

# The Fifth Sunday of Great Lent / Forefeast of Annunciation

## 24 March / 6 April

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

**Troparion of the Forefeast tone 4:** Today the prelude of universal joy moves us to sing the prefestival hymn./ For Gabriel is coming and will cry to her:/ Rejoice, thou who art full of grace; the Lord is with thee.

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

**Kontakion of the Forefeast tone 4:** O thou who didst bear God in thy womb by the descent of the Holy Spirit,/ at the voice of the Archangel thou didst conceive Him Who is of one dignity and essence with the Father,/ O thou recall of Adam.



### *The service to St Mary of Egypt is chanted at Compline*



**St. Mary of Egypt** - The recorder of the life of this wonderful saint was St Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem. A hieromonk, the elder Zossima, had gone off at one time during the Great Fast a twenty-days' walk into the wilderness across the Jordan. He suddenly caught sight of a human being with a withered and naked body and with hair as white as snow, who fled in its nakedness from Zossima's sight. The elder ran a long way, until this figure stopped at a stream and called: 'Father Zossima, forgive me for the Lord's sake. I cannot turn round to you, for I am a naked woman.' Then Zossima threw her his outer cloak, and she wrapped herself in it and turned round to him. The elder was amazed at hearing his name from the lips of this unknown woman. After considerable pressure on his part, she told him her life-story. She had been born in Egypt, and had lived as a prostitute in Alexandria from the age of twelve, spending seventeen years in this way of life. Urged by the lustful fire of the

flesh, she one day got into a ship that was sailing for Jerusalem. Arriving at the Holy City, she tried to go into one of the churches to venerate the Precious Cross, but some unseen power prevented her from entering. In great fear, she turned to an icon of the Mother of God that was in the entrance, and begged her to let her go in and venerate the Cross, confessing her sin and impurity and promising that she would then go wherever the Most Pure led her. She was then allowed to enter the church. After venerating the Cross, she went out again to the entrance and, standing in front of the icon, thanked the Mother of God. Then she heard a voice: 'If you cross the Jordan, you will find true peace.' She immediately bought three loaves of bread and set off for the Jordan, arriving there the same evening. She received Communion the following morning in the monastery of St John, and then crossed the river. She spent forty-eight whole years in the wilderness in the greatest torments, in terror, in struggles with passionate thoughts like gigantic beasts. She fed only on plants. After that, when she was standing in prayer, Zossima saw her lifted up in the air. She begged him to bring her Communion the next year on the bank of the Jordan, and she would come to receive it. The following year, Zossima came with the Holy Gifts to the bank of the Jordan in the evening, and stood in amazement as he saw her cross the river. He saw her coming in the moonlight and, arriving on the further bank, make the sign of the Cross over the river. She then walked across it as though it were dry land. When she had received Communion, she begged him to come again the following year to the same stream by which they had first met. Zossima went, and found her dead body there on that spot. Above her head in the sand was written: 'Abba Zossima, bury in this place the body of the humble Mary. Give dust to dust. I passed away on April 1st, on the very night of Christ's Passion, after communion of the divine Mysteries.' Zossima learned her name for the first time, and also the awe-inspiring marvel that she had arrived at that stream the previous year on the night of the same day on which she had received Communion—a place that he had taken twenty days to reach. And thus Zossima buried the body of the wonderful saint, Mary of Egypt. When he returned to the monastery, he recounted the whole story of her life and the wonders to which he had been an eyewitness. Thus the Lord glorifies repentant sinners. St Mary is also commemorated in the Fifth Week of the Great Fast. The Church holds her up before the faithful in these days of the Fast as a model of repentance. She entered into rest in about 530.

