorified both as an ascetic and a theologian, both as a hierarch and a wonderworker. He was the defender of the Hesychasts. He upheld the doctrine that the human body played an important part in prayer, and he argued that the Hesychasts did indeed experience the Divine and Uncreated Light of Tabor. To explain how this was possible, St. Gregory developed the distinction between the essence and the energies of God. He set Hesychasm on a firm dogmatic basis, by integrating it into Orthodox theology, and by showing how the Hesychast vision of Divine Light in no way undermined the doctrine that God can not be comprehended. His teachings were confirmed by the local councils held in Constantinople in 1341 and 1351. St. Gregory began by reaffirming the Biblical doctrine of man and of the Incarnation; i.e. the whole man, united in body and soul, was created in the image of God, and Christ, by taking a human body at the Incarnation, has 'made the flesh an inexhaustible source of sanctification'. The Hesychasts, so he argued, in placing emphasis on the body's part in prayer, are not guilty of a gross materialism but are simply remaining faithful to the Biblical doctrine of man as a unity. Christ took human flesh and saved the whole man; therefore it is the whole man that prays to God. How is it possible for man to know God and, at the same time, affirm that God is by nature unknowable? St. Gregory answered this question by quoting St. Basil the Great who said "We know our God from His energies, but we do not claim that we can draw near to His essence. For His energies come down to us, but His essence remains unapproachable". St. Gregory added "God is not a nature, for He is above all beings.... No single thing of all that is created has or ever will have even the slightest communion with the supreme nature, or nearness to it". Even though God's essence may be remote from us, He has revealed Himself through His energies (or grace). These energies do not exist apart from God, but are God Himself in His action and revelation to the world. It is through these energies that God enters into a direct and immediate relationship with us. When we say that the saints are 'deified' by the grace of God, we mean that they have a direct experience of God Himself through his energies (or grace), not in His essence. The vision of Light that Hesychasts receive is the same Light that surrounded Christ on Mount Tabor. It is a true vision of God in His divine energies.



Matins Gospel VI

Epistle: for Sunday: Heb 1:10-2:3

10 And: "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands; 11 They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; 12 Like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail." 13 But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool?" 14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

HEBREWS 2: 1 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.

WE MUST GROW AND CHANGE WHILE ON EARTH

The hereinafter provides no more opportunities for change. So this leaves our life on earth as the only time during which change is possible. St. Paul says 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation' (I Cor.6:12). Of this passage, St. John Chrysostom says: "Let us therefore strive for the mastery in the time of this gift. It is the day of grace, of grace divine, wherefore with ease even we will obtain the crown [of heaven]" (Homily XII on II Cor. 6.)

"If you approach now, you will receive both grace and mercy, for you approach 'in due season,' but if you approach then, i.e., at the Day of Judgement, no longer will you receive it...Even now it is hard for those to find repentance who sin after baptism of grace...Now is the time of the gift; let no man despair of himself. Then will be the time of despairing, when the bride chamber is shut...For still are the spectators assembled; still is the contest; still is the prize in suspense," (Ibid. Homily VII on Hebrews IV).

So how do we use this 'accepted time' to benefit us for all eternity? The Church, in her wisdom, has made available to us the sacraments for this purpose: Baptism, Confession, Communion, and Holy Unction. But none of these can help us in the depth of our being or effect the necessary essential change in us without our own contributing effort and without that crowning virtue: humility. A baptism casually buried in the mire of subsequent sin, a perfunctory confession, communion taken without the fear and devout love of God, and holy unction received without fervent belief in its power of healing - all these are useless to us. Indeed they are a mockery and a sacrilege.

The change that must take place in us must be in the heart, 'with much groaning and weeping' (Cf. Rom.8:23). It must be real. For only the real and the pure can enter heaven.

for the hierarch: Heb 7:26-8:2

Gospel: for Sunday: Mark 2:1-12

1 At that time Jesus entered into Capernaum after some days, and it was noised that he was in the house. 2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door; and he preached the word unto them. 3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. 4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. 6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? 8 And immediately, when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? 9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed and walk? 10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) 11 I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. 12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

Brothers and sisters, we have lived this week in the light of last Sunday—the Triumph of Orthodoxy. A wonderful feature was pointed out to us in the Gospel which was then read: Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? (Jn. 1:45-46).

