

# 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

## Heiromartyr Hermolaus and those with him

26 July / 8 August

**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!

**Troparion of the Hieromartyrs tone 3:** You faithfully served the Lord as true priests, O Saints, / and joyfully followed the path of martyrdom. / O Hermolaus, Hermippus and Hermocrates, / three-pillared foundation of the Church, / pray unceasingly that we may be preserved from harm.

**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 of St Hermolaus tone 4:** As a godly priest thou didst receive the crown of martyrdom: / for as a good shepherd of Christ's flock thou didst prevent the sacrifice of idols. / Thou wast a wise teacher of Panteleimon / and we praise and venerate thee, crying: / Deliver us from harm by thy prayers, O Father Hermolaus.



### Matins Gospel VII

#### EPISTLE: ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS 15: 1-7

We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, That you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

#### HAVING GIFTS THAT DIFFER ACCORDING TO THE GRACE GIVEN TO US, LET US USE THEM

He wants to make them vie with each other, and to labour more earnestly by showing that it is they themselves who give the grounds for their receiving more or less. For he says indeed that it is given by God ...But he also says that the beginnings lie with themselves in order to rouse the listless. This he does in the Epistle to the Corinthians as well, to produce these emotions. For when he says, 'covet the gifts earnestly,' (I Cor. 12:31), he shows that they were themselves the cause of the differences in what was given ...For though it is a grace, yet it is not poured forth at random, but framing its measure according to the recipients, it lets as much flow as it may find the vessel of faith that is brought to be capable of holding...

#### CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEEDS OF SAINTS, PRACTICE HOSPITALITY

Even the Apostleship is called a ministry, and every spiritual work is a ministry ... It is not enough to give, but we must also do it with munificence, for this always answers to the name of simplicity ...It is not enough to show mercy, but it behooves us to do it with largesse and an ungrudging spirit ... even with a cheerful and rejoicing one ...He said, 'He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully' (II Cor. 9:6) ... In this way the widow outweighed many talents by the two mites, for her spirit was large.

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXI on Romans XII. B#55, pp. 501, 502.*

## GOSPEL: ST. MATTHEW 9: 27-35

When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See that no one knows it." But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never seen like this in Israel!" But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons." Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

In today's Gospel lesson we heard, beloved, how our Lord Jesus Christ restored the sight of two blind men who *followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us"* (Matt. 9:27), that is to say, take pity on us and heal us, give us the sight which we have lost. Thus we may understand these Gospel words. Christ asked them: *Do you believe that I am able to do this* (Matt. 9:28)? And they said to Him: *Yes, Lord*. Then the Divine Teacher touched their eyes and said: *According to your faith let it be to you* (Matt. 9:29), and the blind men were able to see.

Faith in the victory of Good over Evil is inherent in every person. It is the foundation of our life. Faith moves us to activity. Thus, for example, a farmer sowing his wheat in the spring believes he will reap a harvest in the autumn. But the faith of which we are speaking today is higher and more perfect: We believe in God the Creator. This is the manifestation of our striving towards God. Such faith saves. *He who believes and is baptized will be saved* (Mark 16:16), says the Lord. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

"Faith is confidence in the unseen as in the seen, and in the desired and expected as in that which is present," Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow of blessed memory teaches us in his explanation of the words of the Holy Apostle Paul (Heb. 11:1). But faith alone, the simple recognition of God's existence, is insufficient for salvation, for *even the demons believe—and tremble!* (James 2:19), writes the Holy Apostle James. Faith without good deeds does not lead to salvation: *Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead* (James 2:17).

Man believes in God as the Creator of all things and the Providence, without Whose will nothing happens on earth. Man believes in God as the Source of all blessings, as the Supreme Being, Omnipresent, All-holy and Loving. Man is drawn to Him by his own heart, as a plant is drawn to the sun. He seeks communion with God and finds it in prayer. Through prayer he tastes the joy of communion with God. A believer loves God and feels in himself His merciful love. He wants to please God and always strives to fulfil God's commandments, keeping in mind the words of the Savior: *If you love Me, keep My commandments* (John 14:15).

Along this path one meets many tribulations and temptations. The believer must keep up an especially strenuous spiritual struggle with his thoughts and with sinful habits, affirming his will to sanctity in this struggle.

