

26th Sunday After Pentecost

Venerable Martyr Stephen the New

26 November / 11 December



Resurrection Tropar, Tone 1: When the stone had been sealed by the Jews; / while the soldiers were guarding Thy Most Pure Body; / Thou didst rise on the third day, O Saviour, / granting life to the world. / The Powers of Heaven therefore cried to Thee O Giver of Life: / glory to Thy Resurrection O Christ! / Glory to Thy Kingdom; / Glory to Thy Dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind.

Troparion of St Stephen the New tone 3: Thou didst live a holy and ascetic life/ and didst become a vessel of prayer./ Through thy reverence for the Icon of Christ/ thou wast found worthy of the joy of martyrs./ O holy Stephen, pray to Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 1: As God, Thou didst rise from the tomb in glory, / Raising the world with Thyself. / Human nature praises Thee as God, for death has vanished. / Adam exults O Master, Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage, and cries to Thee; / Thou art the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ.

Kontakion of St Stephen the New tone 8: Come all you faithful who rejoice to celebrate:/ let us praise Stephen the lover of the Trinity who honoured the Icon of Christ and His Mother./ Let us all cry out to him rejoicing: Renowned Father Stephen, joy to thee.

Matins Gospel IV

EPISTLE: Ephesians 5: 9-19

Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), Finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

NOT AS FOOLS, BUT AS WISE, REDEEMING THE TIME, BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL

The acquisition of God's Spirit is also capital, but grace-given and eternal, and it is gained in very similar ways, almost the same ways as monetary, social and temporal capital. God the Word, the God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, likens our life to a market, and the work of our life on earth He calls buying, and says to us all: Buy till I come, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. That is to say, economize the time for receiving heavenly blessings through earthly goods. Earthly goods are virtuous acts performed for Christ's sake and conferring on us the grace of the Holy Spirit, without whom there is not and cannot be any salvation; for it is written: 'By the Holy Spirit is every soul quickened and by purity exalted, yea, is made bright by the Three in One in holy mystery' [from Orthodox Matins hymn]. The Holy Spirit Himself enters our souls, and this entrance into our souls of Him the Almighty ...is only granted to us through our own assiduous acquisition of the Holy Spirit, which prepares in our soul and body a throne for the all-creative presence of God with our spirit according to His irrevocable word: I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people (Lev. 26:12) ...Most of all it is given through prayer; for prayer is somehow always in our hands as an instrument for acquiring the grace of the Spirit ...prayer is always possible for everyone, rich and poor, noble and simple. strong and weak. healthy and suffering, righteous and sinful ...Trade thus spiritually in virtue. Distribute the gifts of the grace of the Holy Spirit to them that ask, as a candle, burning with earthly fire, lights other candles for the illumining of all in other places, but diminishes not its own light.

St. Seraphim of Sarov, Conversation with Nicholas Motovilov Concerning the Aim of the Christian Life. B#26, pp. 269-270.

for the Martyr: II Timothy 1:8-18

GOSPEL: ST. LUKE 13: 10-17

Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day." The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose

his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound--think of it--for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

OUGHT NOT THIS WOMAN ...WHOM SATAN HAS BOUND ...FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS, BE LOOSED FROM THIS BOND ON THE SABBATH?

Mark, I pray, how variously and suitably in each case, He introduces His pleas for the breaking of the sabbath. So first in the case of the blind man, He does not so much as defend Himself to them when He made the clay: and yet then also they were blaming Him. But the manner of the creation was enough to indicate the Lord and Owner of the law. Next, in the case of the paralytic, when he carried his bed, and they were finding fault, He defends Himself, now as God, and now as man, as man, when He says, "If a man on the Sabbath day receives circumcision, that the law should not be broken' ...'are you angry at Me, because I have made a man completely well on the Sabbath day?' (John 7:23). As God again, when He says, 'My Father works hitherto, and I work' (John 5:17). But when blamed for His disciples, He said, 'Have you not read what David did' (Cf Matt. 12-3,4) ...He also brings forward the priests ...