Both of them, Philip and Nathanael, wanted to believe in the right way, praise God rightly, that is, to be Orthodox. But for them it meant first of all to determine who was the true Messiah. With such an intention they approached Christ. Seeing Nathanael, Christ said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. Nathanael saith unto Him, whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee" (Jn. 1:47-48).

What happened under the figtree we do not know. But we do know that Christ hit on just the right point, got right to the heart of this man. Here is Nathanael's answer: "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God" (Jn. 1:49). Nathanael truly and rightly praised Christ, and in this way he became the first Orthodox man. And all because Christ touched his heart, touched something intimate lying deep, deep within Nathanael's heart.

The triumph of Orthodoxy always starts in a person's heart, and only afterwards is it expressed externally. True, sometimes there are cases when the external attracts the heart, as if waking it up. But for this to happen, there must be something in the heart which makes such an awakening possible. God demands our heart. To serve God without heart, Orthodoxy without heart—this is the same as a man without heart.

And here today's Gospel speaks about the same thing. A paralytic was brought to the Lord, carried by four people. Unable to get near Christ because of the multitude, they removed the roof of the house, broke through and lowered the bed on

which the paralytic was lying. See how difficult it all was. This is the fulfilment of the commandment of love in external life. Yes, such is life in the triumph of Orthodoxy.

But where is its source? Let's listen further: 'When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee' (Mk. 2:5). These four had faith in their hearts, and this faith impelled them to make every effort to help; and seeing this faith, Jesus helped. The external happened as a result of the internal. God did not say at once to the paralytic: 'Arise, take up thy bed,' but said, 'Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.' See, not the external first, but the internal. After all, sin was in the heart. A heart paralysed by sin could not sense God in Christ and could not rightly praise Him. And here Christ healed this heart, made it Orthodox. And then followed the external: 'I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed and go thy way into thine house' (Mk. 2:11).

But what would have happened if the Lord had started with the second thing, with the external healing? The paralytic would have gotten up in the same way, would have taken his bed and gone, but only with a heart which was dead from sin. This would have been a living corpse. Here is what the Pharisees could not understand. 'Whether is it easier?' said Christ to them, 'to say to the paralytic, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the paralytic) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed and go thy way into thine house' (Mk. 2:9-11). To this paralytic the Lord gave both the internal and the external. And he walked home and brought there with him the quiet feeling of the triumph of Orthodoxy.

And here, St. Gregory Palamas, to whom this Sunday of Great Lent is dedicated, shows us so clearly by his whole life that Christian life, Orthodox life, always begins in our heart, and only then expresses itself in feats of asceticism.

for the hierarch: John 10:9-16

Beloved of God, today our Church celebrates the memory of St. Gregory Palamas, and his commemoration is decreed for the Sunday after Orthodoxy Sunday because he, too, was an important defender of our Orthodox Faith against heresy. Indeed, he has even been called the last and the greatest of the Fathers.

St. Gregory lived in the 14th Century; at this time there was a learned philosopher and intellectual, Barlaam, who misinterpreted what the early Holy Fathers had said about knowledge of God. Barlaam considered that knowledge of God was an object of cold reason and not something gained from experience; he held the view that no direct knowledge of God—of the relations between the Persons of the Divine Trinity—was accessible to the human mind. He did not understand how one could come to know the Unknowable God.

St. Gregory Palamas proved Barlaam to be wrong, explaining that one could have a true knowledge of God by participating in His uncreated, but revealed divine energies; His essence, however, remained unknowable. In God, St. Gregory distinguished between the essence, in which we cannot participate, and the eternal energies which are creative, for they recreate those who participate in them. They are providential, for by means of them the Lord allows created beings to participate in His Being, Life and Light.

