

Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia

27 January / 9 February

Lenten Triodion Begins

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 8: Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One! / Thou didst endure the three-day burial / to free us from our sufferings! / O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee.

Tropar to the New Martyrs of Russia, Tone 4: O ye holy hierarchs, royal passion-bearers and pastors, monks and laymen, ye countless new martyrs and confessors, mean, women and children, flowers of the spiritual meadow of Russia, who blossomed forth wondrously in time of grievous persecutions, bearing good fruit for Christ in your endurance: entreat Him as the One Who planted you, that He deliver His people from godless and evil men, and that the Church of Russia be made steadfast through your blood and suffering unto the salvation of our souls.



Resurrection Kondak, Tone 8: By rising from the tomb Thou didst raise the dead and resurrect Adam/ Eve exults in Thy Resurrection, / and the world celebrates Thy rising from the dead, O Greatly Merciful One.

Kontakion of the New-Martyrs and Confessors (Tone 2): O ye new passion-bearers of Russia, who have with your confession finished the course of this earth, receiving boldness through your sufferings: Beseech Christ Who suffered for you, that they who pray to you in the hour of the testing of their faith may receive the gift of courage. For ye are a witness to us who kiss your feet, that neither tribulation, prison, nor death can separate us from the love of God.

Kondak for the Publican and the Pharisee, Tone 4: Let us flee the bragging of the Pharisee, and learn the humility of the Publican, while crying out unto the Saviour with groanings: Be gracious unto us, O Thou Who alone dost readily forgive.

Vespers

Lord I have Cried, Tone 8, on 10: Octoechos 3; Triodion 3 (Brethren, let us not pray as the Pharisee); Saints 4 (With fervent supplication); G: Triodion (Almighty Lord), N: Sunday Dogmatic Tone 8. 3 Readings: Isaiah 43: 9-14; Wisdom of Solomon 3: 1-9; Wisdom 4: 7-15 Aposticha: Octoechos, G: Saints (O holy and most humble priests); N: Triodion (Mine eyes are weighed down)

Matins Gospel XI

After the Matins Gospel **Publican and the Pharisee, Troparion, Tone VIII** — Open to me the doors of repentance, O Life-giver. For my spirit rises early to pray towards Thy holy temple, bearing the temple of my body all defiled. But in Thy compassion, purify me by the loving kindness of Thy mercy.

Theotokion: Make straight for me the paths of salvation, O Mother of God. For I have profaned my soul with shameful sins, and have wasted my whole life in easy-going indifference. But by thy intercessions deliver me from all uncleanness.

Tone VI — Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of Thy compassions, blot out my transgression. When I think of the multitude of ghastly things I have done, wretch that I am, I tremble at the fearful day of Judgment. But trusting in the mercy of Thy loving kindness; like David I cry to Thee: Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy.

(Note: These penitential songs are sung on Sundays during the Great Fast from the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee to the fifth week.)

Epistle: II Timothy 3: 10-15

10 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

ALL WHO DESIRE TO LIVE GODLY IN JESUS CHRIST WILL SUFFER PERSECUTION

True faith will be persecuted in this world. The Saviour Himself said this to His apostles clearly and publicly (Jn. 16:32). And St. Apollinarius of Hierapolis, writing against the Montanist heretics, asserts: 'Let them tell us, before God, who of all their prophets, beginning with Montanus and his wives, has been persecuted by the Jews and killed by the ungodly. No-one. Who among them has been arrested for the name of Christ, and crucified? Again, no-one ...Heresies are usually closer to the worldly and demonic spirit, and therefore the world and the demons do not persecute their own. To be constantly under persecution, with short breathing-spaces, is a distinguishing mark of the Faith and of the Orthodox Church. This persecution has existed throughout the whole of history, whether externally or internally; externally from unbelievers and internally from heretics.

The Lord Jesus both foretold this and showed it by His own example. And the apostles said it, and showed it by their own example. And all the God-bearing Fathers of the Church, and confessors and martyrs, said this, and showed it by their own example. Can we have any further doubt that it is by the narrow gate that one enters into the Kingdom of God? No; in this there is no foundation or justification for doubt. Can sheep live among wolves and not be molested by them? Can a candle burn among cross-draughts and not be bent to and fro? Can a fruit-tree grow on a high road and be left alone by passers-by? And so, can the Church of devout souls not be persecuted again and again - by pagans, by idol-worshippers, by heretics, by schismatics, by passions and vices, by sin and lawlessness, by the world and by demons? Thus, not one godly soul can remain without persecution, either external or internal, until it is parted from the body and from this world. Maybe someone will challenge this, and expound something different, according to his assessment and logic. But that would not help either the understanding or the logic of a single man. Thousands of those crucified have spoken otherwise; thousands of those burned by fire have cried otherwise; thousands of those beheaded have proved otherwise, and thousands of those drowned have testified otherwise. Oh, my brothers, the Christian faith is strong, not only when it is in accord with secular understanding and logic, but when (and even especially when) it is opposed to them. All who desire to live godly lives shall be persecuted. This the apostles foretold at the beginning of the Christian era, and twenty Christian centuries give a many-voiced echo, confirming the truth of this prophecy. O risen Lord, give us light that we may be godly to the end and strength that we may endure persecution likewise to the end. To Thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic, The Prologue, 27th April

Second Epistle Romans 8: 28-39

Gospel Luke 18: 10-14

10 Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not like other men— extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess. 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner! 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

FOR EVERYONE WHO EXALTS HIMSELF WILL BE ABASED, AND HE WHO HUMBLER HIMSELF WILL BE EXALTED.

