



Annunciation/ Veneration of the Holy Cross / The Third Sunday of Great Lent / 25 March / & April 1

Third Sunday of the Great Lent: Adoration of Cross, Troparion, Tone I — O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance. Grant victory over their enemies to Orthodox Christians, and protect Thy people with Thy Cross.

Kontakion, Tone IV — O Christ our God, Who wast voluntarily lifted up on the Cross, grant Thy mercies to Thy new people named after Thee. Gladden with Thy power Orthodox Christians and give them victory over their enemies. May they have as an ally that invincible trophy, Thy weapon of peace.

Another Kontakion, Tone VII — No longer does the flaming sword guard the gate of Eden, for a glorious extinction has come upon it, the wood of the Cross. The sting has been drawn from death and the victory from hell. And Thou, my Saviour, didst come and shout to those in hell: Enter Paradise again.

Troparion of the Sunday, Tone III — Let the heavens rejoice, / let the earth be glad! / For the Lord has shown might with His arm, / He has trampled down death by death. / He has become the first-born of the dead. / He has delivered us from the depths of hell, / and has granted the world great mercy!

Hymn to the Theotokos, Tone III — We praise you as the mediatrix of our salvation, / O Virgin Theotokos. / For your Son, our God, Who took flesh from you, / accepted the passion of the cross, / delivering us from corruption as the Lover of man.

Kontakion of the Sunday, Tone III — On this day Thou didst rise from the tomb, O Merciful One, / leading us from the gates of death. / On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices; / with the prophets and patriarchs they unceasingly praise / the divine majesty of Thy power!

Annunciation, Troparion, Tone IV — Today is the crown of our salvation, / and the revelation of the mystery which is from before the ages! / The Son of God becometh the Son of the Virgin, / and Gabriel announceth the glad tidings of grace. / Wherefore, with him let us cry out to the Theotokos: / Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace! // The Lord is with thee!

Kontakion, Tone VIII Automelon — To thee, the Champion Leader, we, thy servants, dedicate a feast of victory and of thanksgiving, / as ones rescued out of sufferings, O Theotokos; / but as thou art one with might which is invincible, / from all dangers that can be do thou deliver us, that we may cry to thee: // Rejoice, thou Bride unwedded!



Matins Gospel - Luke 1:39-49, 56 (For the Theotokos)

(Annunciation) Epistle - Hebrews 2: 11-18

11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You. 13 And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." 14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16 For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. 17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

BOTH HE WHO SANCTIFIES AND THOSE WHO ARE BEING SANCTIFIED ARE ALL OF ONE

When one has justly and dispassionately examined the nature of what comes into being and ceases to be, one will clearly see that generation begins with corruption and ends in corruption. Christ, and the Christlike way of life and understanding are free of the passions characteristic of such generation ...The soul that through the grace of its calling resembles God keeps inviolate within itself the substance of the blessings bestowed upon it. In souls such as this, Christ always desires to be born in a mystical way, becoming incarnate in those who attain salvation, and making the soul that gives birth to Him a Virgin Mother ...He who already lives and moves and has his being in Christ (Cf. Acts 17:28) has annulled in himself the production of what is imbalanced and disunited.

St. Maximos the Confessor. On the Lord's Prayer. Ibid., p. 294

(The Cross) Epistle - Hebrews 4: 14 - 5:6

14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Chapter 5: 1 For every priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also beset by weakness. 3 Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. 4 And no man takes this honour to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son today I have begotten You." 6 As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek ".

SEEING THEN THAT WE HAVE A GREAT HIGH PRIEST... JESUS, THE SON OF GOD

What priest could be so righteous and holy as the only Son of God, who had no need to purge his own sins by sacrifice, neither original sins nor additional sins committed during a man's life? And what more suitable offering for men could be taken from men than human flesh? What more fitting for this immolation than mortal flesh? And to cleanse the faults of mortals what offering so clean as flesh that came to life in a virgin womb, and from a virgin womb, without any pollution of lust? And what could be offered as acceptably, and received as readily, as the flesh of our sacrifice, the flesh that made up the body of our priest? In every sacrifice there are four considerations: to whom it is offered, by whom it is offered, what is offered, for whom it is offered. And so the one True Mediator Himself reconciled us to God, and in this he remained one with Him to whom He made the offering, and made one in Himself those for whom He offered, and was Himself one as the offerer and the offering.

St. Augustine of Hippo. On the Trinity, 4.19. B#15, p. 226.

(Annunciation) Gospel - Luke 1: 24 - 38

24 Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying,
25 "Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on *me*, to take away my reproach among people." 26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name *was* Mary. 28 And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!" 29 But when she saw *him*,[d] she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. 30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." 34 Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" 35 And the angel answered and said to her, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.* 36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing will be impossible." 38 Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

BLESSED ARE YOU AMONG WOMEN, AND BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF YOUR WOMB!