Since his repose in the middle of the 14th Century, St. Gregory Palamas has been remembered for his defense of this Truth. But, what kind of man was St. Gregory? What was his personality? And in what virtues, if any, did he abound? There is almost nothing recorded about these things, but a Greek Priestmonk, asked this question, answered: "The common people of his time knew nothing of the controversy he was involved in, nor of his defense of Orthodoxy. But St. Gregory must have been a very affable man because the people were eagerly awaiting and anticipating his return to Thessalonica." Having been called to Constantinople, the Bishop of Thessalonica had been taken prisoner by the Turks, and almost a year and three months elapsed before he was actually able to return. His flock must have loved him greatly, or else they would not have anxiously awaited his return. But, why did they love him? It must have been as the Priestmonk said; St. Gregory was a very affable man—one who truly loved, for it is in this way alone that we are able to truly capture the love of others.

There are two events in the life of St. Gregory which clearly prove this love. First, when he had publicly debated his enemy Barlaam and had temporarily won him over, he embraced him with joy. He did not boast in his victory, nor did he say, "I told you so," as someone carnally-minded would have, but he embraced him with joy because he truly loved his enemy. Secondly, several months before his death, St. Gregory was carried into his church while in bed and from his bed preached to his flock. What was it that motivated St. Gregory to preach to his people while sick in bed? (Indeed, how would we react if we saw our Bishop carried out before us on a bed of pain in order to preach to us?) It could only have been his great love for them that motivated that act of self-sacrifice.

How did St. Gregory acquire this love? The aforementioned Priest-monk gave an answer to this: "Do not make any special efforts to love your brethren; this will come naturally with *spiritual* growth." For it is in spiritual growth that we receive the Grace of the Holy Spirit and become close to God; as St. John tells us, *God is love* (1 John 4:8).

Throughout much of his life St. Gregory would spend five days of the week in solitude, participating in the common life of his brethren only on the weekends. This was not out of selfishness or dislike of the brethren, for it was precisely in his solitude that he learned to love his fellow men. In his solitude he clung to God with his whole being. There he laid aside every earthly care, and through prayer of the heart he was united to God Who is love.

In his writings, St. Gregory speaks of God as Light (for he saw the same light that the Apostles had seen at the Transfiguration), and at the same time he celebrates the dignity of man. For St. Gregory knew the great Grace man had been

given, and which the Apostle Peter speaks of: *We have become partakers of the divine nature* (2 Pet. 1:4). And it was in his own solitude that St. Gregory had partaken of the Divine Nature. Speaking from his own experience, he taught that the Lord allows created being, that is, us, man whom He created, to participate in His Being, His Life, and His Light. Therefore, he defended this Truth which he knew by experience, and he loved much, for he participated in God's love.

But what can we do to come to at least some knowledge of God? Saint Gregory lived a life of silence, solitude and strict ascetic labors, which are not expected of us. However, a simple Russian Monk, the Elder Silouan, who died about fifty years ago on Mt. Athos, and who also participated in the Love of God, gives us simple advice: "We may study as much as we will, but we shall still not come to know the Lord unless we live according to His commandments, for the Lord is not made known through learning, but by the Holy Spirit...." "If you would know the Lord, humble yourself to the utmost. Be obedient and sober in all things. Love truth, and the Lord, of a surety, will give you to know Him through the Holy Spirit; and then you will know by experience what love towards God is, and love towards man."

Let us listen to his advice and having thus ordered our lives, we shall grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. And then, when we pass from this life, we shall be found worthy of direct knowledge of God and to participate in the love that passes between the members of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the endless ages, world without end. Amen.

The Living Word
H.G.

Saints of the Week

2 / 15 March — The Hieromartyr Theodotus, Bishop of Cyrenia - He was chosen for his wisdom and virtue as bishop, and governed the Church of God with love and zeal. When a persecution of Christians arose in the time of the wicked Emperor Licinius, this man of God was taken before the judge and put to various tortures. When the torturer, Sabinus, urged him to deny Christ and worship pagan idols, Theodotus replied: 'If you knew the goodness of my God, who, it is my hope, will by these brief tortures make me worthy of eternal life, you would wish to suffer for Him as I do!' They hammered nails into his body, and he thanked God; then, believing that the end was near, he counselled and instructed the Christians that were around him. But, by the providence of God, there came at that moment an order from the Emperor Constantine to free all Christians who had been brought to trial for the sake of Christ. Then this saint also was freed, returned thus tortured to his see in Cyrenia and lived for a further two years. He then entered into rest in the Lord whom he had served faithfully and for whom he had suffered greatly. He finished his earthly course in 302, and went to the courts of the Lord; The Holy Martyr Troadius; The Four Hundred and Forty Martyrs of Lombardy; Our Holy Father Agathon; The Holy Martyr Euthalia.

