

28th Sunday After Pentecost
Sunday before the Nativity of Christ,
of the Holy Fathers &
Righteous John of Kronstadt
20 December / 2 January



Resurrection Tropar, Tone 3: Let the heavens rejoice / let the earth be glad / for the Lord has shown strength with His arm! / He has trampled down death by death! / He has become the first-born of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell / and has granted the world great mercy.

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 Forefeast tone 4: Make ready, Bethlehem, Eden has been opened to all./ Prepare, Ephratha, for the Tree of Life has blossomed in the cave from the Virgin./ Her womb was a spiritual paradise whence came the Divine Plant./ If we eat it we shall live and not die like Adam./ Christ is born to raise up the image that of old had fallen.

Troparion of St John of Kronstadt tone 4: O Wonderworker living in Christ for ever,/ with love have mercy on those in danger;/ hear thy children who call on thee with faith;/ be compassionate to those who hope for aid from thee,/ O Father John of Kronstadt, our beloved shepherd.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 3: On this day thou didst rise from the tomb, O Merciful One, / leading us from the gates of death / On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices. / With the prophets and the patriarchs they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Thy power.

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 wiltest, Thou canst do!

Kontakion of the Forefeast tone 3: Today the Virgin is coming to the cave/ to give birth to the eternal Word./ Rejoice at the message, O earth;/ with the Angels and Shepherds give glory/ to Him Who was willing to be seen as a Child/ while remaining God throughout all ages.

Kontakion of St John of Kronstadt tone 4: Thou wast chosen by God in infancy/ and in childhood received the gift of learning./ Thou wast called to the priesthood in a vision during sleep/ and didst become a wonderful shepherd of Christ's Church./ Pray to Christ our God/ that we may all be with thee in the Kingdom of heaven,/ O Father John, namesake of grace.

Vespers readings: Gen. 14:14-20; Deut. 1:8-11, 15-17; Deut. 10:14-21; Joel 2:12-26; Joel 2:27-32; I John 4:20-5:5

Matins Gospel VI

Epistle: Hebrews 11: 9-10, 17-23, 32-40

By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," Concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- Of whom

the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

for the Saint: I John 4:20 – 5.5

BY FAITH ABRAHAM OBEYED

Great indeed was the faith of Abraham ...It was necessary to go beyond human reasoning... to manifest also something more. For what was of God seemed to be opposed to what was of God; and faith opposed to faith, and command promise. I mean this: He had said, 'Get out of your country and from your kindred, and I will give you this land' (Gen. 12: 1-7) ...Do you see how what was done was opposed to the promise? Again He said, 'In Isaac shall your seed be called' (Gen. 21:12), and he believed: and again He says, Sacrifice to Me this one, who was to fill all the world from his seed. You see the opposition between the commands and the promise? He enjoined things that were in contradiction to the promises, and yet not even so did the righteous man stagger, nor say he had been deceived. For you indeed ...he promised rest and gave tribulation ...And he shows another thing too by saying 'God tempted Abraham' (Gen. 22:1). What then? Did not God know that the man was noble and approved? Why then did he tempt him? Not that He might Himself learn, but that He might show others, and make his fortitude manifest to all And here also He shows the cause of trials, that they may not suppose they suffer these things as being forsaken of God.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXV on Hebrews XI. 1, 2. B#58, pp. 477-478

Gospel: St Matthew 1: 1-25

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, And Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, And did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

As we approach the celebration of the feast of our Lord's birth, we are reminded that the incarnation was not something that was suddenly or casually approached by God, but something that had been in preparation since before the foundations of the world were laid. We see this preparation clearly in the remembrance last Sunday of the Holy Ancestors of Christ and this Sunday of the Holy Fathers who came before Christ. In these two Sundays we recall the physical and spiritual preparation of mankind and of the world for the coming of God in the flesh. God guided the course of the existence of the whole world so that it would come to a particular point of perfection. That peak of perfection is the Most Holy Virgin Mary. She is the product of generations of growth and refinement embodying the best possible effort of fallen mankind to fulfill our destiny to be like God. She is the perfect vessel put forth by the efforts of all of creation to receive the Son of God into the world.

When God created mankind, even then at the dawn of our existence, He already knew that He would become man and so draw all of mankind and the whole world into union and communion with Himself. With Adam and then Eve our first parents, He began this preparation, placing them in the worldly paradise of the Garden of Eden and communing with them daily so that they might more rapidly come to the place where they – and through them the whole world – were ready to receive Him in the flesh. But Adam and Eve sinned and departed from the plan of God, however, God did not give up His plan or abandon His creation. Even the fall of Adam and Eve into sin was used by God as an occasion to make His coming incarnation into an event of even greater glory by making it the means by which sin and death, brought into the world through the sin of our first parents, would be defeated and destroyed.

