15th Sunday After Pentecost

Placing of the Venerable Sash of the Most Holy Mother of God in Constantinople

31 August / 13 September

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 Mother of God tone 8: O ever-Virgin mother of God, shelter of mankind,/ thou hast given a powerful legacy to thy people,/ thine immaculate body's tunic and girdle which remain incorrupt through thy pure childbirth./ For in thee time and nature are renewed,/ and we implore thee to obtain peace for the world and great mercy for our souls.

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 the Mother of God tone 2: Thy precious girdle, O Mother of God, which encircled the womb that held God/ is an invincible strength for thy flock/ and an unfailing treasury of grace, O Ever-Virgin Mother.

Vespers: Lord I have Cried, Tone 6, on 10: Octoechos 6; Feast 4 (The shrine which holdeth);

G: Feast (The Church of God is clad); N: Sunday Dogmatic in the 6th tone.

Aposticha: Octoechos; G/N: Feast (Having cleansed our mind).

Matins Gospel IV

<u>Epistle: II Corinthians 4: 6-15</u>

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed-- Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, Knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

WE HAVE THE SAME SPIRIT OF FAITH…KNOWING THAT HE WHO RAISED UP

THE LORD JESUS WILL ALSO RAISE US UP

And where did He command light to shine out of darkness? In the beginning and in prelude to the Creation …Now He said nothing, but Himself became Light for us …We do not see sensible objects by the shining of this Light, but God Himself through Christ. Do you see the invariableness in the Trinity?...

And what is the 'dying of the Lord Jesus,' which they bore about? Their daily deaths by which also the resurrection was shown ...Do you see how he has discovered yet another reason for the trials?... That His life may also be manifested in our body ...We bear about His dying so the power of His life may be made manifest, who did not permit mortal flesh - even undergoing such great suffering - to be overcome by the blizzard of these calamities ...And he says in another place, 'If we die with Him, we will also live with Him' (II Tim. 2:11). For as we endure His dying now, and choose while living to die for His sake: so also He will choose, when we are dead, to beget us then into life. For if we come from life into death, He will also lead us by the hand from death into life.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily VIII, 3, & IX, 1, on II Corinthians IV. B#56, pp. 319, 321-322

Epistle for Theotokos Hebrews 9:1-7

Gospel for Sunday: Matthew 22: 35-46

Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David." He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool?" "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?" And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT IN THE LAW

"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" (Mt. 22:35).

If you were attentive to how the Holy Church, revealing to us the mystery of our salvation, gradually shows us in the Sunday Gospel readings the way of resurrection for the human soul, then you also noticed that starting from Easter until today there were several cycles. One of these cycles convinced us that the Lord is our Saviour, our Saviour from sin, and that He is All-powerful. And further we were shown the dispositions, the states of mind which should be in the soul of every Christian, in order to perceive that power which the Lord has given to us, establishing our salvation in the plan of eternal life. These Gospel readings opened to us the feeling of humility and devotion to God, in understanding the Word of God as acting in our life. And then these cycles changed into others, and we came to a cycle which revealed that all this which God gives us can be accomplished, but only within the limits of the Church. Like the boat in which the Apostles were sailing, it preserved the Apostles. And this boat was like the laws in which lived and lives the Church, which protects those who are in the boat from all the troubles that occur outside of it.

But this is possible only if, on our part, we are obedient to the Lord. And such obedience is connected with certain experiences, in the same way the Apostles experienced them: storm and fear. But if we presume upon the power of God, then we lose obedience and, instead of obedience, we receive boldness. And the same could happen to us which happened to the Apostle Peter, who in a transport of delight and daring, asked Christ for permission to walk to Him on the waves. And Christ in a way answered him: walk, if you want to. This was no longer obedience; this was not the will of Christ, but the will of Peter. And then Peter found himself alone in the water; the waves were so high that Christ was not even visible. Here Peter came to his senses: the law of nature took hold of him; he became frightened and started to drown. And only a strong faith in the Lord and the constant trust in the Almighty saved him (Mt. 14:24-31).

And further: in the Gospel about the filling of five thousand people with five loaves of bread, again the Lord seemed to be talking in a mysterious way about the Church. "Give ye them to eat!" He said to the Apostles, declining their attempt to let the people go into the neighbouring villages to buy food (Mt. 14:16). Does this not mean that He entrusted them, the Apostles and their successors, with feeding people the true food, His Body and Blood, in the Sacrament of the Divine Eucharist? And when He ordered the people to sit in groups, does it not symbolise the organisation of the Church?

The Sunday Gospel readings were convincing us more and more that Christian life is possible only within the Church, under the definite laws of the Church, along with the Divine Eucharist, which is the Tree of Life of the New Testament. So after having brought us to this understanding, the Church begins to show us, explains to us what the life is which surrounds us.

If you will remember, the Gospel before last told us about a certain young man who approached Christ (Mt. 19:16-23). And this young man asked Christ: what shall I do to receive the Kingdom of Heaven? He was like a materialist. He fulfilled accurately everything prescribed by the Law. He himself said, I have fulfilled the commandments. But he fulfilled them as a tradition, as an obligation. And the Lord saw this and said: Then reject everything that you have. In other words, reject the hope you have put in your riches. The young man froze. He could not understand how it is possible to reject this power, the power of the world. Why, through riches we can have everything we want. In such a way the enemy of the human race tempted man and perverted our understanding.