St. Chad of Mercia (672) - Our holy father Chad was tonsured in Ireland while still in his teens. When he came to Great Britain, we do not know, but in about 655, he became abbot of a monastery in Yorkshire where he was known as a great struggler. St Aiden had been his elder, and St Chad followed his example in everything. St Chad became well known throughout Britain for his holiness, meekness and patient love. In 664, the Bishop of York reposed in the Lord, and Saint Chad was chosen as the new bishop. The saint was filled with love for his flock, and he wanted to teach them all about Christ. The holy bishop began to walk through the whole diocese, teaching the Gospel everywhere. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy in every village and town, and preached from the town squares, where he set up crosses. Moreover, St Chad stopped to teach at every cottage, farm, castle and cross-road, and his diocese became one of the most enlightened in Britain. When blessed Theodore of Tarsus, a Greek bishop, was made Archbishop of Britain in 669, he soon heard of St Chad. When the blessed Theodore visited York, he commanded the holy bishop to travel by horse, rather than on foot, for he saw that St Chad was already old and frail. The saint did not want to fulfil this, for he wanted to come to his people as a minister and servant, as Christ had done, and not like a lord on horseback. Nevertheless, the meek saint obeyed. In this same year, 669, St Chad was appointed as bishop of the Kingdom of Mercia. At that time, Mercia was ruled by King Wulfer. Wulfer had been baptised many years before, but later, he supported the worship of demons in his land, and his chief adviser was a cruel pagan. The king's wife, Erminhilda, was a fervent Christian, however, and tried to teach her children about Christ and His Holy church. St Chad began his long, hard work of teaching the people of Mercia the way of salvation. Again, the holy bishop travelled from town to town, preaching, baptising and celebrating the Divine Liturgy. The saint often preached standing near one of the great stone crosses left behind by the Celtic Christians who had long before been driven out of the country by the invading Angles and Saxons. More than anything else, St Chad liked to go alone into the forest, and pray to God for his flock, and for his own soul. He built a small cell and chapel in the woods, and went there to pray and struggle as often as he could. Once, while St Chad was in his cell praying, he heard a loud crashing sound outside. He went out and saw a large stag, collapsed from exhaustion, by the side of the pool, drinking. Making the sign of the Cross, the saint went to the poor animal and stroked it. He knew that hunters must be chasing the stag to kill it, so the saint hid the animal. Soon, the sound of a hunter's horn was heard, and a richly dressed young man on horseback came galloping into the clearing. He reverently greeted the bishop, and asked if he had seen the deer. "I do not tend the deers, nor the beasts of the forest, nor the birds of the air, but this deer, perhaps, has led you to salvation," the bishop replied. The young man was Prince Wulfade, the eldest son of the King. The saint's words opened the heart of the young prince, and he asked the holy bishop to explain the path of salvation to him. St Chad began to tell the prince about how the world was created by Christ our God and how Christ died on the Cross and rose again to save us. He explained about the Church and how everyone who wants to be saved must be born again in Holy Baptism and be united to Christ's Holy Church. The young prince heard all this, and then begged St Chad to baptise him. The saint took Prince Wulfade to the pond, and entering the deep water, baptised him in the name the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He then taught the prince many more things. Later, Prince Wulfade brought his younger brother Rufine to the saint to be taught and baptised. After this time, the young princes came often to the holy bishop to be taught how to struggle and pray. The evil pagan counsellor of the king found out about the new, holy life of the two young princes, and he feared that he might lose his power because of them. For