Divine Grace helps a man along his good path of pleasing God. The believer becomes humble, grieves and cries over his sins; he becomes meek, moderate, chaste and merciful. A true believer becomes faithful to God. While still on earth, his faith turns into knowledge of God, spiritual vision. Such a man becomes a son of God through Grace.

The Lord calls all of us to faith and faithfulness. He says: *Have faith in God* (Mark 11:22). But do we, beloved, have faith like the faith of the blind men healed by Christ? There is a great rift in many of us between faith and the life of faith. We must pay deep attention to our inner life so as to detect the spiritual flaws in it, and correct and heal them as quickly as possible. And may the Lord help us to be not only believers in God, but also faithful to Him. Amen.

A.A.R.

### Saints of the Week

**26 July / 8 August - The Hieromartyr Hermolaus** - he was a priest in Nicomedia in the time of the Emperor Maximian, and was with the twenty thousand martyrs condemned by the Emperor to be burned in their church (see December 28th). Hermolaus somehow escaped death on that occasion, together with two other priests, Hermippus and Hermocrates. Hermolaus baptised St Panteleimon, with whom he was brought to trial, tortured and finally beheaded. Hermippus and Hermocrates suffered with them, and they were all crowned with wreaths of victory and glory in the Kingdom of Christ. They suffered with honour in about 304; Our Holy Mother, the Martyr Paraskeva - Paraskeva was born in Rome of Christian parents and from her youth was instructed in the Faith of Christ. With great fervence, St. Paraskeva endeavoured to fulfill all the commandments of God in her life. Believing strongly and living according to her faith, Paraskeva directed others on the path [of salvation] with the help of the True Faith and pious living. When her parents died Paraskeva distributed all of her property to the poor and was tonsured a nun. As a nun she preached the Faith of Christ with an even greater zeal, not hiding from anyone, even though at that time the Roman authorities bloodily persecuted the Faith of Christ. First the pernicious Jews accused St. Paraskeva of preaching the prohibited Faith. She was brought to trial before Emperor Antoninus. All the flatteries of the emperor did not help in the least to cause her to waver in the Faith. They then subjected her to fiery torments and placed a red-hot helmet on her head. The Lord miraculously saved her and Paraskeva was delivered and left Rome. She again traveled from city to city to convert the pagan people there to the True Faith. In two more cities she was brought before princes and judges and was tortured for her Lord, at the same time working great miracles and by the power of God quickly recuperated from her pains and wounds. The pagans, as always, ascribed her miracles to magic and her power of recovery to

the mercy of their gods. St. Paraskeva once said to the prince who tortured her: "It is not your gods, O prince, who healed me but my Christ the True God." Finally Prince Tarasius beheaded her. Thus this saint gloriously ended her fruitful life. Her relics were later translated to Constantinople. She suffered honourably for Christ in the second century;

**Our Holy Father Moses the Ugrian** - He was at the court of the young Russian Prince Boris. When the godless Svyatopolk murdered Boris, Moses escaped and fled to Kiev. A little later he was taken to Poland as a slave by the Polish King Boleslav and there was sold for a thousand gold coins to a young and depraved widow, the wife of one of Boleslav's commanders who was slain. This wicked woman tempted Moses to commit adultery but Moses would not be tempted for he vowed to live chastely before the Lord. She then suggested marriage to him but he rejected that also. Moses secretly received the monastic tonsure from an Athonite monk and he appeared before the lady in the monastic habit. She bound him, ordered that he be flogged and to have his private organ severed. This unsuccessful seduction by this shameful woman lasted for five years - five years of pain and torture! However, King Boleslav was slain unexpectedly in an uprising during which this woman was also killed. Then Moses was free to go to Kiev where, at the monastery of St. Anthony, he devoted his life to prayer and silence. Completely conquering the shameful vice in himself, Moses assisted many to also be saved from it. His holy relics helped many (St. John, the much suffering July 8). After ten years of silence in the Monastery of the Caves, St. Moses found rest on July 26, 1043 A.D. and took up habitation in the eternal virginal Kingdom of Christ.