And the other evangelist (Mark) says that He also looked about on them when asking these questions, so by His very eye He might win them over; but not even so did they become better ...None of these things made them meek, rather while the man was healed, they became worse by his health. For His desire was indeed to cure them before him, and He tried innumerable ways of healing, both by the things He did in their presence, and by His words, but since their malady was incurable after all, He proceeded to the work. They had received no injury, yet they went about to slay Him. So great an evil is envy. For it is ever warring, not only against strangers, but even against our own. And Mark says, they took this counsel with the Herodians.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XL on Matthew XII, 1,2. B#54, pp. 259-260.

for the Martyr: Matthew 10:23-31

Saints of the week

28 November / 11 December — Nativity Fast — Our Holy Father, the Martyr Stephen the New - As aforesaid Hannah the mother of Samuel, so Anna the mother of Stephen prayed God to give her a son. Praying thus at one time in the Blachernae church in front of the icon of the most holy Mother of God, a light sleep fell on her, in which she saw the holy Virgin, radiant like the sun, and heard her voice: 'Woman, go in peace; in fulfilment of your prayer, you have a son in your womb.' Anna indeed conceived and bore a son, this holy Stephen. He received the monastic habit at the age of sixteen on Mount St Auxentius near Constantinople, at the hands of the elder John, from whom he learned divine wisdom and asceticism. When John entered into rest in the Lord, Stephen remained on that mountain in strict asceticism, taking on himself labour upon labour. His holiness drew many disciples to him. When the Emperor Constantine Copronymos began to persecute the icons even more ferociously than his foul father, Leo the Isaurian, Stephen showed himself to be a zealous defender of the veneration of the holy icons. The demented Emperor listened to various slanders against Stephen, and himself devised a number of intrigues, solely to break Stephen and get him out of the way. Stephen was exiled to the island of Proconnesus, and then taken to Constantinople, put in chains and cast into prison. There he met three hundred and forty-two captive monks, brought from all sides and thrown into prison for their veneration of icons. In the prison, they followed the whole order of church services as in a monastery. The wicked Emperor condemned Stephen to death. The saint foresaw his death forty days before, and took his leave of the brethren. The Emperor's servants took him from the prison and, beating and buffeting him, dragged him through the streets of Constantinople, calling on all who were on the Emperor's side to stone this 'enemy of the Emperor'. One of the heretics aimed a blow at the saint's head with a piece of wood, and the saint breathed his last. As Stephen the Protomartyr suffered at the hands of the Jews, so this Stephen suffered at the hands of the iconoclast heretics. This glorious soldier of Christ suffered in the year 767, at the age of fifty- three, and was crowned with unfading glory. The Holy New Martyr Christos; Our Holy Mother Anna; The Holy and Devout Emperor Maurice.

29 November / 12 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Martyr Paramon, and 370 others - In Asian Bithynia, the governor, Aquilinus, was ferociously persecuting Christians. He once seized three hundred and seventy Christians and took them with him in bonds to some place where there was a temple to the god Poseidon. Here, the wicked governor tried to force them to offer sacrifice to idols. Although he threatened with death any who refused to obey his command, not a single one of the Christians submitted to it. At that time, there passed along the road running beside the temple a respected man called Paramon. He stopped beside the group of bound men and learned what was happening, then cried out: 'Oh how many innocent and righteous men does this foul governor desire to slaughter because they will not bow down to his dumb and dead idols? Paramon then continued on his way, and the furious governor sent servants to kill him. They caught up with him and seized him, first piercing his tongue with a thorn and then stripping him and stabbing him all over. Holy Paramon, with prayer in his heart, gave his soul into God's hands. After that, these three hundred and seventy martyrs, great sons of God and innocent lambs, were beheaded with the sword and thus entered into the immortal Kingdom of Christ the Lord. They suffered in the year 250. Our Holy Father Acacius of Sinai; The Holy Martyr Dionysius Bishop of Corinth; St Tiridates King of Armenia; The Holy Martyr Apollonius.

St. Brendan of Birr - Friend and brother monk with Saint Brendan the Navigator at Clonard abbey. Spiritual student of Saint Finian. Founded the monastery at Birr in central Ireland c.540, and served as its abbot. Friend and advisor of Saint Columba.

At Brendan's death, Columba had a vision of the abbot's soul being carried away by angels.