this reason, and because he hated the two princes, he began to slander them to the king. "Your two sons have disobeyed you. They have become Christians, even though you forbade it. They no longer obey your law, and they are now plotting against you to take over your throne." The evil counsellor convinced the king that he had to kill the two princes before they killed him. One day, the king and the counsellor followed the two princes into the forest, to the cell of St Chad. The holy bishop was away, and the two young men stood alone in prayer. Suddenly, the king burst through the door and cried out: "Why do you disobey my commands and follow this religion of Christ. You know my law, that the old gods must be worshipped by my sons and nobles. I command you to renounce Christ and give honour to the old gods." "We belong to Christ's Holy Church, and we will never turn from Him. But you yourself were once a Christian. We beg you, father, to return to the Holy Church and save your soul." At these words, the king became enraged, and, drawing his sword, furiously cut the two princes to pieces. Thus, the two holy princes received the crown of martyrdom. When the queen learned of this evil deed, she and her daughter immediately went and buried the relics of the two martyrs, and then went to live in the women's monastery at Sheppey. Soon after this, the king's evil counsellor fell ill and died. Suddenly, the king was left all alone: he had killed his two sons; his wife and daughter had fled from him and become nuns, and his counsellor was dead. Now, the king began to feel sorrow for his evil deed. He realised that his sons were innocent, and he remembered his own baptism, and the last words of his sons, begging him to return to Christ's Holy Church. Finally, overcome by sorrow and repentance, the king set out at dawn to the cell of Saint Chad, to ask his help and prayers. As King Wulfer entered the chapel, the holy bishop was celebrating the Divine Liturgy. The king, feeling his guilt, stood at the door and watched. When the bishop reached that part of the Liturgy in which the great mystery takes place, the sanctuary was suddenly filled with a great light. The king was amazed, and fell to the floor in prostration, looking up with fear. He saw that the great light stayed around the Holy Table and filled the sanctuary until the saint had finished communion. The king remained on the floor until the Liturgy ended, and the saint came to him. After this, the king listened to everything Saint Chad taught him, and then he confessed his faith in Christ, and returned to His Holy Orthodox Church. King Wulfer struggled to completely change his life. He helped Saint Chad and his presbyters to lead the people of the kingdom to Christ's Church, and he became merciful and gentle. St Chad chose the town of Lichfield for his cathedral, as in earlier days, St Arnphibale and nearly a thousand other Christians had been martyred there. King Wulfer helped to build the new Church. St Chad continued his life of holy struggle, teaching the Gospel of Christ's Church everywhere in the Kingdom of Mercia. At length, God called the holy bishop to Himself, and Saint Chad gave up his holy soul to the Saviour on 2 March, 672. Through the prayers of our God-bearing father, St Chad, may we find repentance, and save our souls, glorifying the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen!

3 / 16 March — The Holy Martyrs Eutropius, Cleonicus and Basiliscus - They were comrades of St Theodore the Tyro. When glorious Theodore gloriously laid down his life, they remained behind in prison, and were not condemned for a long time because of the courage of the imperial governor of the town of Amasea. When a new governor arrived, more inhuman than his predecessor, he ordered these three to be brought before him. All three were young men; Eutropius and Cleonicus were brothers and Basiliscus a kinsman of Theodore's. But all three were, through their brotherly love, as blood-brothers. And they therefore said to the governor: 'As the Holy Trinity is indivisible, so are we indivisible in faith and inseparable in love.' All flattery on the governor's part was in vain, as were all his efforts to bribe Eutropius. He first invited him to dine with him, which Eutropius refused with a quotation from the Psalms: 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsels of the ungodly', after which he offered him vast wealth—150 litres of silver—which Eutropius likewise refused, reminding the governor that Judas lost his soul for silver. After all these attempts, followed by interrogation and torture, the first two were condemned to be crucified, for which they gave thanks to Christ that He had counted them worthy to die the death He had died; and the third, Basiliscus, was beheaded. They all entered into the Kingdom of joy, where their commander, Theodore, was waiting for them, glorified before Christ the Lord and Victor. They suffered with honour in 308. St Piama of Egypt; An Unknown Girl in Alexandria;

St. Non – also known as Nonna; Nonnita - Nobility, possibly of a royal house. A widow, it is said she was the unwed mother of Saint David of Wales. Lived in convents in Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany.