Following that, the last Gospel reading spoke about the workers in the vineyard (Mt. 21:33-42). This vineyard represents in a parable our whole world. The Lord owns this vineyard. And the workers in the vineyard are only servants, who receive everything necessary for their maintenance. And in the end, everything which the vineyard produces must be given back to their Lord. But the vineyard workers saw the beauty of the vineyard, the comfort of life, and decided that in this consists the whole meaning of life, is life itself. They would live. And therefore, when the Heir came, they killed Him. They said to themselves: What do we need Him for? The vineyard is ours. This is ours.

This is exactly what we are doing now. We say of the world and worldly goods: This is ours. And we cannot conceive leaving here. How are we going to part with all our comforts of life? How are we going to reject all our houses, our air planes, all the inventions which seek to know the world and its mysteries, technology, everything that we are using? How are we going to leave?

And now today the Holy Church points out: we have to fulfil the commandments, and we have to participate in the life around us. Why? Well, because God has sent us here so that through these circumstances, as a means, we would obtain that which is needed. But what is needed? At the creation of man, God gave him the commandments: love for God and neighbour. And these commandments we must fulfil. The Lord, Who came on earth, came to save man. But how? By fulfilling the commandments of love for God and neighbour, and by giving strength to fulfil these commandments. And in fulfilling these commandments, we receive blessedness.

During His whole evangelistic life Christ was tempted by Satan. In the beginning it was in the wilderness: the temptation was by bread, by miracle, and by kingdom. Rejecting all these temptations, Christ fulfilled the commandment of love for God. After that, the enemy did not approach Christ openly, but only through the hearts of men, hoping to stir up in Christ hatred towards neighbour. But Christ never became angry at a man, but only at the power of the enemy, by saying: "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Mk. 8 :33). In such a way the Lord Himself fulfilled this great commandment, and in His Sacraments gives even to us the forces to fulfil it.

So let us fulfil it! "Which is the great commandment?" asked the lawyer. And the Lord answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Mt. 22:36-40).

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei.

Gospel for the Theotokos Luke 10: 38-42, 11: 27-28

Saints of the week

31 August / 13 September - The Feast of the Sash of the Most Holy Mother of God - At her Dormition, the most holy Mother of God left her girdle to the holy Apostle Thomas. This girdle was later taken to Constantinople and kept there in a sealed casket in the church of the Mother of God at Blachernae, founded by the Empress Pulcheria. This casket was never opened until the time of the Emperor Leo the Wise (886-912) . Leo's wife, the Empress Zoe, was taken sick in soul and, as the result of a mysterious vision, desired that the girdle of the holy Mother of God be placed upon her. The Emperor asked the Patriarch, and the casket was opened. The girdle was taken out and placed upon the sick Empress, who immediately recovered. This feast was instituted as a memorial of this wonder. One part of this girdle is to be found in Georgia, in Zugdid. This came about as follows:

The daughter of the Emperor Romanus was healed by the aid of this girdle and, later, when her father gave her to King Abuchaz of Georgia, she took a part of this girdle with her. By order of the Russian Tsar Alexander I, a special church was built in Mingrelia in Zugdid, where this piece of the wonderworking raiment of the holy Mother of God is kept.

St. Aidan, bishop of Lindisfarne, apostle of N. England who taught the Wednesday and Friday fasts (651) - An Irish monk who had studied under St. Senan, at Iniscathay (Scattery Island). He is placed as Bishop of Clogher by Ware and Lynch, but he resigned that see and became a monk at Iona about 630. His virtues, however, shone so resplendently that he was selected (635) as first Bishop of Lindisfarne, and in time became apostle of Northumbria. St. Bede is lavish in praise of the episcopal rule of St. Aidan, and of his Irish co-workers in the ministry. Oswald, king of Northumbria, who had studied in Ireland, was a firm friend of St. Aidan, and did all he could for the Irish missioners until his sad death at Maserfield near Oswestry, 5 August, 642. St. Aidan died at Bamborough on the last day of August, 651, and his remains were borne to Lindisfarne. Bede tells us that "he was a pontiff inspired with a passionate love of virtue, but at the same time full of a surpassing mildness and gentleness."

St. Eanswythe, abbess of Folkestone, grand-daughter of king St. Ethelbert of England, (c.640) - is remembered for the simple life in which she gave up all the pleasures of the World. Once, the King of Northumbria asked to marry Eanswythe. At that time her father was building an oratory for her and one of the beams to be used was three feet too short. Eanswythe set the King a task to complete in order to win her hand in marriage. If the Kings gods could, by his prayers, lengthen the beam then she would marry him. The King failed and went away filled with shame. Eanswythe however, approached the beam, made a prayer, and the beam lengthened to the required size. This was the first miracle. The nearest water to the oratory was a good distance away and had to be brought by hand. Eanswythe therefore went to the spring a mile or so away in the village of Sweeten. Using a stick she made the water follow her, up and down over cliffs and rocky summits, to her Oratory, where it delivered abundant water for men and animals. In the third miracle the young virgin placed an interdict that the birds should stop settling on the nearby fields and consuming the produce. So it was - the birds obeyed. She performed still further miracles. She restored a blind woman's sight, made a mad man sane and restored health in others from various diseases. King Eadbald consented to allowing her to found a monastery where she served as its abbess. Hers was the first convent in England. The Abbey was destroyed by the Danes; the church built in its place became an "alien" Priory of Lonlay l' Abbeye(Orne) in 1095; then about 1838 the Monks were moved by William de Avaranches to the site of the present church. Less than a century later a great rebuilding took place. It was finally rebuilt as we see it today between 1856 and 1874. In art, Saint Eanswythe is portrayed as a crowned abbess with a book and two fish.