The Lord ceaselessly purges the passion of pride in many ways. This passion, more than any other, disturbs our thoughts, and for this reason the Lord always and everywhere teaches on this subject. Here He is purging the worst form of pride. For there are many offshoots of self-love. Presumption, arrogance, and vainglory all stem from this root. But the most destructive of all these kinds of self-love is pride, for pride is contempt of God. When a man ascribes his accomplishments to himself, and not to God, this is nothing less than denial of God and opposition to Him. Therefore, like enemy to enemy, the Lord opposes this passion which is opposed to Him, and through this parable He promises to heal it. He directs this parable towards those who trust in themselves and who do not attribute everything to God, and who, as a result, despise others. He shows that when righteousness—which is marvelous in every other respect and sets a man close to God—takes pride as its companion, it casts that man into the lowest depths and makes demonic what was God-like just a short time before.

The words of the Pharisee at first resemble the words of a grateful man. For he says, God, I thank Thee. But the words that follow are full of foolishness. He does not say, “that Thou hast made me to depart from extortion and iniquities,” but Instead, “I thank Thee that I am not an extortioner or worker of iniquity.” He attributes this accomplishment to himself, as something done by his own strength. How can a man who knows that what he has, he has received from God, compare other men to himself unfavorably and judge them? Certainly, if a man believed that he had received as a gift good things that in truth belong to God, he would not despise other men. He would instead consider himself just as naked as his fellow men in regards to virtue, except that by the mercy of God his nakedness has been covered with a donated garment. The Pharisee is proud, ascribing his deeds to his own strength, and that is why he proceeds to condemn others. By saying that the Pharisee stood, the Lord indicates his haughtiness and lack of humility. In the same way that a humble-minded man is likewise humble in his demeanor, this Pharisee by his bearing displays his pride. Although it is also said of the publican that he stood, note what follows: he would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, so that he was stooped in posture. But the eyes of the Pharisee, together with his heart, were lifted up to heaven in boastful exaltation. Nevertheless, the manner in which the Pharisee arranged the words of his prayer can still instruct us. First he says what he is not, and then he declares what he is. After stating, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, pointing to the failings of others, then he declares his good deeds, that he fasts twice a week and gives tithes of all that he possesses. The order of his prayer shows us that we must first refrain from wickedness, and then set our hand to virtue. One must not only turn away from evil, but also do good (Ps. 33:14). It is the same for a man who wants to draw pure water from a muddy spring: only after he has cleaned out the mud can he draw pure water.

Consider this as well: the Pharisee did not say, “I thank Thee that I am not an extortioner or an adulterer, as other men are.” He could not endure even the association of his name with such vile terms, and so he uses them in the plural, casting these terms at other men, and avoiding the singular, which might associate him with sin. Having said, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, by contrast he points to himself, saying, I fast twice in the Sabbath, meaning, twice in the week, for the week was called “the Sabbath,” deriving its name from the last day of the week, the day of rest. The day of rest was called Sabbat, and the week was called Sabbata, being the plural form of Sabbat. Whence it is that mian Sabatton is the first day of the week, which we call “the Lord’s Day” (Sunday). Among the Hebrews mian means the same thing as first.

There is also a more profound explanation of this parable. Against the passion of adultery, the Pharisee boasted of his fasting, for lustful desires arise from eating and drinking to excess. By restraining his body through fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, as was the practice of the Pharisees, he kept himself far from such passions. He also resisted extortion and injustice by giving tithes of all his possessions. “I am so opposed to extortion and to wronging others,” he says, “that I give alms of everything I have.” Some believe that a simple and single tithe is prescribed by the law; but those who carefully examine the law will find three forms of tithing prescribed. You may learn this from Deuteronomy if you apply yourself diligently (Dt. 12:11,17).

So much for the Pharisee. Now we turn to the publican and observe that he is the Pharisee’s exact opposite. He stood afar off, and kept himself at a great distance, not only in physical location, but in his demeanor, in his words, and by his compunction of heart. He was ashamed to lift up his eyes to heaven, for he considered his eyes unworthy of heavenly vision because they had desired to see and enjoy the good things of earth. And he smote upon his breast, striking his heart, as it were, because of its evil designs, and awakening it because it had been sleeping. The publican said no other words than, God be merciful to me a sinner.

By doing this he went down to his house counted righteous, rather than the other. For every proud heart is unclean in the Lord's eyes, and the Lord resisteth the proud but He giveth grace to the humble (Prov. 3:34, I Pet. 5:5).

But one might wonder why it is that the Pharisee is condemned for speaking a few boastful words, while Job receives a crown for speaking many such words (Job 29). The answer is that the Pharisee stood and spoke these vain words under no compulsion, and he condemned others for no reason. But with Job, his friends pressed him and bore down upon him more fiercely than did his own calamities, telling him that he was suffering these things because of his sins. Job was compelled to enumerate his good deeds, but he did so for the glory of God, and so that men would not be misled from the path of virtue. For if men came to hear that Job was suffering because what he had done was sinful, they would not act as Job had. As a result they would become haters of strangers instead of hospitable to strangers, merciless instead of merciful, and unrighteous instead of righteous; for such were the good deeds of Job. Therefore Job enumerated his virtues so that others would not be misled and harmed, and this was why he spoke as he did. Shall we not say that his words, which may seem boastful, in fact are radiant with humility? Oh that I were as in months past, he said, wherein God preserved me! (Job 29:2) Do you see that he attributes everything to God and does not judge others? Instead he is judged by his friends. But condemnation rightly falls upon the Pharisee, who attributed everything to himself and not to God, and judged others for no reason whatsoever. For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled and condemned by God; and he that humbleth himself when he is condemned by others shall be exalted and counted righteous by God. The Lord is saying, "You, O Christian, be the first to tell your sins, so that you may be counted righteous."

Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

Saints of the week

Fast Free Week

27 January / 9 February - Sunday of the Holy New Martyrs & Confessors of Russia (celebrated on the Sunday nearest to January 25 o.s.) — In any case, the world can and must wholeheartedly use for its edification and correction the present suffering by fire of the Russian people. The Russian people undoubtedly will come out of this fire holier, stronger and greater than it ever was before. No good blacksmith throws nails into the fire to be rid of them, he does it to make something better out of them. We think and believe that the Creator of the Russian people allowed this great people to experience this flame of suffering not to punish and kill it, but in order that by its terrible example other peoples may come to their senses and understand that the Russian people will be even more greatly glorified before heaven and earth. Do not cry, but be happy. A great harvest of souls has ripened in Russia. In these days the tortured Russian people fill Paradise more than any other Christian people on earth.

St. Nikolai (Velimirovic) of Ochrid

"Blessed is God! And in our time martyrs have sprung up and we have been vouchsafed to see people slain for Christ, people who have shed their blood which has watered the whole Church" (3rd Homily of St. John Chrysostom on 1 Chronicles).

We also in our times together with the golden-mouthed preacher can say the same of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, who now stand in the choir of the God-pleasers before the throne of the King of Glory and intercede on behalf of our people.

The congregation of the New Martyrs of Russia consists of representatives of all the professions and ranks of the Russian land - beginning from the time of the Tsar-Martyr down to the last homeless wanderer, the finest children of our Fatherland, who were fated to water the whole Russian Church with their holy blood.

The tortures which the holy passion-bearers endured were little different from the Christian martyrdoms of the first centuries, and the refined cruelty of the modern persecutors in no way yields to the cruelty of their predecessors.

Being incited by the devil — the first cause of all persecution against the Church in all ages, the new tormentors subjected their victims to the same kinds of sufferings which the Jews, pagans, and Moslems used in the first and following centuries of persecution.

To these God-pleasers can be ascribed the words of the apostle concerning the first martyrs of the Church of God in the Old Testament ... of them many were "stoned, sawn asunder, were slain with the sword" "not accepting deliverance: that they might obtain a better resurrection" (Heb 11:37, 35).

Tortures for Christ and death itself the new martyrs met fearlessly they rejoiced that in their sufferings they resembled their Redeemer. Before their deaths many of them prayed for their tormentors, they blessed their murdered, they called them to repentance.

They valour irradiates the Russian Church with a new glory presenting to the world a countless congregation of crowned passion-bearers. And together with them the whole Universal Church is harvesting the fruits of their victories. The New Martyrs have united heaven with the earth in common joy, for both the Church militant together with the Church triumphant now rejoices over them.

The celebration of the glorification of the Holy New-Martyrs and Confessors of Russia took place abroad on October 19/November 1, 1981.

"Orthodox Life" 1/1987

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, THE GOLDEN TRUMPET OF ORTHODOXY - The memory of this illuminary of the Church is celebrated on November 13 and January 30 but, on this date, the Church celebrates the translation of his honourable relics from the village of Comana, where he died in exile, to Constantinople, where earlier he had governed the Church. Thirty years after his death, Patriarch Proculus delivered a homily in memory of his spiritual father and teacher. He so enflamed the love of the people and Emperor Theodosius the Younger toward this great saint that all of them desired that Chrysostom's relics be translated to Constantinople. It was said that the sarcophagus, containing the relics of St. John Chrysostom, did not allow itself to be moved from its resting place until the emperor wrote a letter to Chrysostom begging him for forgiveness (for Theodosius' mother, Eudoxia, was the culprit responsible for the banishment of this saint) and appealing to him to come to Constantinople, his former residence. When this letter of repentance was placed on the sarcophagus, its weight became extremely light. At the time of the translation of his relics, many who were ill and who touched the sarcophagus were healed. When the relics arrived in the capital, then the emperor in the name of his mother as though she herself was speaking over the relics, again, prayed to the saint for forgiveness. "While I lived in this transient life, I did you malice and, now, when you live the immortal life, be beneficial to my soul. My glory passed away and it helped nothing. Help me, father; in your glory, help me before I am condemned at the Judgment of Christ!" When the saint was brought into the Church of the Twelve Apostles and placed on the patriarchal throne, the masses of people heard the words from St. Chrysostom's mouth saying: "Peace be to you all." The translation of the relics of St. John Chrysostom was accomplished in the year 438 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Peter of Egypt; New Martyr Demetrius of Galat