4 / 17 March — St James the Faster - lived in the sixth century. He was so perfected in godliness that he was able to heal the gravest illnesses by his prayers. But the enemy of the human race brought a heavy temptation on him. There was once sent to him a woman who had been corrupted by some mockers. She pretended to weep before him, but enticed him to sin. Seeing that he would fall into sin, James put his left hand into the fire and held it there until it was completely burned. Seeing this, the woman was filled with fear and horror, repented and reformed her life. But on a second occasion he did not resist and fell with a young girl whom her parents had brought to him to be healed of her madness. He indeed healed her, but then sinned with her and, in order to conceal the sin, killed her and threw her into a river. As always, the path from lust to murder was not very long. James spent ten years after that as a penitent, living in a grave. He learned after that that God had forgiven him, because, when he at one time prayed for rain in a time of great drought from which both men and cattle were suffering, it fell. Here is an example, similar to that of David, of how wicked the evil demon is; how, by the permission of God, the greatest spiritual giants can topple, and how again, by sincere repentance, God in His compassion will forgive the greatest sins and does not punish those who punish themselves.; Our Holy Father Gerasim.

5 / 18 March — Saint Nikolai, (Velimirovic) of Ochrid - Saint Nikolai was internationally known in the religious literary world. He was born to very religious parents in 1880 in Lelic, Yugoslavia. After finishing high school, he applied to a military academy and was rejected because he did not possess the physical requirements. Small in body but high in spirit, he decided to be a soldier for the Kingdom of Heaven. He applied to a theological seminary in Belgrade, where he was accepted. He graduated from theology in 1902. For a while he was teaching, but as he was an outstanding student, he was sent to enrich his education in France, Switzerland, Germany, England, and sometime later in Russia. He was fascinated by the firm beliefs of the Russian Orthodox people. In 1908, he received his doctorate of theology in Bern. The school year of 1908-09, he spent at

Oxford University and earned his doctorate in philosophy. After a serious illness, he decided to serve the Lord who had spared his life. On December 20, 1909, he became a hieromonk in the Rakovica Monastery and put to work his knowledge and ability to serve God and the Serbian people. He lived and worked for God and the Serbian people as well as working in and for the Church, but it was not without serious criticism. From 1915-1919, he lived in America and England where he worked for his church and his government. In 1919, he returned to Serbia and was ordained Bishop of Zica. He worked very hard teaching religion, helping the poor, and opening orphanages. He earned the nickname "Grandpa". He was a zealous reader of the Holy Fathers. In 1941, the Germans arrested him. He was in confinement with Serbian Patriarch Gavriilo in the Ljuboslav Vojlovica Monastery for the greater part of the second world war where he wrote his "Prayer Canon" and a prayer to the Holy Mother of God of Vojlovica. In January 1945, he wrote three prayers which are on the cover of the Gospel in the Serbian Church in Vienna. In September of 1944, Saint Nikolai and Patriarch Gavriilo were taken from Vojlovica to the concentration camp Daxay, where they were subjected to abuse and torture until May 8, 1945, when they were rescued by Americans. Some time later Patriarch Gavriilo returned to Serbia but Nikolai decided to emigrate with one wish: to be buried in his fatherland. He came to America in 1946. Poor in health, he still had a lot of strength for his missionary and church work. He travelled extensively through America and Canada. He was a zealous writer and good teacher, often being referred to as the "New Chrysostom" because of his eloquence. He left a legacy of work both in English and in Serbian. One of these works is Missionary Letters. He died on the eighteenth of May in 1956 in the Monastery of Saint Tikhon in Pennsylvania and was buried in the Monastery of Saint Sava in Libertyville, Illinois. However his relics has since been translated to his homeland.

Tropar of Saint Nikolai (Tone 4): Thy righteous acts have revealed thee to thy flock as a model of faith, a reflection of humility and a teacher of abstinence, O Holy Father Nikolai; therefore, through humility thou hast obtained exaltation and through poverty, riches; pray to Christ God to save our souls; The Holy Martyr Conon of Isauria; The Holy Martyr Conon the Gardener; Our Holy Father Hesychius the Faster; Our Holy Father Mark the Ascetic; St. Kieran of Saigher, Munster, Ireland (5th-6th c.)