Tropar of Saint Brendan of Birr, Tone 8: Most glorious ascetic and chief of Ireland's Prophets, O Father Brendan, thou wast a bright beacon in the western isle guiding many to salvation. At thy heavenly birthday the Angels rejoiced and miraculously announced their joy to our Father Columba. The prayers of the righteous avail much for us sinners. Wherefore O Saint, pray to God for us that He will find us a place in the Mansions of the Blest.

Saint Sadwen of Wales - Brother of Saint Illtyd. Disciple of Saint Cadfan. Sixth century hermit. Several Welsh churches are dedicated to him.

Tropar of St Sadwen, tone 8: The remoteness of the Welsh mountains was thy desert, O Father Sadwen,/ where thou didst serve God in fasting and humility./ May thy continual intercession avail for us sinners that our souls may be saved.

30 November / 13 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Apostle Andrew, the First-Called - He was the son of Jonah and brother of Peter, born in Bethsaida and a fisherman by profession. He was first a disciple of St John the Baptist, but, when John pointed to the Lord Jesus and said: 'Behold the Lamb of God' (Jn. 1:36), St Andrew left his first teacher and followed Christ. After that, Andrew brought his brother Peter to the Lord. After the descent of the Holy Spirit, it fell to the lot of the first of Christ's apostles, St Andrew, to preach the Gospel in Byzantium and Thrace, then in the lands along the Danube, in Russia and around the Black Sea, and finally in Epirus, Greece and the Peloponnese, where he suffered. In Byzantium, he installed St Stachys as its first bishop; in Kiev he raised the Cross on high and prophesied a Christian future for the Russian people; in Thrace, Epirus, Greece and the Peloponnese, he brought many people to the Faith and gave them bishops and priests. In the city of Patras he performed many wonders in the name of Christ and brought many to the Lord, among whom were the brother and wife of the imperial governor, Aegeatus. Aegeatus, infuriated by this, put Andrew to torture and then crucified him. While he was still alive on the cross, the Apostle of Christ taught the Christians who were gathered round him. The people wanted to take him down from the cross, but he would not let them. Finally, the Apostle prayed to God and a strange radiance surrounded him. This light lasted for half an hour and, when it disappeared, the Apostle gave his holy soul into God's hands. Thus the first-called Apostle, who first of the twelve Great Apostles came to know the Lord and followed Him, finished his earthly course. St Andrew suffered for his Lord in the year 62. His relics were translated to Constantinople, but his head was later taken to Rome and one hand to Moscow. In the 3rd century some of his relics were taken by a monk, Regulus, to Scotland and given to Oengus, King of the Picts on the eve of a mighty battle in 747 and that night the king and his army saw a huge St. Andrew's Cross blazed in fire across the face of the heavens; so they went forth to battle and triumphed. After this St. Andrew became the Patron Saint of Scotland. His remains were taken to the ancient Pictish city of Muckcross and deposited there. That city is the modern St. Andrews. St. Frumentius, Enlightener of Abyssinia;

St Tudwal, bishop in Wales & Brittany - A Welsh monk Saint Tudwal (died c. 564) was one of the seven founder Saints of Brittany. He travelled to Ireland to learn the scriptures, then became a hermit on what is now called Saint Tudwal's Island East. St Tudwal later emigrated to Brittany, settling in Lan Pabu with 72 followers, where he established a large monastery. Tudwal was made Bishop of Tréguier on the insistence of Childebert I, king of the Franks. Tudwal is shown in iconography as a bishop holding a dragon.

Tropar of St Tudwal, tone 1: Having left thy native Wales/ thou didst serve God in Brittany, O Father Tudwal,/ and both by thy zealous preaching and thy piety thou didst win souls for Christ./ Wherefore we hasten to thee, O radiant Hierarchy,/ that thou wouldst intercede for us that our souls may be saved.