Also commemorated on this day: Hieromartyr Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (†258); St. Paulinus, bishop of Trier (†358); St. Gennadius, patriarch of Constantinople (†471); Blessed Diadoch, bishop of Photica (5th C); St. John, metropolitan of Kiev (†1089); New Hieromartyr Alexander Lyubimov, priest, and Vladimir Dvinsky, deacon (†1918); New Hieromartyrs Michael Kosukhin and Myron Rzhepik, priests (†1937); New Hieromartyr Demetrius Smirnov, priest (†1938); Synaxis of the New Martyrs of Jasenovac (†1941-1945). Movable feast on the Sunday on or after August 26 th: Synaxis of the Saints of Nizhegorod. Movable feast on the Sunday nearest August 31st: Synaxis of the Saints of Saratov. Movable feast on the Sunday on or before September 6th: Translation of the relics of Right-believing Prince Peter, in monasticism David, and Princess Febronia, in monasticism Euphrosyne, the Wonderworkers of Murom

1 / 14 September – **The Beginning of the Church's Year -** The First Ecumenical Council decreed that the Church's year should begin on September 1st. The month of September was, for the Jews, the beginning of the civil year (see Exodus 12:2), the month of the gathering of fruits and the bringing to God of sacrifices of thanksgiving. It was at the time of this feast that the Lord Jesus went into the synagogue in Nazareth, opened the Book of the Prophet Isaiah and read the words: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; because He hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance' (Is. 61:1-2; cf. Luke 4:16-21). This month of September is also noted in the history of Christianity because it was during September that Constantine the Great was victorious over Maxentius, the enemy of the Christian faith, a victory followed by the granting of freedom of confession of the Christian faith through- out the whole Roman Empire. For a long time, the civil year in the Christian world was reckoned in the

same way as the Church's year, from September 1st, but it was later changed to January 1st, first in western Europe and then also in Russia in the time of Peter the Great.

Our Holy Father Simeon Stylites (the Elder) and his mother St. Martha - born in Syria of peasant parents, he fled from them at the age of eighteen and became a monk. He gave himself to the strictest asceticism, sometimes fasting for forty days. After that, he followed a particular ascesis, until then unknown: standing day and night on a pillar in unceasing prayer. His pillar was at first three metres high, then one of six metres was built for him, then eleven, eighteen and finally twenty. His mother, Martha, came to see him twice, but he would not receive her, saying to her from his pillar: 'Don't disturb me now, Mother dear, if we are to be worthy to meet in the next world.' St Simeon endured innumerable assaults from demons, overcoming them all by prayer. He worked great miracles, healing the sick by his prayers and his words. People from all sides gathered around his pillar: rich and poor, kings and slaves. He helped them all, restoring bodily health to some, giving comfort and instruction to others and denouncing some for their heretical faith. The Empress Eudocia was thus turned from the Eutychian heresy back to Orthodoxy. Simeon lived in asceticism during the reigns of the Emperors Theodosius the Younger, Marcian and Leo the Great. This first Christian stylite and great wonderworker, St Simeon, lived for seventy years, and entered into rest in the Lord on September 1st, 459. His relics were taken to Antioch, to the church dedicated to his name.

Righteous Joshua the son of Nun - Joshua was the leader of the Hebrew people after the death of Moses. Of several hundred thousand Jews who came out of Egypt, only he and Caleb entered the Promised Land. Joshua lived to be 110 years old, and died approximately 1440 years before the Nativity of Christ. (Read of his faithfulness to God, his works and his miracles in the Book of Joshua.)

Also commemorated on this day: Martyr Callista and her brothers, Martyrs Evodus and Hermogenes (†309); Forty women martyrs: Adamantine, Calliroe, Haricleia, Penelope, Cleo, Thaleia, Marianthe, Euterpe, Terpsichore, Ourania, Cleonike, Sappho, Erato, Polymnia, Dodone, Athena, Troada, Cleopatra, Coralia, Calliste, Theanoe, Theano, Aspasia, Polynike, Dione, Theophane, Erasmia, Ermeneia, Aphrodite, Margarita, Antigone, Pandora, Haido, Lambro, Moscho, Arivoea, Theonymphe, Akrive, Melpomene, and Elpinike, and St. Ammon the deacon and their teacher (†321-323); Saint Verena of Zurzach (Switzerland) (†c.350); Aeithalas the deacon of Persia (†376); Venerable Meletius the New (†1095); Venerable Nicholas of Crete (†1670); New Martyr Angelis of Karaman (†1680); Venerable Martha of Tambov (†1800); New Nun-martyr Tatiana (Gribkova) and Martyr Natalia Kozlova (†1937); Synaxis of the Saints of Vinnitsa; Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos at the Miasena Monastery, in commemoration of finding her icon; The ‘All Blessed,’ ‘Chernigov-Gethsemane,’ ‘Alexandria,’ and ‘Augustov’ Icons of the Mother of God.