28 January / 10 February — Our Holy Father Ephraim the Syrian - Born in Syria of poor parents in the reign of the Emperor Constantine the Great, his early youth was spent somewhat tempestuously, but he suddenly underwent a spiritual crisis and began to burn with love for the Lord Jesus. He was a disciple of St James of Nisibis (Jan. 13th). By the great grace of God, wisdom flowed from his tongue like a stream of honey and from his eyes tears flowed unceasingly. Loving work like a bee, Ephraim was constantly either writing books or teaching the monks in the monastery or the people in the city of Edessa, or was giving himself to prayer and pondering. His books are numerous; his prayers are beautiful. The best-known of the latter is the prayer in the Great Fast: 'O Lord and Master of my life ... ' When they wished to take him by force and make him bishop, he feigned madness and began to run through the city of Edessa, trailing his garments along behind him. Seeing him mad, they left him in peace. He was a contemporary and friend of St Basil the Great. St Ephraim was especially the apostle of repentance. Even today his writings soften many hearts, strengthen them against sin and turn them back to Christ. He entered into rest at a great age in 373.

Venerable Isaac The Syrian - Isaac was born in Nineveh and in his youth lived an ascetical life in the Monastery of Mar [Saint] Matthew in the proximity of Nineveh. When Isaac became known because of the sanctity of his life and of his many miracles, he was elected bishop of Nineveh and was forced to accept that rank. But, after only five months, he left the bishopric and secretly withdrew into the wilderness to the Monastery of Rabban Shabur. He compiled many works of which about a hundred homilies on the spiritual life and asceticism, written primarily from his personal experience, have come down to us today. He was unequalled as a psychologist and as a director in the spiritual life. Even such saints as was St. Simeon [the New Stylite] of the Wonderful Mountain near Antioch sought counsel from him. Isaac died in extreme old age toward the end of the seventh century.

St. Cannera of Inis Cathaig, virgin - (also known as Cainder, Conaire, Kinnera) Died c. 530. Little is known of Saint Cannera except that which is recorded in the story of Saint Senan, who ruled an abbey on the Shannon River, which ministered to the dying- -but only men. Cannera was an anchorite from Bantry in southern Ireland. When she knew she was dying, she travelled to Senan's abbey without rest and walked upon the water to cross the river because no one would take her to the place forbidden to women. Upon her arrival, the abbot was adamant that no woman could enter his monastic enclosure. Arguing that Christ died for women, too, she convinced the abbot to give her last rites on the island and to bury her at its furthest edge. Against his argument that the waves would wash away her grave, she answered that she would leave that to God. Cannera told the abbot of a vision she had in her Bantry cell of the island and its holiness. Her appearance signalled a change in the attitude of the monks toward women, whose contamination they feared. Cannera charges Senan with this unchristian prejudice. She reminded him that "Christ is no worse than yourself." If He could find comfort in the presence of women, so should the monks. The monks believed that the holier a man, the more he distances himself from Eve. They saw their celibacy as a taboo against women, rather than a sacrifice of love to Christ. They also failed to recognize that Jesus broke the conventions of His time. Again, Cannera said, "Christ came to redeem women no less than to redeem men," and "women gave service and tended to Christ and His Apostles," so why should the monks so distance themselves? Other double (men and women) monasteries already existed in Ireland for Saint Patrick (March 17) and his followers did not reject the fellowship and ministry of women. Probably because Saint Cannera walked across the water, sailors honor their patron by saluting her resting place on Scatterry Island (Inis Chathaigh). They believed that pebbles from her island protected the bearer from shipwreck. A 16th-century Gaelic poem about Cannera prays, "Bless my good ship, protecting power of grace. . . ."

St. Glastian of Kinglassie - (also known as Glastian of MacGlastian) Born in County Fife, Scotland; died at Kinglassie (Kingleace), Scotland, in 830. As bishop of Fife, Saint Glastian mediated in the bloody civil war between the Picts and the Scots. When the Picts were subjugated, Glastian did much to alleviate their lot. He is the patron saint of Kinglassie in Fife, and venerated in Kintyre.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Ephraim of Novotorzhok, wonderworker; Venerable Ephraim of the Kiev Caves, bishop of Pereyaslav; Venerable Theodosius, abbot of Totma; Righteous Theodore Bogoyavlensky, confessor, priest; New Hieroconfessor Arsenius (Stadnitsky), metropolitan of Tashkent and Turkestan; New Hieromartyrs Ignatius (Sadkovsky), bishop of Skopin, Vladimir Pishchulin, priest, Monk-martyr Bartholomew (Ratnykh), and Martyr Olga Evdokimov; Venerable Leontius (Stasevich), confessor; 'Sumorin Totma' Icon of the Mother of God.

29 January / 11 February —The Hieromartyr Ignatius - The chief feast of St Ignatius is in winter, on December 20th. Today we celebrate the translation of his relics from Rome, where he suffered martyrdom, to Antioch, where he had been archbishop. When St Ignatius was summoned to Rome to answer for his faith before the Emperor Trajan (98 - 117) a number of citizens from Antioch accompanied him on this long journey, prompted by their great love for their chief pastor. The saint of God, in no wise willing to deny the faith of Christ and scorning all the flattery and promises of the Emperor, was condemned to death and thrown into the Great Circus before the wild beasts. They tore him to pieces and he gave his soul to God. Then his companions collected his bare bones, took them to Antioch and buried them. When the Persians occupied Antioch in the sixth century, the relics of St Ignatius were again taken from Antioch to Rome.