**Vespers: Lord I have Cried, Tone 8, on 10: Octoechos 6; Forefeast 4 (The Archangel Gabriel confirmeth); G: Feast (Today Gabriel maketh announcement); N: Sunday Dogmatic, Tone 8. Aposticha: Octoechos; G/N: Forefeast (Today is the mystery hidden from before time began).**

## **Matins Gospel VIII**

### **Epistle - Hebrews 9: 11 - 14**

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

### **HE ENTERED THE MOST HOLY PLACE ONCE FOR ALL, HAVING OBTAINED ETERNAL REDEMPTION**

If the priesthood established by the law has come to an end, and the priest who is 'in the order of Melchizedek' has offered his sacrifice, and has made all other sacrifices unnecessary, why do the priests of the new covenant perform the mystical liturgy? Now it is clear to those instructed in divinity that we do not offer another sacrifice, but perform a memorial of that unique and saving offering. For this was the Lord's own command: 'Do this in remembrance of me' (I Cor. 11:24). So that by contemplation we may recall what is symbolised, the sufferings endured on our behalf, and may kindle our love towards our benefactor, and look forward to the enjoyment of the blessings to come.

*Theodoret of Cyprus. The Eucharist. interpr. in XIV ep. S. Paul in Heb.8.4. B#15, p. 276.*

Second Reading: Galatians 3: 23-29

### **Gospel - Mark 10: 32 - 45**

Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; And they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again." Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; But to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared." And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

"This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting (Mk. 9:29). So if you will remember, last Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Great Lent, the Gospel proclaimed to us: "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." What is "this kind"? If you will remember, brothers and sisters, we were told there about a youth who was possessed and sometimes fell into fire and sometimes into water, as his father said when he brought him to Christ. And Christ said, "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." This is what kind. The kind which possessed the youth and was casting him down. This unfortunate youth not only knew no rest, but not even life itself And

Christ said, "can come forth." This means that it was something separate. Now do we understand this or not?

Brothers, if you just open a newspaper, you will at once understand what "This kind" means. See how many people who, in a state of despair, jump into water in order to end their lives, thinking there is no eternal life. And into fire. Here you find so many who again, out of despair, throw themselves into fire, become human torches in order to burn themselves. It is the same thing: a state of insanity or despondency, or on the contrary, a state of mind which almost reaches madness—human pride. And how many people become victims of those terrible excesses of sex. How many terrible mental conditions there are in which a person commits robbery, murder, which are connected with the terrible greed for money, for power. What is this? It is precisely "this kind." We seem not to participate in it. Oh, if only we would not participate!

Now we are in the period of life which we call spiritual spring. If a farmer is late in sowing, then there will be no harvest and, therefore, no bread. Likewise, if a person is late in acquiring sobriety, attention to his inner man, his heart, then he will be left without spiritual nourishment, in spiritual hunger. And if there is some kind of passion in his heart and he realises it, then he will also understand that no one can drive out this passion except He Who created man. But for this to happen, preparation is needed. And this preparation is fasting and prayer.

We should have remained with such feelings during the past week. And if we possessed the state of mind which a Christian should possess, then during this fifth week, when the Church was crying: "O Lord, before I perish to the end, save me," when the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete was being read, which exposes and overturns our heart and reveals to us such passions; it would be possible for us to approach God and say: "O God, forgive me, heal me, give me Thine everlasting light; give me Life, because maybe I have only one year left to live, and maybe not even that; I might be going to Thee right now."

We are all going there into eternity; and the Church gives us this time for preparation, in order to look at ourselves, so that we might acquire the forces necessary for entering eternal existence.

The Church said to us in the last Gospel that this kind is driven out by fasting and prayer. We think that fasting is when we do not have vegetable oil on the table. Yes, certainly limitation in food is also fasting. But fasting does not consist of this alone; this is only part of fasting. Fasting is when a person opens his heart in such a way that he sees what is unneeded and rejects it, keeping only what is needed in order to preserve his heart. And prayer? Prayer is the state in which our soul, sensing Divine peace, unceasingly calls to the Lord; "Help me; don't let it happen. Don't allow the murder of the most important feeling within me—conscience."