2 / 15 September - The Holy Martyr Mamas — He was born in Paphlagonia of eminent Christian parents, Theodotus and Rufina, who were thrown into prison for the name of Christ. In the prison, Theodotus was the first to die, and Rufina, after giving birth to a son, soon followed her husband, and the new-born child was left in the prison beside the bodies of his parents. God the Provider sent His holy angel to a noble widow, Ammia, whom the angel told in a dream to go to the prison and take the child. Ammia asked the city governor's permission to bury the dead and take the child into her own home. The child was dumb until the age of five, and then his first word was 'Mama', because of which he was given the name Mamas. At school, he showed an unusual brightness, and, being brought up at home in a Christian spirit, did not conceal his faith but confessed it before his contemporaries, mocking at the idols. In the time of the Emperor Aurelian, there was a vicious persecution of Christians, and the pagans did not spare even Christian children. Mamas was fifteen years old when he was taken before the Emperor. The Emperor told him to deny Christ only with his lips. To this Mamas replied: 'I shall not deny my God and King Jesus Christ either in my heart or with my lips.' The Emperor ordered that he be beaten, burned with torches and finally thrown into the sea, but an angel of God saved him and took him to a high mountain near Caesarea. There he lived in solitude and prayer, and fierce wild beasts were tamed by his holiness. He was eventually found there by the persecutors and put again to torture. Overcoming both the power of fire and the fierceness of wild beasts, holy Mamas was stabbed with a trident by a pagan priest. He thus gave his holy soul to the God to whom he had remained faithful in all his sufferings. Many of the sick have been healed by his relics.

Venerable John the Faster, Patriarch of Constantinople - He is also celebrated on August 30. He was at first a goldsmith, but because of his great and many acts of mercy-and by God's providence-he was ordained a priest. Once, when he was a young man, John was walking with Eusebius, an old monk from Palestine. Suddenly, a bodiless voice spoke to Eusebius: ``Abba, do not walk to the right of the great John.'' It was the voice of God, foretelling the great service to which John would shortly be called. After the Blessed Eutychius, John was chosen to be Patriarch of Constantinople. He did not want to accept this but, having been frightened by a certain heavenly vision, he accepted. He was a great faster, intercessor and miracle-worker right up to his death. He reposed in the year 595. After his death, his only personal possessions were found to be a wooden spoon, a linen shirt and an old garment. His writings on repentance and confession are well known.

Also commemorated on this day: Righteous Eleazar, son of Aaron (15th C. BC); 3,618 martyrs at Nicomedia (4th C); Venerable Elpidius, abbot (†422); Venerable Hieu of Tadcaster (†657); Venerable Anthony (†1073) and Theodosius (†1074), founders of the Kiev Caves Monastery and monasticism in Rus'; Translation of the relics (1796) of Venerable Theodosius of Totma (1796); New Hieromartyr Barsanuphius, bishop of Kyrillov and those with him: priest John Ivanov, Nun-martyr Seraphima (Sulimova), abbess, Nicholas Burlakov, Anatoly Barashkov, Philip Marishev, and Michael Trubnikov (†1918); New Hieromartyr Damascene (Tsedrik), bishop of Starodub, and those with him: Ephemius Goryachev, John Melnichenko, John Smolichev, Vladimir Morinsky, Victor Basov, Basil Zelensky, Theodotus Shatokhin, Peter Novoselsky, Stephen Yaroshevich, priests, and the Nun-martyr Xenia (Cherlina-Brailovskaya) (†1937); New Hieromartyrs Herman, bishop of Viaznikov, Stephen Ermolin, priest, and Martyr Paul Elkyn (†1937); New Hieromartyr Paul Borotinsky, priest (†1938); 'Kaluga' Icon of the Mother of God.

3 / 16 September – **Fast Day - The Hieromartyr Anthimus** - Born in Nicomedia, he was brought up from childhood as a true Christian. 'His body was mortified, his spirit humble; jealousy was uprooted, anger tamed, sloth banished.... he had love for all and was at peace with all, had a good understanding with all, was filled with zeal for the glory of God and was open to all.' It is not surprising that a man of such virtues was made a bishop. St Anthimus worked as a bishop in Nicomedia at the time of a harsh persecution of Christians under the two wicked Emperors Diocletian and Maximian. Streams of Christian blood were spilled, especially in Nicomedia. One year, on the feast of the Nativity of Christ, twenty thousand martyrs were burned in one church (see Dec. 28th). This happened during Anthimus's episcopate. The persecution did not end with this, but continued, and many Christians were thrown into prison and kept there for torture and death. St Anthimus withdrew to a village, Omana, not to escape death but to be able thence to strengthen his flock in the path of martyrdom, that none should draw back through fear. One of his letters to the Christians in prison was seized and taken to the Emperor Maximian. The Emperor sent twenty soldiers to find Anthimus and take him. The grey-beard, discerning this, went out to meet the soldiers, brought them into his house as his guests and only then revealed that he was Anthimus. The soldiers, amazed at his kindness, urged him to hide, and said that they would tell the Emperor that they had been unable to find him, but Anthimus replied that he dared not allow God's Law to be violated by a lie in order to save his life. So he set out with the soldiers. On the way, all the soldiers came to faith in Christ and were baptised by Anthimus. Brought before the Emperor, Anthimus was submitted to harsh and long-drawn-out torture, and was finally beheaded with an axe. He glorified God and entered into rest in the Lord at the beginning of the fourth century.