St. Flora (Blath) of Kildare - virgin. Died 523. Saint Blath was the lay-sister who served as cook at Saint Brigid's convent in Kildare. She earned a reputation for heroic sanctity, and of her cooking it is said that bread and bacon at Brigid's table were better than a banquet elsewhere.

St. Dallan Forgaill the Blind - (6th.cent.) A kinsman of St. Edan of Ferns, born in Connaught and a great scholar who, through his application to study, became blind. He wrote a poem in honour of St. Columba, called Ambra Choluim Kille which was only published after St. Columba's death. It is said that on its publication Dallan's sight was restored to him. St. Dallan was murdered at Triscoel by pirates (AD 598) and his head thrown into the sea. It was recovered and miraculously reunited to his body.

Also commemorated on this day: St. Barsimeaus, bishop of Edessa; Martyrs Romanus, James, Philotheus, Hyperechius, Abibus, Julian and Paregorius, at Samosata; Martyrs Silvanus, bishop of Emesa, Luke, deacon, and Mocius, reader; St. Valerius, bishop of Trier (Germany); Venerable Aphrahates of Syria; Martyr Ashot, king of Tao-Klarjeti (Georgia); St. Laurence of the Kiev Caves, bishop of Turov; St. Ignatius, bishop of Smolensk; Saints of Perm: Gerasimus, Pitirim, and Jonah; Martyr Demetrius of Chios; New Hieromartyrs John Granitov and Leontius Klimenko, priests, Constantine Zverev, deacon, and with them 5 Martyrs; Synaxis of the Saints of Ekaterinburg; Synaxis of the Saints of Kom

30 January / 12 February — The Three Great Hierarchs: Basil the Great, Gregory the

Theologian and John Chrysostom - Each has his personal feast day in the month of January; Basil on the 1st, Gregory on the 25th and Chrysostom on the 27th. The common feast we celebrate today was instituted in the 11th century, in the time of the Emperor Alexius Comnenus. At one time there was a quarrel among the people about who was the greatest of the three. Some gave Basil the pre-eminence for his purity and courage; others Gregory for the unfathomable depth and height of his theological mind; others still Chrysostom for the wonderful beauty of his speech and the clarity of his presentation of the Faith. So the first were called Basilians, the second Gregorians and the third Johannites. But, by the providence of God, this dispute was resolved to the benefit of the Church and the yet greater glory of the three saints. The Bishop of Euchaita, John (June 14th), had a vision in his sleep, in which each of these saints appeared to him in great glory and indescribable beauty, and then all three together. They then said to him: 'We are one in God, as you see, and there is no dispute among us . . . neither is there among us a first or a second.' The saints also advised Bishop John to compile a common feast for them and to set aside for them a day of common commemoration. The quarrel was settled as indicated by the wonderful vision; January 30th being set aside for the common commemoration of the three hierarchs.

Hieromartyr Hippolytus, Bishop of Rome - Hippolytus suffered for the Faith during the reign of Claudius. When the virgin Chrysa was unmercifully tortured for Christ in Rome, St. Hippolytus interceded on her behalf before the torturers and denounced them. Because of that protest, Hippolytus also was brought to court, was condemned and, after prolonged tortures, was sentenced to death. They bound his hands and feet and drowned him in the sea. Along with Hippolytus and Chrysa, twenty other martyrs also suffered. St. Hippolytus suffered in the year 269 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: St. Agrippinus, patriarch of Alexandria ; St. Macarius, patriarch of Jerusalem; Venerable Zeno, disciple of St. Basil the Great; Right-believing Bathilda, Queen of France; Martyr Theophilus the New in Cyprus; Righteous Peter, king of Bulgaria; Venerable Zeno, the faster of the Kiev Caves; Martyr Theodore of Mytilene; Martyr Demetrius of Sliven; Blessed Pelagia of Diveyevo; New Hieromartyr Vladimir Kristenovich, priest; New Martyr Stephen Nalivayko; 'Tinos' Icon of the Mother of God.

31 January / 13 February — The Holy Unmercenaries and Wonderworkers Cyrus and John -

These compassionate and wonderful saints were not blood-brothers, but were brothers in spirit. Cyrus lived at first in Alexandria, and working as a doctor, healed people by the power of Christ together with medicine for the body. Discovering that illness came upon people mainly through sin, he always told them to cleanse their souls from sin by repentance and prayer, that they might be restored and strengthened in body. When Diocletian began his persecution of Christians, Cyrus went off to Arabia, where he received the monastic habit. But, as he had become known in Alexandria, so he became known also in Arabia, and people went to him for help. John, hearing of him and being at that time a Roman officer in Edessa, came to Arabia to see Cyrus. On seeing each other, they loved each other as brothers and remained together to live in asceticism. At that time, a Christian woman called Athanasia was tortured together with her three daughters in the town of Canopus. Cyrus and John heard of this, and came to Canopus to encourage the mother and daughters not to fall back from the Faith. And, grateful indeed for the counsel of these saints, Athanasia endured all the tortures and, with her daughters, was slain for Christ. The daughters were: Theoctista, aged 15, Theodota aged 13 and Eudocia aged 11. Then the torturers took Cyrus and John and, after torture and imprisonment, slew them with the sword in the year 311 . These holy martyrs performed innumerable miracles, both during their lives and after their death. Their relics were translated to Rome in the time of the Emperor Arcadius. They are invoked for help especially for the sleepless and for the blessing of water and food.