He has gone to dwell in a Virgin's womb that was sanctified beforehand by the Spirit. O marvel! God is come among men; He who cannot be and lined is contained in a womb; the Timeless enters time; and, strange wonder! His conception is without seed, His emptying is past telling: so great is this mystery! For God empties Himself, takes flesh, and is fashioned as a creature, when the angel tells the pure Virgin of her conception.

John the Monk. Festal Great Compline. Festal Menaion, B# 13, p. 443.

Daniel called you a spiritual mountain; Isaiah, the Mother of God; Gideon saw you as a fleece, and David called you a sanctuary; another called you a gate. And Gabriel, in his turn, cries out to you: 'Hail, you who are full of grace, the Lord is with you.'

Irmos. Matins, Canticle Nine. Ibid., p. 458.

(The Cross) Gospel - Mark 8: 34 - 9:1

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power."

WHOEVER DESIRES TO COME AFTER ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME

And you see how He also makes his discourse unexceptionable: not saying at all, 'whether you will or not you must suffer this,' but how? 'If any man will come after Me.' I do not force, I do not compel, but each one I make lord of his own choice ...For to good things do I call you, not to things evil or burdensome; not to punishment and vengeance, that I should have to compel. No, the nature of the thing alone is sufficient to attract you ...For you ought not, O Peter, because you have confessed Me Son of God, therefore only to expect crowns (Cf Mark 8:29), and to suppose this enough for your salvation, and for the future to enjoy security, as having done all. For although it be in My power, as Son of God, to hinder you from having any trial at all of those hardships, yet such is not My will for your sake, that you may yourself contribute something, and be more approved.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily LV on Matthew XVI, 1. B#54, p. 339.

THE CROSS PRESERVES THE UNIVERSE

In the Prophet Ezekiel (9:6), it is said that when the Angel of the Lord was sent to punish and destroy the sinning people, it was told him not to strike those on whom the "mark" had been made. In the original text this mark is called "tau," the Hebrew letter corresponding to the letter "T," which is how in ancient times the cross was made, which then was an instrument of punishment.

So, even then, it was foretold the power of the Cross, which preserves those who venerate it. Likewise, by many other events in the Old Testament the power of the Cross was indicated. Moses, who held his arms raised in the form of a cross during the battle, gave victory to the Israelites over the Amalekites. He also, dividing the Red Sea by a blow of his rod and by a transverse blow uniting the waters again, saved Israel from Pharaoh, who drowned in the water, while Israel crossed over on the dry bottom (Exodus, ch. 14, 17).

Through the laying on of his hands in the form of a cross on his grandsons, Jacob gave a blessing to his descendents, foretelling at the same time their future until the coming of the "expectation of the nations" (Genesis, ch. 48).

By the Cross, the Son of God, having become man and accomplished our salvation. He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the Cross (Phil. 2:8). Having stretched out His hands upon the Cross, the Savior with them as it were embraced the world, and by His blood shed on it, like a king with red ink, He signed the forgiveness of the human race.

The Cross of the Lord was the instrument by which He saved the world after the fall into sin. Through the Cross, He descended with His soul into hell, to raise up from it the souls who were awaiting Him. By the Cross Christ opened the doors of paradise which had been closed after our first ancestors had been banished from it. The Cross was sanctified by the Body of Christ which was nailed to it when He gave Himself over to torments and death for the salvation of the world. Then it was filled with life-giving power. By the Cross on Golgotha the prince of this world was cast out (John 12:31) and an end was put to his authority. The weapon by which he was crushed became the sign of Christ's victory.

The demonic hosts tremble when they see the Cross, because the kingdom of hell was destroyed by the Cross. They do not dare to draw near to anyone who is guarded by the Cross.

The whole human race, by the death of Christ on the Cross, received deliverance from the authority of the devil, and everyone who makes use of this saving weapon is inaccessible to the demons.

When legions of demons appeared to St. Anthony the Great and other desert-dwellers, they guarded themselves with the sign of the Cross, and the demons vanished.

When there appeared to St. Symeon the Stylite, who was standing on his pillar, what seemed to be a chariot to carry him to heaven, the Saint, before mounting it, crossed himself and it disappeared. The enemy, who had hoped to cast down the ascetic from the height of his pillar, was put to shame.

One cannot enumerate all the various incidents of the manifestation of the power of the Cross. Invisibly and unceasingly, Divine grace that gushes from it saves the world.

The sign of the Cross is made at all the Mysteries and prayers of the Church. With the making of the sign of the Cross over the bread and wine, they become the Body and Blood of Christ. With the immersion of the Cross the waters are sanctified. The sign of the Cross looses us from sins. "When we are guarded by the Cross, we oppose the enemy, without fearing his nets and barking." Just as the flaming sword in the hands of the Cherubim barred the entrance into paradise of old, so the Cross now acts invisibly in the world, guarding it from perdition.