Martyr Basilissa of Nicomedia - Basilissa was a nine-year-old girl. She was martyred in Nicomedia not long after the death of St. Anthimus. The torturers covered her whole body with wounds, but she remained faithful to Christ. God preserved her unharmed from fire and wild beasts, which caused her torturer, Alexander, to repent and embrace the Christian Faith. Basilissa then went out into a field, fell to her knees, and prayed thankfully to God that she had endured the tortures, and with that she gave up her spirit to God, in about the year 309.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Theoctistus, fellow-faster with Venerable Euthymius (†467); St. Phoebe, the deaconness, at Cenchreae (1st C); Hieromartyr Aristion, bishop of Alexandria (3rd C); St. Anastasius I, patriarch of Jerusalem (†479); Right-believing Emperor Constantine the New (†641); Venerable Remaclus of the Ardennes (†675); Hieromartyr Aigulphus of Provence (†676); St. Ioannicius, patriarch of Serbia (†1349); Blessed John 'the Hairy,' wonderworker of Rostov (†1580); Martyr Polydorus of Cyprus (†1794); New Hieromartyrs Pimen, bishop of Semirechensk, Sergius Fenomenov, Basil Kolmikov, Philip Shatsky, and Vladimir Dmitrievsky, priest, Monk-martyr Meletius (Golokolosv) (†1918); New Hieromartyrs Basil Krasivsky and Parthenius Krasivsky, priests (†1919); New Hieromartyrs Andrew Dalnikov and Theophan Sokolov, priests (†1920); New Hieromartyrs Vladimir Sadovsky and Michael Sushkov, priests (†1921); New Hieromartyrs Nicholas Sushchevsky, and

Euthymius Krygovich, priests, and 4 martyrs with him (†1924); New Hieromartyr Romanus Marchenko, priest (†1929); New Hieromartyr Alexis Zinoviev and Elias Bazhanov, priests (†1937); New Hieromartyr Peter Sorokin, deacon (†1953); 'Pisidian' Icon of the Mother of God.

4 / 17 September - The Hieromartyr Babylas - This 'great and wonderful man, if one can call him a man', as St John Chrysostom expresses it, was archbishop in Antioch in the time of the wicked Emperor Numerian. This Numerian made a peace-treaty with some barbarian king, who was of better character and a greater lover of peace than himself. As a sign of his sincere desire for a lasting peace, the king gave his little son to be brought up at Numerian's court. One day, Numerian butchered the boy and offered him as a sacrifice to the idols. Still hot from his wicked shedding of innocent blood, this evildoer went to a Christian church to see what was happening there. Holy Babylas was at prayer with the people. He heard that the Emperor was coming with his retinue and intended to enter the church. Babylas stopped the service, went out in front of the church and told the Emperor that, as an idolater, he was not permitted entry to the holy church where the one, true God was worshipped. Speaking of Babylas, Chrysostom says: 'Who else in the world would he fear, having with such authority withstood the Emperor? By this he taught kings not to spread their power further than the measure given them by God, and also showed the clergy how to use their authority. ' The shamed Emperor turned back, but planned revenge. The following day, the Emperor summoned Babylas, and began to berate him and bid him offer sacrifice to idols, which the saint, naturally, steadfastly refused to do. The Emperor then bound him with chains and threw him into prison. He also tortured three children: Urban, aged twelve, Prilidian, aged nine and Hippolinus, aged seven. Babylas was their spiritual father and teacher, and they had stayed near him out of love for him. They were the sons of a Christian woman, Christodoula, who herself suffered for Christ. The Emperor first ordered that each child be beaten with the number of blows that totalled his age, and then had them thrown into prison. Babylas, in bonds, was present at the beheading of the children, giving them courage, and then laid his honoured head under the sword. He was buried by Christians in the chains in which he was bound at his death, in one grave with the three children. Their holy souls flew off to the company of heaven, and their wonderworking relics remained to be of support to the faithful, along with the enduring witness of their heroism in the Faith. They suffered in about 283.