The Venerable Nicetas of the Kiev Caves - As a monk Nicetas was disobedient to his superior, left the monastery and closed himself in a cell. Because of his disobedience, God permitted great temptations to befall him. Once, when Nicetas was at prayer, the devil appeared to him under the guise of a radiant angel and said to him: "Do not pray anymore; rather read books and I will pray for you!" Nicetas obeyed and ceased to pray and began to read books. He only read the Old Testament. He was unable even to open the Book of the New Testament, for the power of the devil prevented him from doing so. With the help of the devil, Nicetas prophesied only crimes, thefts, arson and other evil deeds which are known to the devil and in which he [the devil] participates. Finally, the holy fathers of the Caves realized that Nicetas had succumbed to the temptation of the devil, and they began to pray to God for him. Nicetas returned to the monastery, realized the destruction which plagued him, and directed himself on the right path. After prolonged repentance and many tears, God forgave him and bestowed upon him the gift of miracle-working. He died in the year 1108 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyr Tryphaena of Cyzicus; Martyrs Victorinus, Victor, Nicephorus, Claudius, Diodorus, Serapion and Papias; Martyr Marcella of Rome; New Monk-martyr Elias of Mt. Athos; St. Arsenius of Paros; New martyr Eugene Poselyanin.

1 / 14 February — Forefeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — The Holy Martyr Tryphon - Tryphon was born of poor parents in the village of Lampsacus in Phrygia. In his childhood he tended geese. Also from his childhood he was able to cure illnesses that afflicted people and livestock and was able to expel evil spirits. The Roman Empire at that time was ruled by Emperor Gordian whose daughter Gordiana went insane and this caused her father great sorrow. All the physicians were unable to help Gordiana. The evil spirit spoke through Gordiana and said that no one can cast him out except Tryphon. After many who were named Tryphon in the empire were summoned, by Divine Providence, young Tryphon was also summoned. He was brought to Rome and he healed the emperor's daughter. The emperor lavished upon him many gifts all of which Tryphon, upon his return, distributed to the poor. In his village this holy youngster continued to tend geese and to pray to God. When Decius, the Christ-persecutor, was crowned emperor, Saint Tryphon was tortured and cruelly tormented for Christ. He endured all tortures with great joy saying: "Oh! If only I could be made worthy to die by fire and pain for the Name of the Lord and God, Jesus Christ!" All sufferings did him no harm and finally the tormentors sentenced him to be beheaded. Before his death Tryphon prayed to God and gave up his soul to his Creator in the year 250 A.D.

Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas; The Holy Martyr Satyrus and Others With Them - As Christians, they were all cast into prison during the reign of Emperor Septimus Severus. Saint Perpetua, who was of noble birth, encouraged all the other prisoners not to be afraid to suffer for Christ. In a dream, Perpetua saw a ladder imbedded with sharp knives, swords, spears, fishhooks, nails and other death-bearing instruments extending from heaven to earth. At the bottom of the ladder there lay a loathsome serpent. She saw how Satyrus ran up to the top of the ladder first, unharmed, and from the top cried out to Perpetua: "Perpetua, I am waiting for you; come, but be careful of the serpent!" Encouraged by this, Perpetua stood on the head of the serpent as on the first rung of the ladder and, step by step, quickly raced to the top. When she reached the top, Perpetua entered into heaven and saw the most beautiful mansions of heaven and was very ecstatic. When she related her dream, all the prisoners interpreted that imminent death soon faced them, the first of them being Satyrus, which shortly came true. Satyrus was slain first, then Perpetua and all others one by one. As lambs slain for Christ the Lamb of God, they received from Christ, the eternal reward in the kingdom of Light. They all suffered for Christ between the years 202-203 A.D.

St. Brigit (Brigid), abs & her disciple St. Darlugdach, nun - St Brigit lived at the time when Christ's Holy Church was just being revealed in Ireland. In those days, the country was still wild and many of the kings and warriors were brutal and cruel. The power of God's Grace to change people and even whole lands, was shone forth in this holy saint. For, St Brigit is remembered above all else for her holy love, compassion and charity. By her Christ-like example, she taught kings to be merciful, the greedy to be charitable and the pagans to seek Christ. Brigit was born in the year of our Lord 436, at Tirconnell, Ireland. Her mother was a slave, her father, the master. Before St Brigit was born, her mother was sold to a different master, a pagan magician. Brigit's mother was a Christian, strong in faith, and she worked hard to raise her child according to the Gospel. Soon after St Brigit's birth, the magician (wizard) moved to the province of Connaught, taking his household with him. Here, Brigit's mother, whose name was Broiksech, became close to the Christian bishop, Mel. St Brigit herself was raised under the careful and loving eye of this holy bishop, and she grew strong in the Lord under the guidance of her elder. Very early in life, St Brigit showed special gifts of God's Grace, and several people were healed of illnesses through her pure prayers. Moreover, the saint was a hard worker, and she did every task to the glory of God. The people of the district had a special reverence for this blessed child, because of her open-hearted love for everyone and every creature. Now, in the old Irish law, if a master bought a slave woman who was expecting a child, he bought only the mother, and the child was born a free person. When the saint grew older, she wanted to go to visit her father, Dubthach, who lived in the province of Munster. The magician agreed to help her make the journey, and she went to her father's house. To her great joy, St Brigit soon brought her father to a true understanding of the Gospel. The blessed maiden worked on her father's estate, and continued to struggle in fasting and prayer. Once, the council of the bishops of Ireland was to be held in the town of Moy Liffey in nearby Leinster County. A woman in St Brigit's neighbourhood had some need to take her problems to the bishops for their advice and help, and she asked St Brigit to go with her on the journey. There was a certain holy bishop named Ibhair at the council, and it was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, that a blessed maiden was coming to the council. When St Brigit entered the council room, Bishop Ibhair rose to his feet and glorified God. "This is the maiden whom I foresaw," he said. Then, he blessed and consecrated the chosen virgin. Shortly after this, St Brigit went to visit her mother, who was still in slavery. The mother was very ill, but she still had to work hard in her master's dairy. The young saint took over her mother's duties, and with her hard work and prayers, the dairy soon began to produce more butter than ever before. St Brigit had a custom of always dividing the butter into thirteen portions, one each commemorating the twelve apostles, and a larger portion in honour of Christ the Saviour. This last portion, she always gave away to the poor people in the area. Soon, the magician and his wife heard of these things and they came to look over their dairy.