The Cross is the unconquerable weapon of pious kings in the battle with enemies. Through the apparition of the Cross in the sky, the dominion of Emperor Constantine was confirmed and an end was put to the persecution against the Church. The apparition of the Cross in the sky in Jerusalem in the days of Constantius the Arian proclaimed the victory of Orthodoxy. By the power of the Cross of the Lord, Christian kings will continue to reign until Antichrist, barring his path to power and restraining lawlessness (St. John Chrysostom, Commentary on II Thes. 2:6-7).

The "sign of the Son of Man" (Matt. 24:30), that is, the Cross, will appear in the sky in order to proclaim the end of the present world and the coming of the eternal Kingdom of the Son of God. Then all the tribes of the earth shall weep, because they loved the present age and its lusts, but all who have endured persecution for righteousness and called on the name of the Lord shall rejoice and be glad. The Cross then will save all who conquered temptations, from eternal perdition by the Cross, who crucified their flesh with its passions and lusts, and took up their cross and followed afar Christ.

However, those who hated the Cross of the Lord and did not engrave the Cross in their soul will perish forever. For "the Cross is the preserver of the whole universe, the Cross is the beauty of the Church, the Cross is the might of kings, the Cross is the confirmation of the faithful, the Cross is the glory of angels and the scourge of demons" (Octoechos: Exapostilarion, Monday Matins).

St John of Shanghai and San Francisco - Shanghai, Exaltation of the Cross, 1947

Saints of the Week

25 March / 7 April — The Annunciation of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary — When the most holy Virgin had lived and served in the Temple at Jerusalem for eleven years, and was by then fourteen years old— when, that is, she was entering on her fifteenth year—the priests informed her that, according to the Law, she could no longer remain in the Temple but must be betrothed and marry. But, to the great surprise of all the priests, the most holy Virgin replied that she had dedicated herself to God and wished to a maiden remain till death and enter into wedlock with no-one. Then, by God's providence and under His inspiration, Zacharias, the high priest and father of the Forerunner, in consultation with the other priests, chose twelve unmarried men from the tribe of David so that they might entrust the Virgin Mary to one of them to preserve her virginity and care for her. She was thus entrusted to Joseph, an old man from Nazareth and a kinsman of hers. In his house, the most holy Virgin continued to live in the same manner as in the Temple of Solomon, passing her time in the reading of the sacred Scriptures, in prayer, in pondering on the works of God, in fasting and in handwork. She scarcely ever left the house, nor took an interest in worldly matters or events. She generally conversed very little with anyone, and never without a particular need. She was close friends only with the two daughters of Joseph. But when the time prophesied by the Prophet Daniel had come and when God was pleased to fulfil the promise made to Adam when He drove him out of Paradise, and to the prophets, the mighty Archangel Gabriel appeared in the chamber of the most holy Virgin, at the precise moment (as some priestly writers have related) that she was holding open on her lap the book of the Prophet Isaiah and pondering on his great prophecy: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son'. Gabriel appeared to her in angelic light and said to her: 'Rejoice, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee!', and so forth, just as is related in the Gospel of the divine Luke. With this angelic greeting and the descent of the Holy Spirit, the salvation of mankind and the renewal of creation were set in motion. The Archangel turned the first page of the story of the New Testament with the word 'Rejoice!', to show by this the joy that the New Testament signifies for

mankind and for all things created. And therefore the Annunciation is looked upon as a joyous, as well as a great, feast;



Patriarch Tikhon- (In the world, Vassily Ivanovich Bellavin) was born in 1865 in the district of Pskov. He was very religious and a good pupil, always willing to help his fellow students. When he entered seminary at the age of 19, his fellow students prophetically nicknamed him "the patriarch". He was tonsured in 1891, and in 1898, at the tender age of 33, he was consecrated Bishop of the Aleutian-Alaskan Diocese in North America. He laboured tirelessly for his flock, earning their great love and respect. In 1907 he was recalled to Russia and raised to the rank of Archbishop. When war broke out Archbishop Tikhon was based in Vilno, Poland. He participated eagerly in all organisations which helped soldiers and the wounded, and visited the injured and dying at the front lines. In 1914 he was elected Archbishop of Moscow and in 1917 he was raised to the rank of Metropolitan. Shortly thereafter he was chosen by lot to be the first patriarch for 217 years. The consecration was performed in the ancient Patriarchal Cathedral. What a burden the new patriarch had to

bear! Patriarch Tikhon was probably the greatest martyr of the Russian Church during the period of its persecution by the communists. As Patriarch of All Russia for eight years, he was invested with tremendous power and consequent responsibility. During that period he lived a selfless life, scarcely a free man, and in the end became another victim, for the sake of his faith and the whole Russian Church. He died on March 25, 1925. Holy New Martyr Tikhon, pray for us!