Icon of the Unburnt Bush - This beautiful Icon calls to mind the burning Bush which Moses saw, but which was not consumed by the flames. The Prophet Moses is also commemorated on this day. On the Icon is a representation of the Mother of God with Her Child. She holds a ladder on which is sometimes represented St John of the Ladder, the ascetic who wrote a great spiritual treatise called "The Ladder." This richly meaningful Icon depicts the Mother of God Who contained within Her Womb the Eternal God Who is Fire, and yet was unconsumed, like the Unburnt Bush. She is a true Ladder by which we ascend to Heaven, as the Son of God took His Body from Her. The Prophet David is also depicted in the Icon, as the Ancestor of the Most Holy Theotokos and of Christ. He foretold the coming of the Messiah, especially through his Psalms. Many Icons of the Feasts of the Orthodox Church have depictions of David for the fact that his Psalms are used throughout to celebrate the events of our salvation. This icon has been known for its miracles of preservation from fires in Churches and homes.

Holy Prophet and God-seer Moses - Moses was a great leader and the lawgiver of Israel. He was born in Egypt in about 1550 b.c. For forty years, he lived at the court of the pharaoh; for forty years, he lived as a shepherd in contemplation of God and the world; and for his remaining forty years, he led the people through the wilderness to the Promised Land. He beheld the Promised Land, but was not allowed to enter it, for he had once sinned against God (Numbers 20:12). Moses reposed at the age of 120. As a miracle-worker, he was a prefiguring of Christ, according to St. Basil the Great. He appeared from the other world on Mount Tabor during the Lord's Transfiguration. According to the witness of St. John Climacus, he appeared also to the monks in the Monastery of Mount Sinai.

Finding of the relics of St. Ioasaph, bishop of Belgorod - Sainted Joasaph was born at Proluka, in the former Poltava governance, on 8 September 1705, the feastday of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God. At Baptism he was named Joakim. He was descended from the old and venerable Little Russian (Ukrainian) lineage of the Gorlenkovi. In 1712 his father enrolled the 7 year old Joakim in the Kiev Spiritual Academy. Within the walls of the academy he felt the attraction towards monastic life. And over the course of 7 years he studied it further, and finally revealed his intent to his parents. For a long time his mother and father pleaded with their first-born son not to accept monastic tonsure. But in 1725, in secret from them, he became a "ryasophor" ("robe-

wearing novice") with the name Ilarion at the Kiev Mezhigorsk monastery, and on 21 November 1727 he was tonsured in monk's-mantle with the name Joasaph at the Kievo-Bratsk monastery. This event co-incided with the completion of his studies at the spiritual academy. After the death of His Grace Varlaam, the Kiev cathedra-chair was governed by archbishop Raphael Zaborovsky. Archbishop Raphael directed his attention to the evident abilities of the young ascetic and drew him into still more widespread a service to the Church. He was entrusted the responsible obedience of the office of examiner of the Kiev archbishopric. In November 1734 archbishop Raphael ordained the monk-deacon Joasaph to the dignity of priest-monk, and he transferred over from the Bratsk monastery school to the Kievo-Sophia archbishop's house. At the same time he was appointed a member of the Kiev religious consistory. In fulfilling the office of examiner, he exerted much effort towards the correction of moral deficiencies among the parish clergy. The consistory office service of the saint proved a fine schooling for his administrative abilities. During this time he made a good study of the needs of clergy-servers, noting both the good points and the failings of the diocese. Herein in clear form developed Joasaph's many-sided ability for matter, combined with great inner spiritual efforts. He quickly rose up the ladder of spiritual perfection, to which he witnesses in his work, "The Conflict of the Seven Venerable Virtues with the Seven Deadly Sins".

On 24 June 1737 Priest-monk Joasaph was appointed head of the Holy Transfiguration Mgarsk monastery, with elevation to the dignity of hegumen. Here the hegumen worked with all his strength to get the monastery in good order, which was an old bulwark of Orthodoxy in the struggle with the Unia. In this monastery were situated relics of Sainted Athanasias, Patriarch of Constantinople and Lubensk Wonderworker (Comm. 2 May). And several times Sainted Athanasias appeared to Hegumen Joasaph, witnessing to his patronal protection.

In 1744 metropolitan Raphael elevated Hegumen Joasaph to the dignity of archimandrite. Towards the end of that same year he was called to Moscow and soon, at the direction of the Most Holy Synod, he was appointed vicar of the Holy Trinity Sergiev Lavra monastery. At this monastery of the Monk Sergei he likewise unstintingly fulfilled obedience to the Church (this year required much exertion for the rebuilding of the monastery after a conflagration).