6 / 19 March — The Forty Two Holy Martyrs of Ammoria - these were all generals under the Byzantine Emperor Theophilus. When the Emperor lost the struggle against the Saracens around the town of Ammoria, the Saracens took the town and enslaved many Christians, with these generals among them. The remaining Christians they either killed or sold into slavery, but threw these generals into prison, where they remained for seven years. Moslem leaders came many times, urging them to accept the Mohammedan faith, but the generals refused to do so. When the Saracens told the generals that Mahomet was a true prophet and Christ was not, the generals asked them: 'If two men were to quarrel about a field, with one saying: "It's mine!", and the other saying: "No; it's mine!", and one had many witnesses that it was his field and the other had not a single witness but himself, what would you say—whose field was it?' The Saracens replied: 'His, of course, who had the many witnesses.' 'You have judged right', the generals answered them. 'So it is with Christ and Mahomet. Christ has many witnesses: the ancient prophets, whom you also recognise, from Moses to John the Baptist, witnessed to Him, But Mahomet only witnesses to himself that he is a prophet, and has no other witness.' The Saracens were confounded, but attempted then to defend their faith thus: 'That our faith is better than Christianity is seen in this: that God has given us victory over you, that He gives us the best lands on earth and an empire much greater than the Christian.' To this the generals replied: 'If that were so, then the idol-worship of Egypt and Babylon, and of Greece and Rome, and the fire-worship of Persia, would have been true faiths, for at some time each of these peoples has conquered others and governed them. It is obvious that your victory and power and wealth do not prove the truth of your faith. We know that God sometimes gives victory to Christians, and sometimes leaves them in torture and suffering to correct them and bring them to repentance and cleansing from sin.' After seven years they were beheaded, in 845. Their bodies were cast into the Euphrates, but they floated to the other bank where Christians collected them and gave them burial. Blessed Job; The Holy Martyrs Conon, Father and Son;

St. Fridolin, enlightener of the Upper Rhine - c 540. Born in Ireland, he became a monk at Luxeuil in France. Later he founded the monastery of Sackingen and is venerated as the Apostle of the Upper Rhine in Germany.

Translation of the relics of Saints Cyneswitha and Cyneburga, abbesses of Caistor (Daughter of Pendra of Mercia, a fierce opponent of Christianity. Sister of Saint Cyneburga. Relative of Saint Tibba. Benedictine nun. Abbess at Dormancaster (now Castor) abbey in Northamptonshire, England) and Saint Tibba (Benedictine nun at Dormancaster abbey, Northamptonshire, England), nun of Rynall.

7 / 20 March — The Seven Hieromartyrs of Cherson - Basil, Ephraim, Eugene, Elpidius, Agathodorus, Aetherius and Capito. They were all bishops in Cherson at different times, and all suffered from unbelievers (only Aetherius died peacefully), either Jews or Greeks from Scythia. They had all gone to that savage land as missionaries, sent by the Patriarch of Jerusalem to bring the light of the Gospel there. They were all tortured and suffered for the sake of their Lord. Basil raised the son of a prince of Cherson to life, which embittered the Jews and they brought charges against him. He was bound by the feet and dragged through the streets of the town until he gave up the ghost. Ephraim was beheaded. Eugene, Elpidius and Agathodorus were beaten with rods and stones until they gave their souls into God's hands. Aetherius lived in the time of Constantine the Great, and so he governed the Church in freedom and peace, built a great church in Cherson and died peacefully. When the last of them, Capito, was sent as bishop, the savage Scythians sought a sign of him, that they might believe. And they suggested to him that he go into a burning furnace, and, if he were not burned up, they would believe. With fervent prayer and hope in God, Capito put on his episcopal pallium and, crossing himself, entered the burning furnace, holding his heart and thoughts directed towards God. He stood in the flames for about an hour, and came out untouched, with no scorch-mark either on his body or his clothing. Then all cried out: "There is one God, the great and powerful God of the Christians, who keeps His servant safe in the burning furnace!", and the whole town and surroundings were baptised. Many spoke of this wonder at the Council of Nicaea (325), and all glorified God and praised the firm faith of St Capito. But Scythian unbelievers caught Capito by the River Dnieper and drowned him. They all suffered around the beginning of the fourth century; Our Holy Father Emilianus;

Saint Eosterwine - 688. A Northumbrian noble, he entered the monastery of Wearmouth with his relative St Benedict. He succeeded St Benedict as abbot. He was celebrated for his gentleness.