Our Holy Father Justin, Abbot of Chelije Monastery in Valjevo, Serbia - was born into a pious & priestly family on the Feast of the Annunciation, 1894. His name in the world was Blagoje. A church-minded youth, he entered seminary at the age of 11, where he studied under the then Hieromonk Nikolai Velimirovic, who was also his Father Confessor, and who was the most influential person throughout his life. After his graduation, the young Blagoje served as a student nurse during WW1. He was tonsured in 1916, receiving the name Justin. He then studied in Russia, forming a great love for Russian spirituality and piety, especially that of the common people. He then studied at Oxford, England, afterwards returning to teach in Seminary in Serbia, and undertake further study in Greece. He was ordained deacon in 1920 and priest in 1922. Many were attracted to this humble priestmonk, coming to him for confession and spiritual guidance. Father Justin had close contact at this time with two luminaries of the Russian Church: Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) and the then Bishop John Maximovitch. A great intellect and ascetic, his labours enriched the Serbian Church. Worthy of special mention is his three volume exposition of the Orthodox Faith in Serbian, *The Dogmas of the Orthodox Church*, published in 1932. After WW2, Father Justin was exiled from Belgrade by the communists. He lived in several monasteries before settling in Chelije in 1948., where he remained until his repose on March 25, 1979. This women's monastery flourished under his guidance. Many pious people travelled from all over the world to hear him preach and teach the correct Orthodox Faith. He was a pillar of Orthodoxy and a true Holy Father of the 20th Century.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Sabbas the New (1948). "Annunciation" (16th c.) Icon of the Mother of God. Martyrs Pelagia, Theodosia, and Dula of Nicomedia, who suffered under Valentinian. Venerable Parthenius of the Kiev Caves (1855). St. Senuphius the Wonderworker of Latomos (9th c.). St. Nicander of Pskov (1581).

26 March / 8 April — Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel —Wine & Oil allowed - The Holy Archangel Gabriel - The herald of the incarnation of the Son of God, he is one of the seven great angels who stand before the throne of God. He revealed to Zacharias the birth of the Forerunner, and said of himself: 'I am Gabriel that stands in the presence of God' (Lk. 1:19). His name, Gabriel, signifies 'man of God'. Speaking about the Annunciation, the holy Fathers comment that an angel with such a name was sent to signify who He was, and of what nature He was, who would be born of the most pure Virgin. He would be the Man of God, the Man-God, the strong and mighty God. Others have found that it was this same Gabriel who announced the conception of the Virgin Mary to Joachim and Anna, and that it was he who

taught Moses in the wilderness to write the Book of Genesis. The holy Fathers considered that Gabriel belongs to the foremost and highest order of the heavenly powers, the seraphim, since the seraphim stand closest to God. And so he is one of the seven seraphim closest to God. The names of these seven are: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Selathiel, Jegudiel and Barachiel. Some would add Jeremiel to this number. Each has his own particular service, but all are equal in honour. Why did God not send Michael? For the reason that Michael's service is the suppression of the enemies of God's truth, while Gabriel's is the annunciation of the salvation of the human race.

The Hieromartyr Irenaeus, Bishop of Srem - It is thought that Irenaeus was a Slav. He was married and had children prior to becoming a bishop. He suffered for Christ during the reign of Maximian. At the time of horrible sufferings, his relatives stood around him crying and begged him to spare himself and them [that is, to deny Christ]. But this wonderful priestly-martyr loved the wounds of Christ more than all the riches of this world. At the same time Seren, a certain gardener in Srem, also suffered at the hands of Prince Probus, as did Afrius suffer in Regia. Because Irenaeus did not want to deny his faith, Prince Probus ordered that he be hurled from a bridge into the Sava river, where this shepherd of Christ's flock died and took up habitation among the citizens of heaven. He honourably suffered in the year 304 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyr Parasceva (1939). Martyrs Bathusius and Bercus presbyters, monk Arpilus, laymen Abibus, Agnus, Reasus, Igathrax, Iscoeus (Iskous, Escoes), Silas, Signicus, Sonerilas, Suimbalus, Thermus, Phillus (Philgas), and the women Anna, Alia, Larissa, Monco (Manca), Mamica, Uirko (Virko), Animais (Animaida), Gaatha, and Duklida, in Crimea (375). Venerable Malchus of Chalcis in Syria (4th c.). Venerable Basil the Younger, anchorite near Constantinople (944). Hieromartyr Eusebius, bishop of Kival, and Martyr Pullius the Reader. St. Braulio of Saragossa in Iberia (646). Martyr Codratus (Quadratus), and with him 40 Martyrs, who suffered under Diocletian. St. Ludger, bishop of Munster (809). Martyr Montanus the priest, and his wife Maxima at Sirmium (beginning of 4th c.). St. Euty chius, subdeacon of Alexandria (356). New Martyr George of Adrianople (1437). Venerable Stephen the Wonderworker, abbot of Tryglia (815). St. Govan, hermit of Pembrokeshire