On 2 June 1748 at the Petropavlovsk (Peter and Paul) cathedral in Peterburg, Archimandrite Joasaph was ordained bishop of Belgorod. Entering upon the archbishop cathedra-chair, Saint Joasaph strictly concerned himself with piety and the condition of the churches, with the proper making of Divine-services and especially the moral condition of his flock. The saint devoted great attention to the education of the clergy, and the correct observance by them of churchly norms and traditions. And just as before, the saint worked with all his strength at the archpastoral service, without regard for his health. To his cell-attendant Stefan, on the eve of his repose, the saint forbade him to aspire to the priestly dignity and he predicted, that in case of disobedience he would meet with an untimely end. To another dell-attendant Vasilii, the saint indicated that he would be a deacon, but would never attain the dignity of priesthood. And this prediction was afterwards fulfilled. On 10 December 1754 the saint died. Sainted Joasaph was glorified to the ranks of the Saints on 4 September 1911.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyr Hermione, daughter of the Apostle Philip the deacon (†c.117); Martyrs Theodore, Ammianus, Julian, and Chion (†c.305); Venerable Petronius, disciple of Venerable Pachomius (†c.348); Martyr Babylas of Nicomedia and 84 youths with him (4th C); Venerable Symeon of Gareji (†1773); Venerable Anthimus the Blind of Cephalonia (†1783); Monk-martyr Parthenius, abbot of Kiziltash (†1867); New Hieromartyrs Gregory, bishop of Schlisselburg, Sergius, bishop of Narva, Paul Vasilievsky, John Vasilevsky, Nicholas Lebedev, Nicholas Sretensky, John Romashkin, Nicholas Hvoshchev, Alexander Nikolsky, Peter Lebedinsky, Michael Bogorodsky, Elias Izmailov, priests, Monk-martyr Stephen (Kuskov), Martyrs Basil Yezhov, Peter Lonskov, Stephen Mityushkin and Alexander Blokhin (†1937); New Hieromartyr Peter, metropolitan of Dabro-Bosnia (†1941); Martyr Elena Chernova (†1943); Second Finding and Translation of the relics of St. Metrophanes (Macarius in schema), bishop of Voronezh (1989); Synaxis of the saints of Voronezh.

5/ 18 September – **Fast Day - The Holy Prophet Zacharias -** He was the father of St. John the Forerunner. Zacharias was the son of Barachias, from the lineage of Abia, of the sons of Aaron. Zacharias was a high priest who held the eighth degree of service in the Temple at Jerusalem. His wife Elizabeth was the daughter of Sophia and sister of St. Anna, who was the mother of the Holy Theotokos. During the reign of King Herod the child-slayer, Zacharias was serving one day at the Temple of Jerusalem according to his turn. An angel of God appeared to him in the sanctuary, and Zacharias had great fear. The angel said to him: Fear not, Zacharias (Luke 1:13), and announced that Elizabeth would bear a son, in answer to their prayers.

But both Zacharias and Elizabeth were old. When Zacharias doubted the words of the heavenly herald, the angel said: I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God (Luke 1:19). Zacharias was struck dumb from that hour, and could not speak until his son was born and he had written on a tablet: His name is John (Luke 1:63). Then his speech returned, and he magnified God. Some time later, when the Lord Jesus had been born and Herod began to slaughter the children of Bethlehem, he sent men to find and kill the son of Zacharias-for Herod had heard all that had happened to Zacharias, and how John had been born. Upon seeing the soldiers coming, Elizabeth took John into her arms-he was a year and a half old at that time-fled from the house with him, and ran to a rocky and desolate place. When she saw the soldiers following her, she cried out to the mountain: ``O mountain of God, receive a mother with her child!'' and the rock opened and hid the mother and child. Then Herod, enraged that the child John had not been slain, ordered that Zacharias be slain before the altar. The blood of Zacharias was spilled on the marble and dried solid as stone, and remained as a witness to Herod's evil deed. In the place where Elizabeth hid with John a cave opened, water flowed out of it, and a fruit-bearing palm grew, all by the power of God. Forty days after the death of Zacharias, the blessed Elizabeth died. The child John remained in the wilderness, fed by an angel and protected by God's providence, until the day he appeared at the Jordan.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Thathuil and his sister Bebaia (2nd C); Martyr Servilus; Martyr Rhais (Raisa or Iraida) (†c.308); Martyrs Juventinus and Maximinus, soldiers (†361); Martyrs Urban, Theodore, Medimnus and 77 with them at Nicomedia (†370); Martyr Abdas (Abid) of Persia (†420); Killing of the Holy Right-believing Prince Gleb (David in baptism) (†1015); New Monk-martyr Athanasius of Brest-Litovsk (†1648); New Martyr Euthymius Kochev (†1937); Finding of the relics of Venerable Alexander Urodov, confessor (2001); Finding of the relics of Righteous Theodosius of Melitopol, confessor (2012); Appearance of the Apostle Peter to Emperor Justinian in Athira (6th C); 'Orshan' Icon of the Mother of God.

6 / 19 September - Commemoration of the Miracles of the Holy Archangel Michael - There was in Phrygia a place called Chonae (plunging), not far from Hierapolis, and in that place there was a miraculous spring of water. When the Apostle John the Theologian, together with Philip, was preaching the Gospel in Hierapolis, he looked at this place and foretold that a spring would gush forth in it, a spring of healing water from which many would be restored to health, and that the place would be visited by Michael, the great archangel of God. This prophecy was very soon fulfilled: a spring of water appeared, which became known far and wide for its miraculous power. A pagan in Laodicea had a dumb daughter, which caused him great grief, but the Archangel Michael appeared to him in a dream and urged him to take his daughter to this spring, that she might be restored to health. The father immediately obeyed, took his daughter and there encountered many people who had come to seek deliverance from various ills. They were all Christians. The man asked how he should seek healing, and the Christians told him: 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, you must beg the Archangel Michael.' The father made his petition accordingly and dipped his daughter in the water, and the girl began to speak. Then this pagan was baptised along with his daughter and his whole household, and built a church to the Archangel Michael over the spring. Later, a young man called Archippus settled there. Pagans did him much malicious harm, for they did not want such power to be felt from a Christian holy place and many people be drawn to it. In their wickedness, they altered the course of a nearby river, so that it inundated the church and the spring. But, at the prayers of Archippus, the Archangel Michael appeared and opened a fissure in the rock at the end of the church, through which the flooding river plunged. So the place was saved, and became known as Chonae — plunging — from the river's plunge through the opened fissure. St Archippus lived there in asceticism till the age of seventy, and entered peacefully into rest in the Lord.