1 / 14 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Prophet Nahum - Born of the tribe of Simeon in a place called Elkosh, on the further side of the Jordan, he lived seven hundred years before Christ and foretold the fall of Nineveh two hundred years after the Prophet Jonah. The people of Nineveh had repented after hearing Jonah's preaching, and God had protected them and not destroyed them. But, with the passage of time, they came to forget God's mercy and turned again to evil. Nahum foretold their doom, warning them that, if they showed no repentance, they would receive no protection. The entire city was so utterly destroyed by earthquake, flood and fire that its location is no longer known. Holy Nahum lived for forty-five years before going to his rest in the Lord, leaving us a small book of his true and genuine prophecies. St. Philaret the Merciful. **2 / 15**

December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Prophet Habakkuk - The son of Sappan, of the tribe of Simeon, he prophesied six hundred years before Christ, in the time of King Manasseh, and foretold the devastation of Jerusalem. When Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, attacked Jerusalem, Habakkuk went into the land of the Ishmaelites, whence he returned to Jerusalem and made his living working on the land. One day, when he was carrying lunch to the workers in the fields, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him and said: 'Go, carry the meal that thou hast into Babylon, unto Daniel who is in the lion's den.' Habakkuk replied: 'Lord, I never saw Babylon, neither do I know where the den is' (Daniel 14:33 in the Greek text. It is omitted in the Hebrew Bible, and is to be found in the Apocrypha under Bel and the Dragon). Then the angel seized him by the hair and carried him straight to Babylon, over an immense distance, to the lion's den where Daniel had been cast by King Cyrus because he would not worship idols. 'O Daniel, Daniel,' cried Habakkuk, 'take the dinner which God hath sent thee!' And Daniel took it and ate. Then the angel of God again took hold of Habakkuk and carried him back to his field in Judea. Habakkuk preached and prophesied about the liberation of Jerusalem and the coming of Christ. He entered into rest in great old age and was buried at Keilah. His relics were discovered during the reign of Theodosius the Great. The Holy Martyr Myrope; St Uros, King of Serbia; Our Holy Father Athanasius, Recluse of the Kiev Caves; St Jesse.

3 / 16 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Prophet Zephaniah (Sophonias) - Born on the mountain of Savarat and of the tribe of Simeon, he lived and prophesied in the seventh century before Christ, in the time of Josiah the pious King of Judah, and was a contemporary of the Prophet Jeremiah. With his great humility, pure mind and constant striving after God, he was found worthy of seeing into the future. He foretold the day of the wrath of God and the punishment of Gaza, Ashkalon, Ashdod, Ekron, Nineveh, Jerusalem and Egypt. He looked upon Jerusalem as 'a filthy, polluted and oppressing city ... her princes within her are like roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves ... her prophets are light and treacherous persons; her priests have

polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the Law (Zeph. 3:1-4). Foreseeing the coming of the Messiah, he cried out with rapture: 'Sing, O daughter of Sion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!' (3:14). This seer of secrets and mysteries went to his rest in the place where he was born, there to await the general Resurrection and his reward from God. St John the Silent (the Hesychast); The Hieromartyr Theodore, Archbishop of Alexandria; Our Holy Father Theodulus; Our Holy Father Sava of Storozhev;

St. Lucius - in the days of Good King Lucius came a revival. Llewrug Mawr, Llewrug the Great (grandson of Saint Cyllinus and great-grandson of Caractacus), nicknamed Llever Mawr or the great luminary (hence his latinised name of Lux or Lucius), was king in Britain in the middle and towards the end of the 2nd century. He increased the Light that the first missionaries, the disciples of Christ, had brought, by sending emissaries to Eleutherius, Bishop of Rome, requesting him to send missionaries to Britain. The Welsh Triads tell us that Eleutherius, in response, sent Dyfan and Fagan, Medwy and Elfan, all of them British names, in AD 167. These missionaries journeyed through Britain and came to Glastonbury. There, God leading them (wrote William of Malmesbury), they found an old church built, as 'twas said, by the hands of Christ's disciples, and prepared by God Himself for the salvation of souls, which Church the Heavenly Builder Himself showed to be consecrated by many miraculous deeds, and many Mysteries of healing.... And they afterwards pondered the Heavenly message that the Lord had specially chosen this spot before all the rest of Britain as the place where His Mother's name might be invoked. They also found the whole story in ancient writings, how the Holy Apostles, having been scattered throughout the world, St. Philip coming into France with a host of disciples sent twelve of them into Britain to preach, and that there, taught by revelation they constructed the said chapel which the Son of God afterwards dedicated to the honour of His Mother; and, that to these same twelve, three kings, pagan though they were, gave twelve portions of land for their sustenance. Moreover, they found a written record of their doings, and on that account they loved this spot above all others, and they also, in memory of the first twelve, chose twelve of their own, and made them live on the island with the approval of King Lucius. These twelve thereafter abode there in divers spots as anchorites - in the same spots, indeed, which the first twelve inhabited (traditionally in huts round the wonderful Chalice Well at the foot of St. Michael's Tor). Yet they used to meet together continuously in the Old Church in order to celebrate Divine worship more devoutly; just as the three pagan kings had long ago granted the said island with its surroundings to the twelve former disciples of Christ, so the said Phagan and Deruvian (Dyfan) obtained it from King Lucius for these their twelve companions and for others to follow thereafter. And thus, many succeeding these, but always twelve in number, abode in the said island during many years up to the coming of St. Patrick, the apostle of the Irish.