27 March / 9 April — The Holy Martyr Matrona - She was an orphan, and a servant in the house of a certain Jew in Salonica. The wife of this Jew constantly derided Matrona for her faith in Christ, and urged her to cast Christ aside and go to the synagogue. But the humble Matrona went about her work conscientiously, not replying to her mistress and secretly praying to Christ our God. On one occasion the Jewess discovered that Matrona had gone to church unbeknown to her, and demanded, in a great rage, to know why she had gone to the church and not the synagogue. 'Because God is alive in the Christian Church, but He has departed from the synagogues of the Jews', replied Matrona. Enraged by such a courageous answer, the Jewess thrashed her and locked her in a dark chamber, and in addition to that had her bound. But the next day she found her unbound by the power of God and kneeling in prayer, praising God. Then she locked her up again for the second time until she died of hunger. Then that wicked woman took the body of the holy maiden and threw it to the ground from the top of her house. Christians took the body of the martyr and buried it, and the bishop, Alexander, when he had learned of the many miracles worked by the holy martyr, built a church over her grave. As for the evil Jewess, she soon received her just reward, when, standing on the same spot from which she had thrown Matrona's body, she slipped and fell onto the cobbled pavement and was smashed to pieces.

Venerable John the Clairvoyant of Lycopolis - John was a woodsman until his twenty-fifth year and then, driven by an insatiable desire for constant prayer, withdrew into the wilderness where he lived until his death, during his ninetieth year. He was a corporeal being but lived as an incorporeal being. He discerned the heart of every person who came to him and was able to discern their name, their desires, and their thoughts. He prophesied to Emperor Theodosius the outcome of his battles. He prophesied for generals, monastics, and for all who found it necessary to know what was hidden for them in the darkness of future days. A prince once begged John to receive his wife who especially wanted to meet him. The saint did not allow empty inquisitiveness but appeared to the wife of the prince in a dream showing her what he was like. When the woman described her vision in the dream to her husband, he confirmed that, indeed, this was the likeness of the saint. To every visitor, he taught humility as the basis of the virtues, always citing examples from life of how pride has toppled many exalted characters into dust and led them into serious sins. He endured many assaults of evil spirits. On

one occasion, Satan appeared to him with a myriad of demons under the guise of shining angels. They pressured him to worship Satan, lying to him, saying that it [Satan] is Christ. But John answered wisely, "I bow down and worship my King, Jesus Christ, everyday. If that were He, He would not demand me to do so now, especially since I already worship Him." Following these words, all the evil powers vanished as smoke. He died peacefully kneeling in prayer in his ninetieth year.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Manuel and Theodosius (304). Venerable Cyricus (Quiricus), monk, of Thrace. Prophet Hanani (Ananias). Venerable Paul, bishop of Corinth (ca. 925). Venerable Paphnutius, disciple of St. Anthony the Great (4th c.). St. Ephraim of Rostov (1454). Venerable Alexander, abbot of Voche, near Galich (on the Volga) (16th c.). St. Anthony, metropolitan of Tobolsk (1740). Icons of the Most Holy Theotokos on Mt. Athos "Glykophylousa" ("Sweet-kissing") and "Of the Akathist". St. Rupert, bishop of Salzburg (718). Martyrs John and Baruch (Greek). St. Eutyches, monk (Greek).

28 March / 10 April — Our Holy Father, the Martyr Eustratius of the Kiev Caves - He was very wealthy, but, moved by the love of Christ, gave away all his goods for His sake, entered the Monastery of the Caves and became a monk. When the Polovtsians conquered Kiev in 1097, they looted the monastery, slew many Christians and monks and gave Eustratius and other of the faithful to a certain Jew in the town of Khorsun as slaves. This Jew mocked the Christian faith and tried to compel the Christians to convert to the Jewish faith. Seeing that they had no other alternative, they all decided to starve to death rather than deny the true Faith. Eustratius encouraged the Christians in this decision. They all perished from hunger, some after three days, some after four and some after seven days. Eustratius, accustomed to fasting, remained the only one alive, and survived fourteen days without food. Infuriated that he had lost the money he had paid for the slaves, the Jew took his revenge by having Eustratius nailed to a cross. But Eustratius gave thanks to God from the cross and predicted an imminent and vicious death for the Jew. Possessed by a furious anger, the Jew stabbed him with a spear. And thus the holy man of God gave his soul to his Saviour. They cast his body into the sea, but it rose to the surface and many were the great miracles performed over it. Soon after this, the Byzantine Emperor commanded that the Jews in Khorsun be punished for their wickedness towards the Christians, and the torturer of the Christians was hanged on a tree and received the wages of Judas.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Hilarion the New, abbot of Pelecete (754). Venerable Stephen the Wonderworker, abbot of Tryglia (815). New Hieromartyr Nicholas priest(1931). New Hieromartyr Basil priest(1938). Martyr John (1939). New Hieromartyr Priest Peter Ochryzko of Chartoviec (Chelm and Podlasie, Poland) (1944). Venerable Hilarion, monk, of Gdov (Pskov) (1476). Martyrs Jonah and Barachisius and those with them in Persia: Zanithas, Lazarus, Maruthas (Marotas), Narses, Elias, Marinus (Mares), Abibus, Sembeeth (Sivsithina), and Sabbas (330). Sts. George, bishop, Parodus and Peter, presbyters, and Prince Enravota-Boyan (833), martyrs of Bulgaria (Bulgaria). St. Hesychius the Theologian of Jerusalem, disciple of St. Gregory the Theologian (434). Apostle Herodion of the Seventy (Greek). Sts. Priscus, Malchus, and Alexander in Caesaria of Palestine (259). St. Dionysius the Merciful, bishop of Larissa (1510). Venerable Jonah of Kliminetsk (Olonets) (1534). Venerable John, Bishop of Manglisi (1751) (Georgia)