They saw that it was now clean and well run. The calves were in good health, and there was much butter being sold every day. The magician's wife, however, out of greed, demanded of Brigit that she fill a large container with butter then and there, so the mistress could take it home with her. There was only a small quantity of butter left at that time, because the saint had given the extra butter away to poor people. The mistress became angry and began to scold and mock; the blessed one. At this, the saint brought what butter there was in the church, and began to pray to God, making the sign of the Cross upon herself and over the butter. The merciful Lord heard the prayers of his servant, and when she began to take the butter out of the churn, there was more than there had been. Indeed, by God's Grace, there was even more than was needed to fill the container. When the magician saw this, he was amazed. He asked to be taught about this Christ Whom St Brigit and her mother adored. Moreover, he set St Brigit's mother free. After he had been taught the Christian faith, the magician and his whole household were baptized into Christ's Holy Church, and he gave away not only butter, but also cows, to the poor, and completely changed his way of life. St Brigit returned to her father's house, and though he loved her, he was often angry with her. The saint was in the habit of giving away something to every beggar or poor person who asked for her help. In this way, Brigit was giving away all her father's food, property and wealth. In despair, St Brigit's father took her to the fortress of King Dunlaing of Leinster, and asked him to take her into his service as a worker. It was the law in those days, that no-one could carry his sword into the king's house. So, when Dubthach started to enter the king's house, he took off his sword and gave it to St Brigit to hold, until she was sent for. When the king asked why St Brigit's father wanted to be rid of her, Dubthach replied, "She is a good and hard worker, but she is giving everything of mine away to those who do not work, and soon I will be poor." The king told him to bring in Brigit, but when Dubthach came to St Brigit, he noticed that she no longer held his sword. "Where is my sword?" he asked in alarm? "Father, a poor leper came and asked help of me. I had no gold, so I gave him your sword, that he might sell it." St Brigit was brought before the king, and her father angrily told him what had happened with the sword. The king asked in surprise: "Why did you take your father's wealth, and even his sword, and give it away?" St Brigit replied: "The Virgin's Son knows. If I had your power and wealth and all of Leinster, I would give it all to the Lord of the poor." The king was amazed. Then Brigit boldly told him and all those present about the Gospel of Christ and the life God commands of all those who would obtain the Heavenly Kingdom. The king glorified Christ because of the love and compassion of His saint, and sent her away in peace. Not long after this, a certain man came and asked for the hand of Brigit in marriage. Her father was happy to give her away, and the family encouraged her to marry the man. He was wealthy and had a good reputation, and everyone thought he would be a good husband. The saint, however, had already decided to become a nun. She replied to all, "The Son of the Virgin knows. Nothing is good for us if it harms our souls." St Brigit soon went down to the cathedral of Telcha Mide, to Bishop Mel, her elder, with eight other virgins to be tonsured. When they came to church on the day of their tonsure, St Brigit, out of humility, stood at the end of the line, thinking to herself that the others were all more worthy than she. When Bishop Mel saw the merciful saint standing last of all, he called her forth, and said: "Blessed are the least, for they shall be first." He tonsured St Brigit first and set her over the rest as Abbess. She later founded the convent at Kildare. For many years, then, St Brigit struggled and guided her nuns. God granted her many gifts of Grace. People from across the whole country came to the saint for healing, comfort and for help. The saint knew and often helped the great apostle, St Patrick in his tireless labour of enlightening Ireland. St Brigit was renowned for her charity and mercifulness. The number of the poor that she fed is known only to God, and she saved many from prison and death. St Brigit lived for eighty-eight God-pleasing years. As the time of her repose drew near, Bishop Nin, called by the people, "The Pure-Hand," arrived from Rome. He came to visit St Brigit, and found her near death. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy and gave her the Holy Communion. Soon after, the saint gave up her holy soul into the hands of Christ the Saviour, to Whom be all glory and adoration, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen! The great St Columba (Colum-cille), who was the apostle to the Scots in Scotland, when he was sailing to his monastery on the Isle of Iona, was caught in a great storm. He called upon Christ and His saint Brigit to calm the storm, and his prayers were answered. After that, he wrote an ode to the saint, from which the following troparion is composed: Pure virgin and flame of the Lord, / O Brigit, guide to the Eternal Kingdom, / deliver us, by thy prayers, from the throngs of demons and the storms of life, / and pray to Christ God that our souls be saved.