And here at the end of this week, I don't know about you, but I still have a feeling of being unworthy. And for me today is a great comfort. In what sense? Here before us, before our spiritual eyes, stands Mary of Egypt. This was a sinner who became a classic type, a classic image of a Christian woman. She was an outrageous courtesan of Alexandria in Egypt. She was a harlot; she was a prostitute; she was a beauty; and her depravity knew no limits.

Once she chanced to see a crowd of people boarding a ship. And she, not in order to go to Palestine, but in order to be active in her profession among the pilgrims, she also boarded this ship. And so she sailed to Jerusalem. She went with the crowd to worship the Cross of the Lord. Why not? The whole crowd was going and so she went too. And here, when the crowd had entered the vestibule of the church; then here, no matter what Mary did, she could not enter the church. By now almost everyone had entered, but she was somehow nailed to the floor. It was as if a gust of wind or a wave threw her out and drove her away. No matter how she trembled, no matter how eager she was to enter, she could not; something would not let her. Finally, she understood that some kind of terrible force would not let her in. And here she looked up: before her was a face; it was the icon of the Mother of God with the Child. Immediately the curtain which covered up her conscience was opened. She had heard about Christ and she had heard that Christ called to chastity. And here her conscience revealed to her all her sin, and she fell before the Heavenly Queen with this cry: "Forgive me, help!"

And then she herself did not see or understand what happened. All at once, as if lifted by wind, she was brought into the church and she fell down before the Cross of the Lord. And here a miracle happened to her: there appeared in her the thirst for purity, for chastity. She wanted to feel the lightness of a clean conscience. And when she felt forgiveness, without looking around and without any provisions, she rushed to the Jordan, walked through it, and then disappeared into the desert.

And so for seventeen years she lived in a state of sobriety; and as she said later, she had to bite the ground in order to destroy lustful feelings, carnal longings, the demonic bodily movements of "this kind." And later on, for seventeen more years she praised God's Grace. She was like an angel.

Therefore, I say that for us this day which the Church puts before us is a comfort. There is no sinner whom the Lord would not forgive. Brothers and sisters, without doubt every one of us will be covered by the lid of a coffin. Every one of us will disappear into the grave. And the soul will pass over

into eternity. What will be there? Do we ever think about what will be there? The Church is calling and calling us to repentance. But how do we start? Now pay attention to this: Mary could not enter the Church; somebody was not letting her in. Look at yourself, at your conscience. The same happens to you; somebody is not allowing you to surrender fully to Christ. Stop this. But how? In the same way Mary did—rush to the Mother of God.

This is what I am asking you to do. This is the greatest joy. And rush to the Lord and say, "Lord, help me to be Christian. Help me, so that the motion of my heart beats out just one feeling: surrender to the Lord, fulfilment of His commandments. Then a clear, bright spring will come. And approaching Pascha we will hear the words of Christ, "Peace be unto you!"(Lk. 24:36). May this peace rest in you.

*The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei*

[Second Reading: St. Luke 7: 36-50](#)

### [Saints of the Week](#)

**24 March / 6 April — Forefeast of the Annunciation — Commemoration of the miracles at the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev** - Two friends, John and Sergius, swore brotherhood before the icon of the holy Mother of God in this monastery. John was a rich man, with a five-year-old son, Zachariah. John fell ill, and at his death commended his son to the care of Sergius, and left in Sergius's keeping a large sum of silver and gold for him to hand over to Zachariah when he had grown up. When Zachariah came of age, however, Sergius denied receiving anything from the deceased John. Then Zachariah said: 'Let him swear before the same icon of the most holy Mother of God, in front of which he accepted brotherhood with my late father, that he received nothing from John, and then I will seek nothing more from him.' Sergius agreed, but when he had sworn this and went up to kiss the icon, some force held him back and would not allow him to come near. Then, tormented all at once by a demon, he began to cry out: 'Holy fathers Antony and Theodosius, do not let this merciless angel destroy me!' The demon had attacked him by God's permission. He then told them of all the money which John had left. But when they opened the box, they found double the amount. Taking it, Zachariah gave it to the monastery and was himself tonsured as a monk. He lived a long time and was worthy of God's great gifts, entering peacefully into eternity.