29 March / 11 April — St Mark the Confessor, Bishop of Arethusa - St Gregory the Theologian and Blessed Theodoretus have given us an account of his sufferings. According to these accounts, Mark destroyed some pagan temples and brought many to the Christian faith during the reign of the Emperor Constantine. But when the Emperor Julian came to the throne and quickly became an apostate from the Faith, some of the inhabitants of Arethusa renounced Christ and lapsed into paganism. They rose up against Mark because he had demolished the temple and demanded that he either rebuild it or pay them a very large sum of money. As Mark refused to do either the one or the other, he was flogged and flayed and dragged through the streets. They then cut off his ears with strong, fine threads, stripped him naked, smeared him with honey and left him bound to a tree in the summer heat for the wasps, mosquitoes and hornets to eat. The martyr of Christ endured all this without complaint. He was quite old, and his face shone like an angel of the Lord. The pagans lowered the price of their temple again and again, finally demanding a quite insignificant amount which Mark could easily have given. But he refused to give even a single coin for that purpose. His endurance made a great impression on the citizens, and they began to admire him for it and to feel sorry for him, and gradually

reduced the price of their temple to nothing just to allow him to remain alive. Finally, they let him go free and, one by one, all came to him to receive instruction and become Christians again. A deacon, Cyril, also suffered at this time for a similar cause in Heliopolis at the foot of mount Lebanon. He had broken some idols at the time of the liberation of Christianity and was cruelly tortured under Julian for this. The pagans were so enraged with him that, after they had killed him, they tore out his teeth and ripped open his stomach. Many others suffered on the same day as St Cyril. The evil pagans cut their bodies into small pieces, coated them with barley and fed them to the pigs. But retribution came swiftly upon them; all their teeth fell out and their mouths emitted an unbearable stench.

Also commemorated on this day: New Martyrs Priest Paul (Voinarsky), and brothers Paul and Alexis Kiryan, of the Crimea (1919). New Hieromartyr Michael priest(1933). Venerable John, Anchorite of Egypt (4th c.). St. Eustathius (Eustace) the Confessor, bishop of Kios in Bithynia(9thc.). Venerables Jonah (1480) and Mark of the Pskov Caves. St. Diadochus, bishop of Photike in Epirus (ca. 486). St. Eustasius, abbot of Luxeuil (7th c.). Sts. Gwynllw and Gwladys, parents of St. Cadoc

30 March / 12 April — Our Holy Father John Climacus (of the Ladder) - The author of the famous 'Ladder', he came from an unknown place to Mount Sinai as a sixteen-year-old boy and remained there, first as a novice, then as a hermit and finally as abbot of Sinai, until he died at the age of eighty, in about 649. His biographer, the monk Daniel, says of him: 'He brought his body up to Mount Sinai, but his spirit he brought to the Mount of Heaven'. He spent nineteen years in obedience to his spiritual father, Martyrios. Anastasius of Mount Sinai, who saw John once as a young man, foretold that he would be abbot of Mount Sinai. After the death of his spiritual father, John took himself off to a cave, where he lived for twenty years in strict asceticism. His disciple, Moses, fell asleep one day in the cool shade of a huge rock. John was at prayer in his cell, and, perceiving that his disciple was in danger, began to pray for him. Moses came up to him later, fell to his knees and began to thank him for saving him from certain death. And he related how he had heard John calling him in his sleep and had jumped up at the very moment that a rock fell. Had he not jumped out of the way, the rock would certainly have killed him. At the importunate urging of the brethren, John accepted the abbacy, and guided their souls to salvation with loving zeal. He once heard a monk reproach him for being too verbose. He was not in the least angered, but was silent for an entire year, not uttering a single word until the brethren begged him to speak. He then began to instruct them with the wisdom with which God had endowed him. Once 600 pilgrims came to Mount Sinai. At supper they all noticed an agile young man dressed as a Jew who was serving at table and giving orders to the other servants, taking charge of everything. Suddenly, he disappeared. While everyone was pondering this and asking questions among themselves, John said: 'Do not bother to look for him; that was the prophet Moses serving you in his own home.' During the time that he was silent in his cave, John wrote many instructive books, of which the most famous, 'The Ladder', is much read to this day. It describes the way to raise the soul to God as if on a ladder. Before his death, John appointed his own brother, George, to the abbacy, but George began to grieve greatly at the approaching parting with John. Then John said that, if he were found worthy to stand close to God in the next world, he would pray that George be taken up to heaven in the same year. And so it came to pass. After ten months, George also fell asleep and departed to take his place among heaven's citizens alongside his brother John.