Also commemorated on this day: Apostle Zacchaeus, bishop of Caesarea, former publican; Venerable Peter of Galatia ; Venerable Vendemianus of Bithynia; Venerable Seiriol of Penmon; St. Basil the confessor, archbishop of Thessalonica; St. Tryphon, bishop of Rostov; Martyr Anastasius at Nauplion; New Hieromartyr Nicholas Mezentsev, priest.



2 / 15 February — The Meeting of Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ

— On the fortieth day after His birth, the most holy Virgin brought her divine Son to the Temple in Jerusalem, to consecrate Him to the Lord and to purify herself according to the Law (Lev. 12:2-7, Exod. 12:2). And though neither the one nor the other was necessary, nevertheless the Lawgiver would not in any way transgress the Law which He had given through His servant and prophet Moses. At that time Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was serving his turn as high priest in the Temple. He stood the Virgin Mary in the place for maidens, not that for married women. On this occasion, there were two very special people present: the elder, Simeon, and Anna the daughter of Phanuel. The righteous elder took his Messiah up in his arms and said: 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.'

Simeon also spoke the following words of the Christ Child: 'Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.' Then Anna, who had from her youth served God in the Temple in fasting and prayer, and who herself recognised the Messiah, praised the Lord and made known to the inhabitants of Jerusalem the coming of the awaited One. But the Pharisees, present in the Temple and seeing and hearing all that passed, and being vexed with Zacharias for having stood the Virgin Mary in the place for maidens, made this known to King Herod. Believing this to be the new King of whom the star-followers from the East had spoken, Herod quickly sent to have Jesus killed. But in the meantime the holy family had already escaped from the city and set out for Egypt, under the direction of an angel of God. This day has been celebrated from the very earliest times, but its solemn celebration dates from 544, in the time of the Emperor Justinian.

Tropar of The Meeting of the Lord, First Tone: Rejoice thou who art full of grace, O Virgin Theotokos, for from thee hath risen the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, enlightening those in darkness. Rejoice, thou also, O righteous Elder, as thou receivest in thine arms the Redeemer of our souls, Who also granteth unto us the Resurrection.

Kondak of The Meeting of the Lord, First Tone: Thou Who didst sanctify the Virgin's womb by Thy birth, and didst bless Simeon's hands as was meet, by anticipation didst even now save us, O Christ God. But grant peace in the midst of wars unto thy commonwealth and strengthen Orthodox Christians whom Thou hast loved, O only lover of mankind.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyr Agathadorus of Cappadocia; Martyr Jordan of Trebizond; Monk-martyr Gabriel of Constantinople; 'Softening of Evil Hearts' Icon of the Mother of God.

‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡

Monday - 2 Peter 1:20-2:9; Mark 13:9-13; Galatians 5:22-6:2 (Venerable Ephraim); Matthew 11:27-30 (Venerable Ephraim)

Tuesday - 2 Peter 2:9-22; Mark 13:14-23; 2 Peter 3:1-18; Mark 13:24-31; Hebrews 4:14-5:6 (Hieromartyr Ignatius); Mark 9:33-41 (Hieromartyr Ignatius)

Wednesday - John 10:9-16 (Matins Gospel); Hebrews 13:7-16 (Epistle, Hierarchs); Matthew 5:14-19 (Gospel, Hierarchs)

Thursday - 1 John 1:8-2:6; Mark 13:31-14:2

Friday - 1 John 2:7-17; Mark 14:3-9; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; Luke 20:46-21:4

Saturday - Luke 2:25-32 (Matins Gospel); Hebrews 7:7-17 (Epistle, Meeting); Luke 2:22-40 (Gospel, Meeting)

GREAT LENT

Great Lent is the most important and most ancient of the fasts which extend over more than one day. It reminds us of the forty-day fast of the Saviour in the wilderness, and prepares us for Passion Week and for the joyous Feast of Feasts, the radiant Resurrection of Christ.

The Holy and Great Fast is a time for special prayer and repentance during which each of us should beseech the Lord for forgiveness of sins through Confession and preparation for Communion, and then worthily partake the Holy Mysteries of Christ in accordance with the commandment of Christ (John 6:53-56).

During the Old Testament period the Lord commanded the sons of Israel to give each year a tithe (one tenth) of all that they possessed, and when they did so they received blessing in all their affairs.

In like manner the Holy Fathers established for our benefit that a tenth of the year, the period of Great Lent, be consecrated to God, so that we might be blessed in all our affairs and each year purify ourselves of our sins which we have committed during the course of the year.

Great Lent then serves as the God-ordained tenth of the year, for it equals approximately thirty-six days, excluding Sundays, during which we separate ourselves for a time from the distractions of life and all its possible enjoyments, and dedicate ourselves primarily to the service of God unto the salvation of our souls.

Great Lent is preceded by three preparatory Sundays. The first preparatory Sunday of Great Lent is termed the "Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee." This Sunday's Gospel parable of the Publican and the Pharisee is read in order to demonstrate that only prayer with heartfelt tears and humility, like those of the publican, and not with a recounting of one's virtues like the pharisee, can call down upon us the mercy of God. Starting with this Sunday and continuing until the fifth Sunday of Great Lent, following the reading of the Gospel, during the All-night Vigil, the contrite prayer is chanted, "The doors of repentance do Thou open to me, O Giver of Life..."

The Law of God, Fr. Seraphim Slobodskoy