Throughout the whole of the history of the Old Testament we see how God gradually guided the course of the world, gradually molding and shaping fallen man towards the pinnacle of perfection through which He Himself would come into the world. From the very beginning we see God choosing righteousness over sin, teaching, by long and thorough lessons, what is good and what is evil. When the time was right, God chose a particular people, the patriarch Abraham and then Isaac and then Jacob as the line from which He would draw this perfect vessel. The children of Israel, were then given the law to guide them and the prophets to ever push them into the application of the law. With each generation, the chosen people became more and more adept at living within the law and becoming as perfect as man was able to become on his own. Finally this progression towards perfection found its ultimate peak and its ultimate expression in the birth of the Virgin Mary who was the chosen vessel, the ultimate perfect human being produced by the efforts not only of one family or of one generation, but by the whole of the human race from Adam and Eve on through the Patriarchs and chosen people; again through the kings and priests and finally through the ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna. The Holy Virgin Mary was brought by her parents to the temple as an offering to God and the High Priest and Prophet Zacharias received her and by the grace of God saw her to be the perfect vessel, the pinnacle of perfection which the world had produced to offer to God. Thus the High Priest Zacharias led her not only into the temple, but placed her in the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the covenant had once stood for she would become the new Ark of the Covenant, the throne of God who would come into the world through her womb, be carried in her arms as though born by the Holy Angels and sit upon her lap as upon a throne.

The Holy Virgin Mary is the peak of the perfection of the created world. She is the best that creation could ever offer to the creator. But even the perfection of the world, brought about throughout the whole span of history and with the guiding hand of God upon mankind was not sufficient to enter into union and communion with God. She could not, of her own essence bring forth into the world the God/man. As perfect and holy as she was, she reveals to us how far short the perfection of the world is when compared to the perfection of God. She shows us the great unbridgeable distance between the creature and the Creator. She is the pinnacle of perfection of the whole human race and of the whole world – but she was insignificant before God. In herself, she was as empty as the Holy of Holies in which she sat and prayed. That emptiness would have to be filled not by her, nor by another human being, but by God Himself. Only God could bridge the gap between Himself and His creation. Only God could perfect the imperfection of the human race by His presence. Only God could offer His own essence to the world. And so out of His love and His compassion He did all of this. God, seeing the perfection of the world offered to Him as a vessel for His coming into the world, accepted this offering as insufficient as she was, and filled the Holy Virgin with Himself through the Holy Spirit. In this moment, as the Virgin was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, the life of God began to grow in her, uniting God with her own flesh and through her to the whole world. Accepting her as the ultimate expression of perfection of which the created world was capable, God made up that which was lacking by uniting Himself to the world through her. Through the Virgin Mary, He took flesh, became man, came into the world and dwelt among us. He Himself became the most perfect man that ever lived for only by uniting God and man could man ever be truly perfect. Even the most Holy Virgin Mary produced by the world after ages of refinement and labor as the highest expression of worldly perfection could not come close to the perfection which was brought about by the union of God and man. Nor can such perfection ever be overtaken by any effort of the world. Only by the union of God and man can men ever become perfect.

This then is our salvation, our perfection – that is the union of God and man, the perfect communion of the creature and the Creator. Having come into the world through the Holy Virgin our Lord showed that His perfection is available not only to the one who was perfect by worldly standards but to all men. He chose as His own disciples and apostles men who were not perfect, but who had their own flaws and deficiencies. By His grace and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, He united Himself with them and those imperfections were overcome by the perfection of God and they were united with Him. Neither did He reject she who was the vessel of His coming into the world, but she also embraced His grace and the union and communion with Himself that He now offered to the whole world. This grace, because of her union with God as the instrument of the incarnation, found in her fertile ground and took root and grew to produce the most beautiful flower of paradise, the fragrant bloom of the Mother of God and Ever Virgin Mary – glowing now not with the perfection of the world, but shining with the grace and perfection of Heaven. As this new perfection, she shines as a beacon for us of the grace and love of God, marking for us the path to the perfection of union and communion with God.