**27 July / 9 August - The Holy and Great Martyr Panteleimon** - born in Nicomedia of a Christian mother, Eubula, and a pagan father, Eustorgius, he studied medicine as a young man. The priest Hermolaus befriended him, instructed him in the Christian faith and baptised him. Panteleimon miraculously healed a blind man whom other doctors had treated in vain: he healed him by the name of Christ and baptised him. From jealousy, the doctors denounced Panteleimon as a Christian, and he went before the Emperor Maximian for judgement. 'He stood before the earthly ruler in the body, but in his mind he stood before the heavenly King.' He freely declared himself to be a Christian before the Emperor, and, in front of his eyes, healed a paralytic of a long infirmity. This miracle brought many of the pagans to the Christian faith. The Emperor put him to torture, but the Lord appeared to him on several occasions and delivered him whole and uninjured. Then St Hermolaus suffered, along with Hermippus and Hermocrates. Condemned to death, St Panteleimon knelt in prayer. At that, the executioner gave him a blow on the neck with his sword, and the sword broke as if made of wax. The executioner could not kill him until he had finished his prayer and had himself given the word to behead him. Panteleimon was beheaded under an olive tree, which after that became laden with fruit. 'Panteleimon' means 'all-merciful'. God the all-merciful received his righteous soul, and glorified him among His greatest saints, his relics remaining incorrupt. This wonderful martyr suffered with honour as a youth for Christ on July 27th, 304. St Panteleimon is invoked in the prayers at the blessing of water and the blessing of oil, together with St Hermolaus and the other unmercenaries and wonderworkers. The loveliest church dedicated to him is to be found on the Holy Mountain; St Clement, Archbishop of Ochrid; Blessed Nicolas the Fool for Christ; Our Holy Mother Anthusa; The 153 Martyrs in Thrace; commemoration of the canonisation of St. Herman of Alaska (1970).

**July 28 / August 10 — The Smolensk "Hodigitria" Icon of the Theotokos**, or "She who leads the way," was, according to Church Tradition, painted by the holy Evangelist Luke during the earthly life of the Most Holy Theotokos. The holy hierarch Demetrius of Rostov suggests that this icon was painted at the request of Theophilus, the prefect of Antioch. From Antioch the holy image was transferred to Jerusalem. From there the empress Eudokia, the spouse of Arcadius, gave it at Constantinople to Pulcheria, the sister of the emperor, who put the holy icon in the Blachernae church. In 1046, the Byzantine emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1054), gave his daughter Anna in marriage to Prince Vsevolod Yaroslavich, the son of Yaroslav the Wise. He blessed her on her way with this icon. After the death of Prince Vsevolod the icon went to his son Vladimir Monomachos, who transferred it at the beginning of the twelfth century into the Smolensk cathedral church in honor of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos. From that time, the icon was known as the Smolensk Hodigitria. In the year 1238, at the bespeaking of the icon, the self-sacrificing Orthodox warrior Mercurius went by night into the camp of Batu and killed many of the enemy, in whose number was their most powerful warrior. Having accepted a martyr's death in battle, he was included by the Church in the ranks of the Saints (November 24).

In the fourteenth century, Smolensk came into the possession of the Lithuanian princes. The daughter of prince Vitovt, Sophia, was given in marriage to the Moscow Great Prince Basil Dimitrievich (1398-1425). In 1398, she brought the Smolensk Icon of the Mother of God with her to Moscow. They set the holy image in the Annunciation cathedral of the Kremlin, on the right side of the Royal Doors. In 1456, at the request of the inhabitants of Smolensk with Bishop Misael at the head, the icon was solemnly returned to Smolensk in a church procession, and at Moscow there remained two copies. One was put in the Annunciation cathedral, and the other, "a measure for measure," was put in the Novodevichi monastery, founded in memory of the return of Smolensk to Russia. The monastery was built on Devichi Pole (Virgin's Field), where "with many tears" the Muscovites handed over the holy icon to Smolensk. In 1602 an exact copy was painted from the wonderworking icon (in 1666 together with the ancient icon they brought a new copy to Moscow for restoration), which they placed in the tower of the Smolensk fortress wall over the Dneprovsk Gates, under a specially constructed cover. Afterwards, in 1727, a wooden church was built there, and in 1802, a stone church. The new copy took on the power of the old image, and when the Russian armies left Smolensk on August 5, 1812, they took the icon with them for defense from the enemy forces. On the eve of the Battle of Borodino they carried this icon through the camp, to encourage and inspire the soldiers to great deeds. The ancient image of the Smolensk Hodigitria, taken to the Dormition cathedral on the day of the Battle of Borodino went in procession with the Iveron and Vladimir Icons of the Mother of God through the Belo and Kitai quarters and the Kremlin walls, and then they sent it to the sick and wounded at the Lefortovo palace. After leaving Moscow, the icon was taken to Yaroslavl. Thus were these sister-icons preserved, and the Mother of God defended Russia through Her icons. After the victory over the enemy forces the Hodigitria Icon was returned to Smolensk together with its glorified copy. The celebration in honor of this wonderworking icon on July 28 was established in the year 1525 in memory of the return of Smolensk to Russia. There exist many venerated copies of the Smolensk Hodigitria, for which the celebration is set on this day. There is also a day of celebration for the