St. Birinus, (600-50) - Ordained in Rome. Bishop in Genoa, Italy. Sent by Pope Honorius I as a missionary to Britain in 634. Preached with the pagan West Saxons where he had great success, converting King Cynegils and many of his subjects. Bishop of Dorchester, England. Founded many churches in the region. Known for a great devotion to the Eucharist.

4 / 17 December — Nativity Fast -The Holy and Great Martyr Barbara - This famous follower of Christ was betrothed to Him from her early years. Her father, Dioscorus, was a pagan in the city of Heliopolis in Egypt, and was famed for his wealth and standing. Dioscorus shut up his only daughter, who was both intelligent and beautiful, in a high tower, surrounded her with all possible comforts, gave her a host of attendants, set up idols for worship and built her a bathroom with two windows. As she gazed through the windows of the tower upon the earth below and the starry sky above, Barbara's mind was opened by the grace of God, and she came to know Him as the one, true God and Creator, although she had no human teacher to bring her to the knowledge of Him. Once, when her father was away from the city, she came out of the tower and, by God's providence, met some Christians who told her about the true Christian faith. Barbara's heart was set on fire with love for Christ. She had a third window cut in the bathroom as a symbol of the Holy Trinity, and traced a Cross with her finger on one wall of it, which etched itself deep in the stone as if cut by a chisel. A spring of water gushed forth from the bathroom floor from her footprint, and it later gave healing from sickness to many. When Dioscorus found out about his daughter's faith, he beat her harshly and drove her from the tower, chasing after her to kill her, but a cliff opened and hid Barbara from her irate father. When she appeared again, Dioscorus took her to Marcian, the governor of the city, who handed her over for torture. The innocent Barbara was stripped and beaten until her entire body was covered in bloody wounds, but the Lord Himself appeared to her in the prison with many angels, and healed her. A certain woman, Juliana, beheld this and conceived a desire for martyrdom herself. Both of them were fearfully tortured and taken around the city to be mocked, then their breasts were cut off and much blood flowed from them. They were finally led out to the place of execution, and Juliana was slain by soldiers while Barbara was killed by her own father. On the same day, lightning struck Dioscorus's house, killing both him and Marcian. St Barbara suffered in 306, and her wonderworking relics are preserved in Kiev. Greatly glorified in the Kingdom of Christ, she has appeared many times down to our own days, sometimes alone and sometimes in the company of the most holy Mother of God.

St John Damascene - he was first a minister of Caliph Abdul-Malek, and then became a monk in the monastery of St Sava the Sanctified. For his ardent advocacy of the veneration of icons while still a courtier during the reign of the iconoclast Emperor Leo the Isaurian, he was slandered by the Emperor to the Caliph, who had his right hand cut off. John fell down in prayer before the icon of the most holy Mother of God, and his hand was re-joined to his arm and miraculously healed. When he beheld this wonder, the Caliph repented, but John no longer desired to remain at court as a nobleman, but to withdraw to a monastery. There, he was from the beginning a model of humility and obedience, and of all the works of asceticism prescribed for monks. He wrote the hymns for the Parting of the Soul from the Body, put together the Octoechos, the Irmologion, the Menologion and the Easter Canon, and wrote many theological works of an inspired profundity. A great monk, hymnographer and theologian, and a great warrior for the truth of Christ, Damascene is counted among the great Fathers of the Church. He entered peacefully into rest in about 749, being seventy-five years old; St Gennadius, Archbishop of Novgorod.