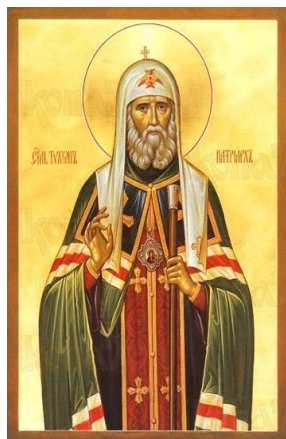
**Also commemorated on this day:** St. Artemon, bishop of Seleucia of Pisidia; Venerable Zachariah the Recluse of Egypt; Venerable Sennuphius the Standard-Bearer; Venerable Thomas, abbot; Venerable Caimin of Inis Cealtra (Holy Island); St. Severus of Catania, bishop of Catania; Venerable James the Confessor; Venerable Zachariah of the Kiev Caves; Martyrs Stephen and Peter of Kazan; Hieromartyr Parthenius, patriarch of Constantinople; New Hieromartyr Vladimir Pankin, priest; Eight Martyrs in Caesarea, Palestine; Venerable Martin of the Thebaid; 'Uncut Mountain' Icon of the Mother of God.



**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 Savvas the New of Kalymnos.

**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:** Hieromartyr Montanus, priest, and his wife Maxima, at Sirmium; Hieromartyrs Bathusius and Bercus, priests, Monk-martyr Arpilus, and the martyred laymen Abibus, Agnus, Reasus, Igathrax, Iscoeus, Silas, Signicus, Sonerilas, Suimbalus, Thermus, and Phillus, and the martyred women Anna, Alla, Larissa, Monco, Mamica, Uirko, Animais, Gaatha the queen of the Goths, and Duklida in Crimea; Venerable Malchus of Syria ; St. Braulio, bishop of Saragossa; St. Ludger, bishop Mimigernaford; Venerable Basil the New; Martyr George of Sofia; New Martyr Parasceva Kochneva; 'Melitina' Icon of the Mother of God.

**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 Discerner"** - 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:** Prophet Hanani; Martyrs Manuel and Theodosius; Venerable Paphnutius of Heraclea; St. Paul, bishop of Corinth; St. Ephraim, archbishop of Rostov; Venerable Alexander of Voche; St. Anthony, metropolitan of Tobolsk; Venerable Cyricus of Thrace.

**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.

**The Miraculous Occurrence of Taxiotis** - Taxiotis was a soldier from Carthage. He spent his entire life in grievous sins but finally repented, left the military service and lived a God-pleasing life. While he was with his wife on his estate near the city, he committed adultery with the wife of his farm worker. Afterwards, he was bitten by a snake and died immediately. Taxiotis was dead for six hours after which he arose. Then, on the fourth day, he spoke and related how and what kind of level of judgment he had passed through until he came to the level of judgment [Mitarstvo] for adultery. There, he fell into the dark abode of demons from which he was led out by an angel who attested on his behalf and was sent back in the flesh to repent for his latest sin. He repented for forty days, going from church to church, beating his head against the doors and thresholds, always crying and telling of the terrible sufferings which sinners undergo in the other world. He implored men not to sin but to repent for those sins already committed. On the fortieth day, with rejoicing, Taxiotis took up habitation into the Kingdom of the Merciful God.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Venerable Hilarion the New, abbot of the Pelekete monastery; Martyrs Priscus, Malchus, and Alexander; Martyrs Jonah and Barachisius and those with them in Persia: Zanithas, Lazarus, Maruthas, Narses, Elias, Marinus, Abibus, Sivsithina, and Sabbas; St. Hesychius the Theologian, priest of Jerusalem; Venerable Stephen the Wonderworker; Martyr Boyan, prince of Bulgaria, Hieromartyrs George, bishop, Parodus and Peter, priests; Monk-martyr Eustratius of the Kiev Caves; Venerable Hilarion of Gdov (Pskov); St. John, bishop of Manglisi, Georgia; Righteous Nicholas Postnikov, priest and confessor; New Hieromartyr Nikolai Piskanovsky, priest; Hieromartyr Basil Malinin, priest; Martyr John Chernoff.