Smolensk Icon (November 5), glorified in the nineteenth century when this image was returned to Smolensk on the orders of the commander-in-chief of the Russian army M. I. Kutuzov. In memory of the expulsion of the enemy from Russia, it was decided to celebrate this day annually at Smolensk. The holy icon of the Hodigitria Mother of God is one of the chief holy objects of the Russian Church. Believers have received and do receive from it an abundant help of grace. The Mother of God through Her holy icon intercedes for and strengthens us, guiding us on the way to salvation, and we call out to Her, "Thou art the All-Blessed Hodigitria for faithful peoples, Thou art the affirmation, the Praiseworthy of Smolensk and all the Russian land. Rejoice, Hodigitria, salvation of Christians!"

**The Holy Apostles of the Seventy and Deacons: Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon & Parmenas** — all four were of the number of the seven deacons and the seventy apostles. The other three deacons were Stephen, Philip and Nicolas. Stephen, the first martyr, is commemorated on December 27th, and Philip on October 11th. Nicolas was not included in the ranks of the saints because of heresy. These first four have no separate commemoration, and are commemorated together on this day. Prochorus was consecrated by the Apostle Peter as Bishop of Nicomedia. He served for a time with St John the Evangelist and, on the island of Patmos, wrote down the Revelation that he heard from St John's lips. After that, he returned to Nicomedia, where he made great efforts to bring the people to the Faith. He died a martyr in Antioch, where he was murdered by unbelievers. Holy Nicanor suffered in Jerusalem on the same day as St Stephen the Archdeacon, quickly followed by two hundred others, killed by the wicked Jews. Timon was bishop in Arabia, and was crucified for Christ. Parmenas died before the eyes of the apostles, and was mourned and buried by them; The Holy Martyr Julian; Our Holy Father Paul of Xeropotamou; The Holy Martyr Eustathius (Eustace);

**St. Samson, bishop of Dol in Brittany (c.565)** - Bishop and confessor, born in South Wales; died 28 July, 565 (?). The date of his birth is unknown. His parents whose names are given as Amon of Dyfed and Anna of Gwynedd, were of noble, but not royal, birth. While still an infant he was dedicated to God and entrusted to the care of St. Illtyd, by whom he was brought up in the monastery of Llantwit Major. He showed exceptional talents in his studies, and was eventually ordained deacon and priest by St. Dubric. After this he retired to another monastery, possibly after that on Caldy Island, to practise greater austerities, and some years later became its abbot. About this time some Irish monks who were returning from Rome happened to visit Samson's monastery. So struck was the abbot by their learning and sanctity that he accompanied them to Ireland, and there remained some time. During his visit he received the submission of an Irish monastery, and, on his return to Wales, sent one of his uncles to act as its superior. His fame as a worker of miracles now attracted so much attention that he resolved to found a new monastery or cell "far from the haunts of men", and accordingly retired with a few companions to a lonely spot on the banks of the Severn. He was soon discovered, however, and forced by his fellow-countrymen to become abbot of the monastery formerly ruled by St. Germanus; here St. Dubric consecrated him bishop but without appointment to any particular see. Now, being warned by an angel, he determined to leave England and, after some delay, set sail for Brittany. He landed near Dol, and there built a monastery which became the centre of his episcopal work in the district. Business taking him to Paris, he visited King Childebert there, and was nominated by him as Bishop of Dol; Dol, however, did not become a regular episcopal see till about the middle of the ninth century. Samson attained the age of 85 years, and was buried at Dol.