Also commemorated on this day: The Meeting of the Mother of God and Saint Elizabeth (movable Feast on March 30. If March 30 should fall between Lazarus Saturday and Pascha, however, the Feast is transferred to Bright Friday). St. Sophronius, bishop of Irkutsk (1771). Prophet Joad (I Kings 13:11 -10th c. BC) who dwelt in Bethel. Holy Apostles Sosthenes, Apollos, Cephas, Caesar, and Epaphroditus, of the Seventy (1st c.). St. Eubula, mother of St. Panteleimon (304). Venerable John the Silent of St. Sabbas monastery (558). Venerable Zosimas, bishop of Syracuse (662). St. John II, patriarch of Jerusalem (5th c.). Hieromartyr Zacharias, bishop of Corinth (1684). St. Osburga of Coventry, virgin (1015) (Celtic & British). Translation of the relics of the Martyr-King Edmund of East Anglia (Celtic & British). Venerable John the Hermit of Cilicia (4th c.)

31 March / 13 April — Metropolitan Innocent, Enlightener of Siberia and Alaska - born John in the Irkutsk district in 1797 the son of a poor sacristan. His father died when he was seven leaving him and his family in great poverty. Fortunately his uncle took him in, provided for his education and taught him manual crafts himself. He entered seminary at age 9 and was

a good student. Whilst there the rector changed his surname to Veniaminov. John married in 1817 at the age of 20 and became a deacon in Irkutsk. After a year he was ordained priest and in 1823 the Bishop sought a priest to undertake missionary work in the islands between Siberia and Alaska. Although at first unwilling, Father John was seized with the desire to preach the Gospel of Christ to the unenlightened. His bishop consented, and although his family were at first opposed they began the long journey. In the following year they arrived on the island of Unalaska. He began to teach the natives carpentry and building, and with their help erected a church and dwellings. He then began to study the native language, hoping to translate the Gospel and divine services. He preached to the natives in their own language, adapting concepts to their understanding. He travelled widely throughout the diocese, which stretched over several thousand kilometres, serving, preaching, and baptising. He sometimes traversed great distances on the open sea in a small canoe. He developed an alphabet for the Aleutian language and translated the catechism and the Gospel of St. Matthew. At this time he wrote his most famous work - Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven. He opened a school and himself taught the children to read and write. He spent 10 years in Unalaska, in which time he converted all the inhabitants to Christianity. He was then transferred to Sitka, an island port close to the mainland of Alaska. He laboured there for five years, learning the language and translating, preaching and baptising, and teaching the natives manual trades. He was greatly loved by the native peoples. In 1838 he returned to Russia to seek help for his work and for a blessing to print his translations. He was raised to Archpriest and at the same time his wife died. He accepted monasticism and in 1840 was tonsured with the name of Innocent eventually becoming Bishop Innocent and returning to Alaska to finish his work. In 1850 he was elevated to Archbishop and in 1857 was recalled to Russia where he laboured greatly for the conversion of the unenlightened peoples on the Russian-Chinese border. Finally in 1867, he was chosen to succeed the newly reposed Metropolitan Philaret. By now an old man he accepted this great burden with humility, fulfilling his duties to the glory of God until his repose on 31 March, 1879. This great worker planted the Faith of Christ amongst a great many pagan tribes, labouring for their salvation with true patience, humility and simplicity. For his labours, the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad resolved in May 1993 to recognise Metropolitan Innocent as a saint on January 17/30, 1994.

Archbishop Averky of Jordanville - the world known as Alexander Pavlovich Taushev) was born on October 19, 1906, in the city of Kazan. His father was employed by the government until the Revolution of 1917 and was required to travel widely. Thus Vladika, although only 14 when he was forced to leave Russia, knew a great deal of his beloved homeland. He read widely from a young age, and was especially moved by spiritual books which he father obtained from the Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mt. Athos. In 1920 the family settled in Bulgaria amongst many other Russian refugees. Then in 1925, he met Archbishop Theophan who had a tremendous influence on this young man, and it was at this time he became firm in his desire for monasticism. He entered theological Academy and graduated in 1930 with top marks. Desiring greatly to labour for the Russian people, he decided to travel to Czechoslovakia, where many were returning from the Unia to Orthodoxy. Vladika Theophan blessed him, and Alexander was appointed secretary to the Diocesan Administrator. In 1931 he was tonsured a monk with the name Averky. The next day he was ordained to the diaconate, and in the next year was ordained priestmonk. In 1937 he was made Abbot before in 1940 he was forced as a result of World War II to move to Belgrade where he taught and laboured in the service of the Synod. In 1951 he moved to America and was invited to teach at Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville. In 1961 he was made Archbishop - a great preacher and zealot of True Orthodox Christianity, Vladika suffered greatly as a result of the attacks of modernism and ecumenism on the Orthodox Faith. It was said that he was one of the last giants of 20th Century Orthodoxy. May his memory be eternal!