**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.

**Venerable John the Hermit** - John was the son of Juliana, a Christian woman in Armenia. As a young boy, he left his mother and withdrew into the wilderness, completely enflamed with love toward Christ the Lord. In the wilderness, he first surrendered himself to the guidance of a spiritual director, Pharmutius, who had been found so worthy before God that an angel of God brought him bread daily. Afterwards, the young John distanced himself and withdrew into solitude. He lowered himself into a dry well where he spent ten years in fasting, prayer and vigils. St. Pharmutius brought bread from the angel and gave it to him. So that John would not become proud, the angel of God did not want to give bread to the young John personally, but rather through his spiritual father Pharmutius. After ten years of difficult mortification in the well, St. John presented himself to the Lord. His relics revealed itself to be wonder-working. He lived and was glorified by God and men in the fourth century.

**Also commemorated on this day:** St. Eustathius the Confessor, bishop of Bithynia; Venerable Jonah and Mark of the Pskov Caves Monastery; New Hieromartyr Paul Voinarsky and with him Paul and Alexius Kirian; Righteous Michael Victorov, priest and confessor.

**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.

**Memorial to a Monk Who Joyfully Died and Who Never Judged Anyone in his Life-** This monk was lazy, careless, and lacking in his prayer life; but throughout all of his life, he did not judge anyone. While dying, he was happy. When the brethren asked him how is it that with so many sins, you die happy? He replied, "I now see angels who are showing me a letter with my numerous sins. I said to them, Our Lord said: `stop judging and you will not be judged' (St. Luke 6:37). I have never judged anyone, and I hope in the mercy of God that He will not judge me." And the angels tore up the paper. Upon hearing this, the monks were astonished and learned from it.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Holy Prophet Joad; Holy Apostles of the Seventy Sosthenes, Apollos, Cephas, Caesar, and Epaphroditus; St. Eubula, mother of Great Martyr Panteleimon; St. John, patriarch of Jerusalem; Venerable John the Silent; St. Zosimus, bishop of Syracuse; Hieromartyr Zachariah, metropolitan of Corinth; St. Sophronius, archbishop of Irkutsk; Righteous Monaka of Alexandria.

### ‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡

**Monday** - Genesis 28:10-17 (Vespers, Annunciation); Ezekiel 43:27-44:4 (Vespers, Annunciation); Proverbs 9:1-11 (Vespers, Annunciation); Exodus 3:1-8 Theotokos; Proverbs 8:22-30 Theotokos; Luke 1:39-49, 56 Matins Gospel; Hebrews 2:11-18 Theotokos; Luke 1:24-38 Theotokos; Isaiah 48:17-49:4 (6th Hour); Genesis 27:1-41 (Vespers, 1st Reading); Proverbs 19:16-25 (Vespers, 2nd Reading)

**Tuesday** - Isaiah 49:6-10 (6th Hour); Genesis 31:3-16 (Vespers, 1st Reading); Proverbs 21:3-21 (Vespers, 2nd Reading)

**Wednesday** - Isaiah 58:1-11 (6th Hour); Genesis 43:26-31; 45:1-16 (Vespers, 1st Reading); Proverbs 21:23-22:4 (Vespers, 2nd Reading)

**Thursday** - Isaiah 65:8-16 (6th Hour); Genesis 46:1-7 (Vespers, 1st Reading); Proverbs 23:15-24:5 (Vespers, 2nd Reading)

**Friday** - Isaiah 66:10-24 (6th Hour); Genesis 49:33-50:26 (Vespers, 1st Reading); Proverbs 31:8-31 (Vespers, 2nd Reading)

**Saturday** - Hebrews 12:28-13:8; John 11:1-45





Lazarus Saturday is a paschal celebration. It is the only time in the entire Church Year that the resurrection service of Sunday is celebrated on another day. At the Liturgy of Lazarus Saturday, the Church glorifies Christ as "the Resurrection and the Life" who by raising Lazarus has confirmed the universal resurrection of mankind even before His own suffering and death.