**July 29 / August 11 —Fast Day - The Holy Martyr Callinicus** - born in Cilicia and brought up in Christian piety, he left all and began to preach the Gospel. He was arrested in Ancyra by the pagan governor, Sacerdos. When the governor, in fury, threatened him with torture if he would not worship idols, St Callinicus replied: 'Every torture for my God is as welcome to me as bread is to a hungry man.' After harsh torture and beating, the governor shod him with iron shoes, with the nails sticking inwards, and ordered that he be driven out to the town of Gangra, for he did not dare to have him further tortured or killed in Ancyra, as many men, beholding the heroic endurance of the man of God, were turning to the Christian faith. On the way, the soldiers became thirsty and there was no water. St Callinicus prayed to God and brought forth water from a rock. When they arrived in Gangra, the torturers threw Callinicus into a fiery furnace. The saint prayed to God, saying: 'I thank Thee, O heavenly Father, that Thou makest me worthy in this hour to die for Thy holy Name!' He then went into the fire. When the fire was extinguished, his dead body was found whole and untouched by the flames. He suffered with honour, and was crowned with a wreath of eternal glory, in about 250. The Holy Martyr Seraphima; The Holy Martyr Theodotia; The Holy Martyr Eustathius of Mtskhet; St. Olaf, king of Norway (1030).

**July 30 / August 12 — The Holy Apostles Silas, Silvanus, Crescens, Epaphroditus and Andronicus** - these are all among the Seventy. St Silas was sent from Jerusalem to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, to settle a quarrel among the faithful concerning circumcision: namely, whether or not it was necessary to circumcise pagans who had embraced Christianity (Acts 15:22). After that, Silas travelled with Paul around Asia and Macedonia, and was installed as Bishop of Corinth, where he died peacefully. Silvanus helped the two greatest apostles (I Pet. 5:12; II Cor. 1:19). As bishop in Salonica, he laboured much and suffered much, until he exchanged the earthly life for the heavenly. Crescens was a fellow-worker with the Apostle Paul (II Tim. 4:10), and then bishop in Galatia and a missionary in Gaul, where he died a martyr for Christ under Trajan. St Epaphroditus is mentioned by the Apostle Paul (Rom. 16:5), and became Bishop of Carthage. Andronicus (Rom. 16:7), Bishop of Pannonia, is also commemorated separately on May 17th; The Hieromartyr Valentine; The Hieromartyr Polychronius, Bishop of Babylon; St John the Soldier; Our Holy Mother Angelina; Birthday of the New Martyr Crown Prince Alexis.

**July 31 / August 13 — Fast Day - Forefeast of the Procession of the Precious and Life-giving Cross of the Lord — Righteous Eudocimus** - born in Cappadocia of devout parents, Basil and Eudocia. In the time of the Emperor Theophilus (829-842), Eudocimus was a young army officer. Even as a soldier, he endeavoured with his whole heart to live according to the precepts of the Gospel. He kept his purity unstained and avoided converse with any woman except his mother. He was liberal to the poor, assiduous in the reading of holy books and yet more assiduous in prayer to God. He fled vain chatter and idle talk. 'Among all the chaos and vanity of the world, he was like a lily among thistles, and like gold in the furnace.' For his rare virtues, the Emperor made him military governor of Cappadocia. In this high state, Eudocimus strove to be righteous

before God and man . By God's providence, he died early, at the age of thirty-three, and his relics were found to have healing power. An insane man touched his tomb and was healed, and a paralytic child stood upright and was made whole. After eighteen months, his mother opened his coffin, and found his body as though still alive, with no mark of corruption—and a wonderful fragrance arose from the saint's body. His relics were later translated to Constantinople and buried in the new church of the holy Mother of God, built by Eudocimus's parents.

**Righteous Joseph of Arimathea** - a rich man, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin and a secret follower of Christ (Matt. 27:57; Jn 19:38), took Christ's body down from the Cross together with Nicodemus, and laid it in his own new tomb. For this, he was fettered by the Jews and cast into prison. The risen Lord appeared to him and brought him to belief in His Resurrection. The Jews then released him from prison and drove him from his fatherland. He travelled around the world, preaching the Gospel of Christ, and took this Good News to England, where he entered into rest in the Lord. The Holy Martyr Julitta; St John the Exarch; St. Germanus, bishop of Auxerre (448).