Also commemorated on this day: Parents' Saturday. Remembrance of the dead. Venerable Hypatius the Wonderworker, bishop of Gangra (ca. 360). Repose of St. Jonah, metropolitan of Kiev, Moscow, and all Russia (1461). New Hieromartyr John priest (1938). St. Hypatius the Healer of the Kiev Caves (14th c.). Venerable Philaret Danilevsky (1841). Venerable Apollonius, ascetic of the Thebaid (395). Martyrs Abdas the Bishop and Benjamin the Deacon, of Persia (424). Venerable Hypatius, abbot of Rufinus in Chalcedon (446). Appearance of the "Iberian" ("Iveron") Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. Righteous Joseph the Fair, son of Jacob (ca. 1700 B.C.). 38 Martyrs, beheaded by the sword under Julian (361-363). Saint Akakios the Confessor,

Bishop of Meletina (249-251). Venerable Blaise of Amorium and Mt. Athos (908) (Greek).
Martyr Menander (Greek). St. Stephen the Wonderworker, monk (Greek).

‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡

Monday - Isaiah 14: 24-32; Genesis 8: 21-9:7; Proverbs 11: 19-12:6

Tuesday - Isaiah 25: 1-9; Genesis 9: 8-17; Proverbs 12: 8-22

Wednesday - Isaiah 26: 21-27:9; Genesis 9: 18-10:1; Proverbs 12: 23:-13:9

Thursday - Isaiah 28: 14-22; Genesis 10: 32-11:9; Proverbs 13: 19-14:6

Friday - Isaiah 29: 13-23; Genesis 12: 1-7; Proverbs 14: 15-26

Saturday - Hebrews 6: 9-12; 1 Corinthians 15: 47-57; Mark 7: 31-37; John 5: 24-30

A Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, Thou that didst weep over Lazarus, and shed tears of sorrow and compassion for him, accept the tears of my bitterness.

By Thy Passion, cure my passions.

By Thy Wounds, heal my wounds.

By Thy Blood, purge my blood; mingle the fragrance of Thy life-creating Body with my body.

Let the gall Thou didst drink at enemies' hands sweeten my soul from the bitterness which the foe hath given me to drink.

Let Thy Body, O Friend of man, which was stretched on the Tree of the Cross, extend toward Thee mine understanding which is dragged evilly downward by demons.

Let Thy Head, which Thou didst bow on the Cross, raise up my head, which is buffeted by mine adversaries.

Let Thine all-holy Hands, which were nailed to the Cross by the unbelieving Jews, lead me out of the abyss of perdition to Thee, as Thine all-holy Mouth hath promised.

Let Thy Countenance, which received blows and spittings from accursed men, brighten my countenance, which is stained with iniquities.

Let Thy Soul, which on the Cross Thou didst commend to Thy Father, guide me to Thee by Thy grace.

I have not a mournful heart wherewith to seek Thee, I have no repentance, I have no compunction, which brings the children into their proper inheritance. O Master, I have not a comforting tear.

My mind is darkened by the affairs of this life, and hath no strength to look steadfastly toward Thee with groaning. My heart is grown cold from the multitude of temptations, and cannot warm herself with tears of love for Thee.

But Thou, my Lord and God Jesus Christ, the Treasury of good gifts, grant me thorough repentance and a sorrowing heart, that with all my soul I may go forth to seek Thee. For without Thee, I am a stranger to all that is good.

Therefore, O Good One, freely grant me Thy grace. Let the Father, Who hath timelessly and everlastingly brought Thee forth from His bosom, renew in me the features of Thine image.

I have forsaken Thee, do not forsake me. I have gone out from Thee, come out to seek me, and lead me up to Thy pasture, and number me among the sheep of Thy chosen flock, and nourish me with them on the verdure of Thy Divine Mysteries; for their pure heart is Thy lodging-place, and therein is the illumination of Thy revelations dearly beheld, which is the comfort and refreshment of those who for Thy sake have travailed in afflictions and every kind of outrage.

May we also be deemed worthy of this illumination by Thy grace and love for man, O our Saviour Jesus Christ, unto the ages of ages.

Amen.

St. Issac the Syrian. The Ascetical Homilies. Homily 16, pp. 211-213