8 / 21 March — St Theophylactus, Bishop of Nicomedia - When the emperor's advisor Tarasius, as a layman, was elected Patriarch of Constantinople, then with him and from him, many of his friends, admirers, and others of the laity received the monastic tonsure. Among them was Theophylactus. Tarasius appointed him Bishop of Nicomedia. As a bishop, Theophylactus was a good shepherd to his entrusted flock and proved to be exceptionally filled with compassion toward the less fortunate and indigent. After the death of St. Tarasius, the Patriarchal Throne was occupied by Nicephorus and shortly after that, the Imperial Throne was occupied by Leo the Armenian, who was an Iconoclast and, as such, raised up a absolute storm in the Church of Christ. Even though Iconoclasm had been anathematized by the Seventh Ecumenical Council [Nicaea, 783 A.D.], nevertheless, Emperor Leo re-instated it and by this wanted to supplant Orthodoxy. Saint Theophylactus opposed the emperor to his face and, when the emperor would not yield, Theophylactus said to him, "O emperor, violent injury will unexpectedly befall you, and you will not find anyone who will save you from it." Because of these words and by the order of the emperor, Theophylactus was ousted from his position and banished into exile, where he spent thirty years undergoing many hardships and insults and, where, in the end, he rendered his soul to the Lord about the year 845 A.D.; The Hieromartyr Theodoretus;

St. Felix of Burgundy, bishop of Dunwich, and enlightener of East Anglia (c.648) - Monk. Priest, In Burgundy he met befriended, converted and baptised King Sigebert who was in exile from East Anglia. England. When Sigebert returned to East Anglia in 630, he invited Felix to bring Christianity to his people. Felix was ordained bishop by Saint Honoratus of Canterbury, and then sailed up the River Kent, apparently starting his work in the area now known as Felixstowe. Evangelized throughout East Anglia, building a cathedral and school at Dunwich, stone churches throughout the region, and the college that became the University of Cambridge. With Saint Sigebert he founded the Bury Saint Edmunds abbey c.637. Worked with Saint Fursey. Spiritual teacher of Saint Audrey.

The anniversary of the repose of Archbishop Vitaly (Maximenko) of Jordanville (1960) - the young Archmandrite Vitaly was assigned by his bishop to the Pochaev Monastery in 1902 as a printer and preacher. He turned the Pochaev print-shop into one of the biggest church printing operations in Russia, having St. Job of Pochaev - a champion of Orthodoxy against the Uniates - as his heavenly patron. His efforts were interrupted by the First World War and the Russian Revolution, however, as the print-shop was plundered by Ukrainian nationalists and the Bolsheviks. In 1924 Vladika Vitaly managed to re-establish the print-shop in Lodomirovo, situated just inside the Czechoslovakian border. In 1944 the brotherhood was forced to move again, this time because of the Second World War. Once again everything was lost, this time to advancing Soviet troops. Archimandrite Vitaly was ordained Bishop and appointed to North America. He asked the monks at the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville to accept him as one of the brethren which they did. He moved the print-shop of St. Job of Pochaev there in 1947, where it operates to this day. He was Abbot of the monastery from 1948 until his repose in 1960. One of the great figures of the Russian Diaspora, Vladika Vitaly was a great printer-missionary and stalwart of Orthodoxy in these times. May his memory be eternal!;

New Martyr Archpriest Michael Edlklinsky - little is known of Father Michael. He was the parish priest of the Church of Sts. Boris & Gleb at Podol in Kiev from at least 1889 until the Revolution. He worked tirelessly for his parishioners. He was especially attentive to the problem of drunkenness, considering it to be the foremost reason for human depravation and spiritual fall. Through his prayers, many were healed from this terrible weakness. He was given much money by others for charitable purposes. He established a parish cafeteria which distributed food for the poor and also an orphanage and a day school for the children of working women. He, his Matushka, and their daughters dressed poorly so as to give everything they could to the poor. Once, when the people began to attack the local Jewish population, he proceeded together with his clergy in full vestments and admonished the rioters, who began to disperse. He had great faith, and prayed fervently with tears. His sermons greatly profited those who heard him, and all who confessed in his presence experienced spiritual joy and peace. He died in a Kiev prison in 1938. There have been many miracles worked through his prayers, both during his life and after his martyrdom. Holy New Hieromartyr Michael, pray for us!