**St. Neot, hermit in Cornwall (c.877)** - the son of King Ethelwulf of Kent and Wessex. Like Zaccheus, who had to climb up in a tree in order to see our Saviour, St Neot was very short. When he was old enough to become a soldier, he was not allowed to join the army because he was too short, so he decided to become a soldier for Christ instead, and he became a monk. At first, Saint Neot lived in the Glastonbury monastery. Here, he was made a presbyter, but because he was so short, he had to stand on a little stool when he served the Divine Liturgy. The saint was a great struggler, fasting, praying and reading the Scripture all the time. Because of his great struggles and faith, God gave him many gifts of Grace. He healed people of both bodily and spiritual illnesses, and he had great wisdom. Soon, he became famous, and people from all over Britain came to see him. St Neot did not like for all these crowds of people to come to him. He no longer had time for his prayers, and besides, he was afraid that he might fall into pride. With the blessing of his elder, the saint took one other monk, Father Barrey, and went to a wild valley in the deep forests of Cornwall. Even here, however, the saint became famous, and people walked through the dense forests to see the saint, ask for his prayers and his help. Even the great King Alfred came to the saint and asked for a blessing. The saint did not bless the king, but began to chastise him for his proud harshness and sinful way of life. Then the saint prophesied that King Alfred would be beaten in war, "but if you repent of your sins and help the poor, God will help you and you will finally have victory over your enemies." This happened just as the saint foretold. King Alfred had to flee from his enemies, the Danes, but the saint (who had reposed the year before) appeared to him one night and comforted him. "Because you have wept for your sins, God will help you. You will be given victory on the Seventh Week after Pascha." Not only did King Alfred receive his victory, but his enemy, King Guthrum of Denmark was later baptised at Cirncester, as were many of his soldiers. The rest of King Alfred's reign passed in peace, justice and mercy. When the saint reposed in Christ, a wonderful fragrance came from his body.

**August 1 / 14 — Procession of the Precious and Life-giving Cross of the Lord — (First of the three "Feasts of the Saviour" in August) Beginning of the Dormition Fast - Wine & Oil Allowed - Lesser Blessing of Water** (Epistle: 1st Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians 14: 6-19; Gospel: St. Matthew 20: 17-28) **Prayer:** O Lord our God, who art mighty in counsel, and wonderful in deeds, the Creator of all things, who keepest thy covenant and thy mercy unto those who love thee and keep thy commandments, and receivest the contrite tears of all who are in distress: (For this cause thou didst come in the similitude of a servant, scorning not our image, but giving true health to the body, and saying, thou art healed, sin no more; and with clay thou didst make the man's eyes whole, and having commanded him to wash, didst make him, by thy word, to rejoice in the light, putting to confusion the floods of passion of enemies, and drying up the bitter sea of the life of the same, and subduing the waves of sensual desires heavy to be endured): Do Thou, the same King who lovest mankind, who hast granted unto us to clothe ourselves in the garment of snowy whiteness, by water and the Spirit, send down upon us thy blessing, through partaking of this water, and through sprinkling therewith, washing away the defilement of passions. Yea, we beseech thee, visit thou our weakness, O Good One, and heal our infirmities, both spiritual and bodily; by thy mercy; Through the prayers ...

**Holy Seven Maccabees, their Mother Solomonia and Eleazar the Priest** - they all suffered for the purity of the Israelite faith under King Antiochus, called by some 'Epiphanes'—God manifest—and by others, 'Epimanes'—mad. For the great sins of Jerusalem, and especially for the wresting-away of the high-priestly power and the wickedness that ensued, the Lord let loose great calamity on the Holy City. Antiochus desired after that to bring the Jews to idolatry in place of their faith in the one, living God, and did all he could to this end. He was helped in his intention by several disaffected high priests and elders of Jerusalem. The king once came himself to Jerusalem and commanded that all Jews eat pork, which was against the Law of Moses and was therefore a recognisable sign of apostasy from the Jewish faith. The elder Eleazar, a priest and one of the seventy translators of the Old Testament into Greek, refused to eat pork . He was therefore tortured and burned . Returning to Antioch, the king took the seven young men, the Maccabees, and their mother Solomonia (II Macc. 6:18-7:41). The seven Maccabean brothers were called: Avim, Antonius, Eleazar, Gurius, Eusebon, Achim and Marcellus. Before their mother's eyes, the wicked king tortured her sons one after the other, flaying the skin from their faces and then throwing them into the flames. They all endured torture and death with courage, remaining steadfast in their faith. Finally their mother, when she saw her three-year-old son in the fire, threw herself into the flames and perished, giving her soul into God's hands. They all suffered with honour for their faith in the one, living God in about 167BC; The Nine Holy Martyrs: Leontius, Attus, Alexander, Cindeus, Mnesitheus, Cyriacus, Menaeus, Catunus and Euclaus; St. Nicholas, enlightener of Japan;