From the dawn of time and the first instant of the existence of the world, God began preparing a place for Himself in the world. Our first parents Adam and Eve were made by God as the crown and pinnacle of all creation and through them He began to prepare the means by which He Himself would be united to His creation. Even though they fell into sin, still God did not give up His plan to come into the world, but worked throughout all of our history to make His incarnation even more glorious and more triumphant. He guided mankind throughout all of history, choosing those who were righteous out from those who had given themselves up to evil. Choosing for himself a people, the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Choosing from among those people the line of priests and kings as those who would serve Him. He guided His chosen people by the law and the prophets leading them finally to the moment in all of history when the perfect human being would be produced by them – the Virgin Mary. And through her, He Himself entered into the world, spanning in His incarnation the chasm between creation and Creator that even the perfection of the world could not begin to bridge. The God/man Jesus Christ brought true perfection into the world – the perfection brought about by the union of God and man. He brought this same perfection, this same union and communion with God to all of us by sending down upon us the Holy Spirit. Freeing us from the enslavement

to sin and death, by His own death and resurrection, He then offers to all of mankind union and communion with God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In this union of God and man, we too are able to participate and through the grace of the Holy Spirit the path is opened to us to rise to the heights of perfection brought about by the union of God with us surpassing the perfection of the world and entering into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Archpriest David Moser (<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/propoved/info>)

for the Saint: Luke 6:31-36

Saints of the week

20 December / 2 January — Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ - **Nativity Fast - Repose 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.

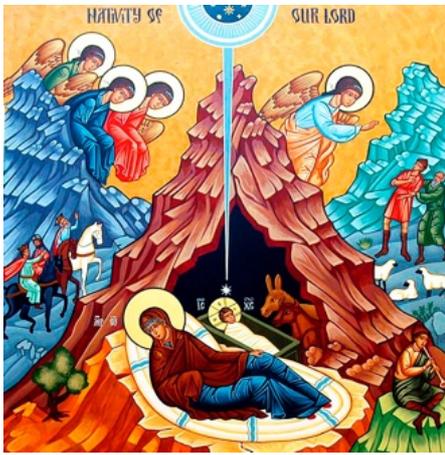
21 December / 3 January — Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ - **Nativity Fast - The Holy Martyr Juliana and the 630 martyrs with her** - This glorious virgin martyr was born in Nicomedia of pagan parents. Hearing the Gospel preached, she turned to Christ with all her heart and began to live in exact 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 claved 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

24 December / 6 January — The Eve of the Nativity of Christ - **Nativity Fast - Our Holy Mother, the Martyr Eugenia, and those with her** - the daughter of Philip, Eparch of all Egypt, she was born in Rome. At that time, the Christians had been driven out of Alexandria and were living outside the town. The maiden Eugenia visited the Christians and received their Faith with all her heart. She fled from her parents with her two faithful eunuchs, was baptised by Bishop Elias and, wearing man's clothing, went to a men's monastery where she received the monastic habit. She so purified her heart by voluntary asceticism that she received from God the gift of healing the sick, and thus healed a rich woman, Melanthia. After this, though, the woman conceived a physical passion for her, not suspecting that she was a woman. Being firmly repulsed by Eugenia, this wicked woman, out of revenge, went to the Eparch and slandered her just as Potiphar's wife had slandered chaste Joseph. The eparch ordered that all the monks be bound and thrown into prison together with Eugenia. When they were brought out for trial, Eugenia revealed herself to her father as his daughter. The overjoyed Philip was baptised, with his whole household, and Philip was chosen as Bishop of Alexandria. Hearing of this, the Roman Emperor sent a wicked general, Terence, who, coming to Alexandria, secretly killed Philip. Then St Eugenia moved to Rome with her mother and brothers. In Rome, she fearlessly and zealously brought pagans to the true Faith, especially maidens, and thus brought a beautiful maiden, Vassilia, to the Faith. Vassilia was quickly beheaded for Christ, as Eugenia had foretold to her, and then her two eunuchs, Protus and Hyacinthus, were beheaded. Finally, martyrdom came to Eugenia, whose presence had caused the Temple of Diana to fall in ruins. The torturers first threw her into water and then into fire, but God preserved her. The Lord Jesus Himself appeared to her in the prison and told her that she would suffer on the day of His Nativity. And so it came about. She was beheaded with the sword on December 25th, 262, in Rome. After her death, Eugenia appeared to her mother in great glory, and comforted her. Our Holy Father Nicolas the Soldier; In E. Scotland, St. Caranus, bishop.