St. Bega, virgin, first abbess of Copeland in Cumbria – of Irish royalty. Her family arranged her marriage to the Prince of Norway. Bega wanted to devote her life and virginity to the Lord, refused the arrangement, and fled. It is said that she was carried across the sea to the coast of Cumberland by riding on a clod of earth. She lived as am anchoress in Cumberland for many years, being fed by the birds in the woods. Saint Oswald of Northumbria, on a raid to dispel some highwaymen, convinced her to enter a convent for her own safety. She agreed, and took the veil from Saint Aidan of Lindisfarne and founded a monastery which later was named after her. As Abbess she was known for her generosity to the poor and oppressed who came to the abbey for assistance.

Martyr Romulus and 11,000 other soldiers in Armenia - While Emperor Trajan waged war in the East, he once commanded that the Christians in his army be counted. It was found that there were 11,000 Christians in the imperial army. The emperor then ordered that they all be dismissed from the army and sent to Armenia. St.

Romulus was the overseer of the imperial household. He went before the emperor and reprimanded him for this action, declaring himself a Christian. The emperor gave order that
Romulus be beheaded. Of those banished soldiers, the emperor had 10,000 of them crucified. The others were slain by various tortures.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyr Cyriacus, Faustus the priest, Abibus the deacon, and 11 others (†c.250); Hieromartyr Cyril, bishop of Gortyna (†c.303); Martyrs Eudoxius, Zeno, Macarius and 1,104 soldiers with them (†311-312); Venerable Archippus and others in Chonae (4th C); Venerable David of Egypt (6th C); St. Michael, bishop of Yuryevsky (9th C); Venerable Lazarus, bishop of Pereiaslav (†1117); New Hieromartyr Demetrius Spassky, priest (†1918); New Hieromartyrs Constantine Bogoslovsky, John Pavlovsky and Vsevolod Poteminsky, priests (†1937); 'Kiev-Bratsk' and 'Arapet (Arabian)' Icons of the Mother of God.

† Daily Scripture Readings †

Monday – Vespers: Isa. 61:1-9; Lev. 26:3-12, 14-17, 19-20, 22, 33, 40-41; Wisd. 4:7-15
Epistle: for the indication: I Tim. 2:1-7 (§282); for St. Symeon: Col. 3:12-16 (§258)
Gospel: for the indication: Luke 4:16-22 (§13); for St. Symeon: Matt. 11:27-30 (§43)

Tuesday – Epistle: for Monday: Gal. 4:28-5:10 (§211); for Tuesday: Gal. 5:11-21 (§212)
Gospel: for Monday: Mark 6:54-7:8 (§27); for Tuesday: Mark 7:5-16 (§28)

Wednesday –Epistle: Gal. 6:2-10 (§214); Gospel: Mark 7:14-24 (§29)

Thursday – Epistle: Eph. 1:1-9 (§216); Gospel: Mark 7:24-30 (§30)

Friday - Epistle: Eph. 1:7-17 (§217); Gospel: Mark 8:1-10 (§32)

Saturday –Epistle: I Cor. 10:23-28 (§146); Gospel: Matt. 24:34-44 (§101)

REFLECTION

Christians do not believe in kismet, fate or destiny. Even if God determines the chief lines of our life, He, according to our prayers and merits, can change them. Thus, He prolonged King Hezekiah's life for fifteen years: "Go and say to Hezekiah, thus said the Lord, the God of David Your father, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears: behold I will add unto your days fifteen years" (Isaiah 38:5), and to the Venerable Dius (July 19) he likewise prolonged his life for fifteen years. God extended the life of St. Basil the Great, according to the prayer of the saint for one day until he baptized the Jew, Joseph, his physician. But, as God can, by prayer, prolong life, so He can shorten it because of sin. Emperor Anastasius adhered to the Severian heresy, so called the Acephalites (the headless ones), who spread the foolishness that the Church does not need bishops and priests but rather that everyone unto himself is a bishop and a priest and that everyone has the right, in his own way, to interpret Holy Scripture and to teach others as he understands and believes. In vain did St. John the Patriarch counsel the emperor to return to the truth of Orthodoxy, and not only did the emperor not accept the counsel but rather ill-treated the patriarch in various ways and contemplated to have him banished. One night, the emperor saw in a dream an awesome man on an exalted throne, who held a book in his hand. This man opened the book, found the name of Emperor Anastasius and said: "I have wanted to permit you to live for a while longer but, because of your heresy, behold, I am erasing fourteen years from your life." And he erased something from the book. Terrified, the emperor jumped up from his dream and related his dream to his followers. After a few days, thunder struck the emperor's place and killed Emperor Anastasius.