**St. Ethelwold, bishop of Winchester (984)** - born there of good parentage in the early years of the tenth century; d. 1 Aug., 984. After a youth spent at the court of King Athelstan, Ethelwold placed himself under Elphege the Bald, Bishop of Winchester, who gave him the tonsure and ordained him priest along with Dunstan. At Glastonbury, where he was dean under Saint Dunstan, he was a mirror of perfection. In 955 he became Abbot of Abingdon; and 29 November, 963, was consecrated Bishop of Winchester by Dunstan, with whom and Oswald of Worcester he worked zealously in combating the general corruption occasioned by the Danish inroads. At Winchester, both in the old and in his new minster , he replaced the evil-living seculars with monks and refounded the ancient nunnery. His labours extended to Chertsey, Milton (Dorsetshire), Ely,

Peterborough, and Thorney; expelling the unworthy, rebuilding and restoring; to the rebellious "terrible as a lion", to the meek "gentler than a dove". The epithets "father of monks" and "benevolent bishop" summarize Ethelwold's character as reformer and friend of Christ's poor. Though he suffered much from ill-health, his life as scholar, teacher, prelate, and royal counsellor was ever austere. He was buried in Winchester cathedral, his body being translated later by Elphege, his successor. Abingdon monastery in the twelfth century had relics of Ethelwold.

## HYMN OF PRAISE

### THE HONORABLE CROSS OF CHRIST

The Honorable Cross of Christ Before it, all honorably prostrate, By the power of the Cross of Christ From temptation, we are redeemed. The Holy Cross is mightier than the demons And from every earthly king, From sickness, the Cross saves And from the assaults of barbarians. Prince Andrew, by the power of the Cross Enslaved lands, saved, King Manuel, by the power of the Cross The Saracens, gloriously destroyed. From the armies of pagans, From the tyrannical conquerors, From all evils demonstrated that The power of the Cross is mightier.

## REFLECTION

A weak man usually protects himself by hypocrisy and the strong man protects himself by tyranny. That no man can defend his life before God either by hypocrisy or by tyranny is clearly shown to us by the example of the holy elder Eleazar and King Antiochus. When the tyrannical king brought Eleazar to trial and compelled him to eat pork if he desired to save his life, Eleazar adamantly rejected that. Then some of Eleazar's friends handed him a piece of other meat, not swine's meat, begging him to eat that in the presence of the king and the people in order to safeguard both his life and his conscience. The elder refused this offer saying to his friends: "Hypocrisy is not becoming to me an old man to the scandal of many young people." The elder Eleazar was slain in the body but he saved his soul. The punishment of God came upon the tyrannical King Antiochus while he was still living. A dreadful disease from within overcame him and his body swarmed with worms and the stench from his body spread afar. In his despair, the king remembered the shedding of the innocent blood of thousands and thousands of human beings who, by his order, were unmercifully murdered and, frightened of God, he began to confess the one God whom, before that, he persecuted by persecuting His faithful ones. However, heavenly mercy did not manifest itself on him.

## HOMILY

### About prophetic visions

*"The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amos" (Isaiah 1:1).*

He who has understanding can know the one and true God. He, who is without understanding, let him listen to the one who understands and the one who understands and the other [who listens] will be saved. It is possible to clearly know God from created nature and still more clearly, from the inspired men of God and most clearly from the Lord Christ. The inspired men of God before Christ were the prophets. Among the first was Isaiah, the son of Amos. The Spirit of God opened his sight and he saw that which other men did not see. That is why he called his message to his people "a vision" [or apparition]. How the prophets saw the heavenly mysteries and the mysteries of future events cannot be described: that can only be experienced by those to whom God gives that gift.

The visions of the holy prophets are true, for those words and those heavenly appearances from these visions, have actually been confirmed later on. They are true because they served for the good of men, turning them from evil to good. Furthermore, they are true because the prophets fearlessly declared them without regard of the suffering which befell them and even without regard for the bitter death which many of them suffered.

What did Isaiah receive from the world and from men for his visions? Riches or honor or an exalted calling? The Jews sawed him in half! This is the riches, this is the honor and this is the glory of the prophet to suffer for the truth of God!

Therefore, let us listen to the prophets of God for they are the paths that lead to the city of the Great King; they are the rays of the Sun of Righteousness Christ which on a distant sphere illumines men with the heavenly light, pointing out the Sun to them.

O Lord Christ, Who revealed Yourself through the prophets and prepared the way for Your descent into our valley, help us. Help us to recognize Your light and Your providence in Your holy prophets.

**To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.**