At the Divine Liturgy of Lazarus Saturday, the baptismal verse from Galatians ("As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" **Galatians 32:27**) replaces the Thrice-Holy Hymn, thus indicating the resurrectional character of the celebration, and the fact that Lazarus Saturday was once among the few great baptismal days in the Orthodox Church Year.

Because of the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, Christ was hailed by the masses as the long-expected Messiah-King of Israel. Thus, in fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament, he entered Jerusalem, the City of the King, riding on the colt of an ass (**Zechariah 9:9; John 12:12**) the crowds greeting him with waving branches and shouts of praise: Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord! The Son of David! The King of Israel! Because of this glorification by the people, the Jewish priests and scribes were finally driven "to destroy Him, to put Him to death." (**Luke 19:47; John 11:53, 12:10**)

*Taken from The Orthodox Faith, Vol. II: Worship, by Fr. Thomas Hopko.*

### **Sermon on Lazarus Saturday**

*by Metropolitan Philaret  
of Eastern America and New York*

It often happens that a child does a bad thing, and his father properly punishes him. But when he sees the child crying in sorrow, parental love takes hold and the father seeks to console the punished child.

A terrible sentence was imposed upon our fallen ancestors living in the Garden of Eden. The Lord, after their terrible sin, when they betrayed Him and heeded the tempter, His enemy, said: "thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken," that is "unto dust thou shalt return." In this way the Lord sentenced our ancestors and their progeny to death, for before this, mankind was not to taste death. Having no sin, man could not before then die and would have lived forever, but after that, he became the prey of death. But our Lord knows that death is terrifying for man, that nothing terrifies him more. That is why, in order to ease the very thought of death, in order to alleviate this fear, the Lord performed His wondrous deeds of which we read in the Holy Gospel.

In particular, He performed the miracle we remember today, the greatest of His miracles—the Raising of Lazarus.

The Lord had earlier told the Apostles: "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." He said that the moment would come when those in the grave would hear the voice of the Son of God and would emerge alive. And yet death, which destroys the body of man, horrifies us. And the Lord, consoling us, encouraging us, made an example of Lazarus, who, hearing the voice of the Son of God, came out of

his tomb. He spoke, His Omnipotent Voice shook the depths of hell, and Lazarus, whose body had already begun to decay, came out of the tomb alive, unharmed and in good health.

Today's holiday is for this reason especially close to our hearts, especially joyful. Today we celebrate our future resurrection. In seven or eight days the Feast of Feasts will arrive, the Triumph of All Triumphs, when we will celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord, "raising us with Him," as the Church sings. And so to illustrate how this will occur, how the dead will rise from their graves to the sound of the voice of the Son of God, the Lord raised the dead Lazarus. That this is so is declared by the troparion which will be sung today and tomorrow: "By raising Lazarus from the dead before Your Passion, You confirmed the universal resurrection, O Christ God!"—that is, it confirmed that there will be resurrection for all.

Our souls are filled with special joy on this day, a brilliant joy, because death ceases to terrify us. How unfortunate are the godless! Of course, we know that they are in error, that man is not annihilated after death. But these poor folks think that death comes and everything comes to an end, the person is dead, his body is killed and there is no question of any life. All their talk about how their leaders live in eternity in the hearts of their followers are simply nonsense!

The human soul does not seek this, it seeks only an escape from the fear of death. The Lord grants it, for after all He had done for us, it turns out that death is not disappearance into the abyss of non-existence, but only a temporary slumber, but longer than earthly sleep. But sleep nonetheless, for with His Almighty Voice, He will wake us all at a time known only to Him so that we pass into eternity.

How bright and happy is this day! The human soul cannot but tremble with elation because, again, we are celebrating our universal resurrection! Remember this, o human soul, and thank your Lord for His great mercy to you.

**Amen.**