25 December / 7 January — The Nativity according to the Flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ — Fast-free period — 'And when the fullness of time was come, God sent His only-begotten Son' (Gal. 4:4), to save the human race. And when the ninth month had come after the archangel Gabriel appeared to the most holy Virgin in Nazareth, saying: 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured... thou shalt conceive and bear a son'—at that time a decree went forth from Caesar Augustus that all the inhabitants of the Roman Empire be taxed. In accordance with this decree, everyone had to go to his own town and there be inscribed. Therefore righteous Joseph came with the most holy Virgin to Bethlehem, the city of David, for they were both of the royal House of David. But, there being a great many people in that small city for the census, Joseph and Mary could not find a lodging in any house, and found shelter in a cave which the shepherds used as a sheepfold. In this cave the most holy Virgin gave birth to the Saviour of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. Bearing Him without pain, as He was conceived without sin of the Holy Spirit and not of man, she herself wrapped Him in swaddling bands, worshipped Him as God and laid Him in a manger. Then righteous Joseph drew near and worshipped Him as the divine Fruit of a virgin womb. Then the shepherds came in from the fields, directed by an angel of God, and worshipped Him as Messiah and Saviour. The shepherds had heard a multitude of angels singing: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among men' (Luke 2:14). At that time there also came wise men from the East, led by a wonderful star, bearing their gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh, and worshipped Him as King of kings, offering Him their gifts (Matt. 2:11). Thus He came into the world Whose coming had been foretold by the prophets and Who was born in the way that they had prophesied: of the most holy Virgin, in the city of Bethlehem, of the lineage of David according to the flesh, at the time when there was no longer in Jerusalem a king of the tribe of Judah, but Herod the stranger was on the throne. After many types and prefigurings, messengers and heralds, prophets and righteous men, wise men and kings, finally He appeared, the Lord of the world and King of kings, to perform the work of the salvation of mankind that could not be performed by His servants. May His be eternal glory and praise! Amen

Tropar of the Nativity according to the Flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ (Tone 4): Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath shined upon the world the light of knowledge; for thereby, they that worshipped the stars were taught by a star to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. O Lord, glory be to Thee.

Kondak of the Nativity according to the Flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ (Tone 3): Today the Virgin giveth birth to Him Who is transcendent in essence; and the earth offereth a cave to Him Who is unapproachable. Angels with shepherds give glory; with a star the Magi do journey; for our sake a young Child is born, Who is pre-eternal God.

26 December / 8 January— Second Day of the Feast of the Nativity - Fast-free period — Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos - On the second day of Christmas, the Christian Church gives glory and praise to the most holy Mother of God, who bore our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. This feast is called a 'general commemoration' because, on this day, all the faithful come together to glorify her, the Mother of God, and to celebrate a triumphant, common feast in her honour. In Ochrid, it has been the custom from time immemorial that, on the eve of the second day of Christmas, Vespers has been celebrated only in the church of the Mother of God, the Chieftain. All the clergy and people there together glorify the most pure Mother of God - Fast-free period - Commemoration of the Flight into Egypt- The wise men, astrologers, from the East, having worshipped the Lord in Bethlehem, returned home, at the command of an angel, another way. Herod, that wicked King, planned to slaughter all the children in Bethlehem, but God saw Herod's intention and sent His angel to Joseph. The angel of God spoke to Joseph in a dream and commanded him to take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt. Joseph did this. Taking the divine Child and His most pure Mother, he travelled first to Nazareth (Lk. 2:39), where he set his household affairs in order and then, taking his son James with them, went off to Egypt (Matt. 2:14). And so the words of the prophet: 'The Lord, riding upon a swift cloud, shall come into Egypt' (Is. 19:1), were fulfilled. In old Cairo today the cave where the holy family lived can be seen, and in the village of Matarea near Cairo, the tree under which the Mother of God rested with the Lord Jesus, where a miraculous spring of water sprang up under the tree. They lived in Egypt for several years, and then the holy family returned to Palestine in response to a command by an angel of God. And so a second prophecy was fulfilled: 'Out of Egypt have I called My Son' (Hosea 11:1). Herod was dead, and on his bloodstained throne sat a worthy successor in his wicked son Archelaus. Joseph, hearing that Archelaus was reigning in Jerusalem, returned to Galilee, to his town of Nazareth, where he settled in his own home. Galilee was at that time ruled by another of Herod's sons, Herod the Younger, who was somewhat better than his wicked brother, Archelaus. Our Holy Father Evarestus; St Euthymius the Confessor, Bishop of Sardis; Our Holy Father Constantine of Synnada
St. Tathai (Athan) - nephew of Saint Samson of Dol. Hermit in Glamorgan, Wales. Founded the monastery at Llantathan (Saint Athan), Gwent. Founded the monastery school at Caerwent. Reputed miracle worker, he was noted for gentleness, love of the country, and for his generosity to travellers and the poor. Born in 5th century, Irish. Died in 6th century at Caerwent or Llantathan, Wales of natural causes.

Tropar of St. Tathai Tone 8: Teacher of true piety and blessed adornment of Christ's Church, O Father Tathai:/ as thou didst serve Wales with thy tireless endeavours,/ teach us, O Saint, the virtues of unshakable stability and loyalty to the true Faith,/ that at the end Christ our God will grant great mercy to our souls.