

The Second Sunday of Great Lent, St Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica

23 February / 8 March

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 6: The angelic powers were at Thy tomb; / the guards became as dead men. / Mary stood by Thy grave, / seeking Thy most pure Body. / Thou didst capture hell, not being tempted by it. / Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life. / O Lord who didst rise from the Dead, / Glory to Thee!

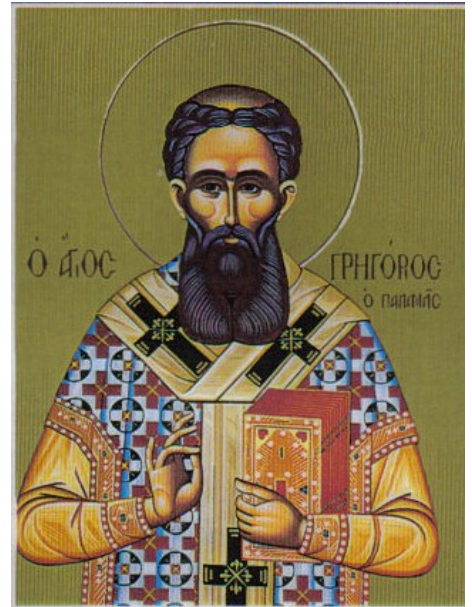
Tropar of St. Gregory Palamas, Tone 8: Light of Orthodoxy, pillar and teacher of the Church, adornment of monastics, invincible champion of theologians, O Gregory thou wonderworker, boast of Thessalonica, herald of grace, ever pray that our souls be saved.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 6: When Christ God the Giver of Life, / raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His Mighty Hand, / He bestowed resurrection on the human race. / He is the Saviour of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of All.

Kontakion of St Gregory Palamas, Tone 8: O sacred and divine instrument of wisdom, joyful trumpet of theology / with one accord we sing thy praises, O Gregory inspired by God. / But since thou standest now in mind and spirit before the Original Mind // guide our minds to Him, O father, that we may cry to thee Hail, preacher of grace.

Kontakion from the Triodion, Tone 4: The season of the virtues hath now been revealed / and judgement is at the doors / therefore let us arise and keep the Fast / offering tears of compunction together with our alms / and let us cry: our sins are more than the sands of the sea / but do Thou pardon us, O Creator of all // that we may receive incorruptible crowns.

St. Gregory Palamas — Gregory's father was an eminent official at the court of the Emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus. The gifted Gregory, completing his secular studies, did not want to go into imperial service at court, but withdrew to the Holy Mountain and became a monk, living in asceticism at Vatopedi and the Great Lavra. He waged war against the heretic Barlaam, and finally overcame him. He was consecrated Metropolitan of Salonica in 1347, being glorified both as an ascetic and a theologian, both as a hierarch and a wonderworker.. He was the defender of the Hesychasts. He upheld the doctrine that the human body played an important part in prayer, and he argued that the Hesychasts did indeed experience the Divine and Uncreated Light of Tabor. To explain how this was possible, St. Gregory developed the distinction between the essence and the energies of God. He set Hesychasm on a firm dogmatic basis, by integrating it into Orthodox theology, and by showing how the Hesychast vision of Divine Light in no way undermined the doctrine that God can not be comprehended. His teachings were confirmed by the local councils held in Constantinople in 1341 and 1351. St. Gregory began by reaffirming the Biblical doctrine of man and of the Incarnation; i.e. the whole man, united in body and soul, was created in the image of God, and Christ, by taking a human body at the Incarnation, has 'made the flesh an inexhaustible source of sanctification'. The Hesychasts, so he argued, in placing emphasis on the body's part in prayer, are not guilty of a gross materialism but are simply remaining faithful to the Biblical doctrine of man as a unity. Christ took human flesh and saved the whole man; therefore it is the whole man that prays to God. How is it possible for man to know God and, at the same time, affirm that God is by nature unknowable? St. Gregory answered this question by quoting St. Basil the Great who said "We know our God from His energies, but we do not claim that we can draw near to His essence. For His energies come down to us, but His essence remains unapproachable". St. Gregory added "God is not a nature, for He is above all beings... No single thing of all that is created has or ever will have even the slightest communion with the supreme nature, or nearness to it". Even though God's essence may be remote from us, He has revealed Himself through His energies (or grace). These energies do not exist apart from God, but are God Himself in His action and revelation to the world. It is through these energies that God enters into a direct and immediate relationship with us. When we say that the saints are 'deified' by the grace of God, we mean that they have a direct experience of God Himself through his energies (or



grace), not in His essence. The vision of Light that Hesychasts receive is the same Light that surrounded Christ on Mount Tabor. It is a true vision of God in His divine energies.

Vespers

Lord I have Cried, Tone 6, on 10: Octoechos 6; Hierarch 4 (What hymns of praise – from the Triodion); G: Hierarch (Thrice-blessed saint); N: Sunday Dogmatic in the 6th Tone. Aposticha: Octoechos; G: Hierarch (Thy tongue, watchful in teaching); N: Theotokion, Tone 8 (O unwedded Virgin).

Matins Gospel VI

Epistle: St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews 1:10 - 2:3.

10 And: "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands; 11 They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; 12 Like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail." 13 But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool?" 14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

HEBREWS 2: 1 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.

WE MUST GROW AND CHANGE WHILE ON EARTH

The hereinafter provides no more opportunities for change. So this leaves our life on earth as the only time during which change is possible. St. Paul says 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation' (I Cor.6:12). Of this passage, St. John Chrysostom says: "Let us therefore strive for the mastery in the time of this gift. It is the day of grace, of grace divine, wherefore with ease even we will obtain the crown [of heaven]" (Homily XII on II Cor. 6.)

"If you approach now, you will receive both grace and mercy, for you approach 'in due season,' but if you approach then, i.e., at the Day of Judgement, no longer will you receive it...Even now it is hard for those to find repentance who sin after baptism of grace...Now is the time of the gift; let no man despair of himself. Then will be the time of despairing, when the bride chamber is shut...For still are the spectators assembled; still is the contest; still is the prize in suspense," (Ibid. Homily VII on Hebrews IV).

So how do we use this 'accepted time' to benefit us for all eternity? The Church, in her wisdom, has made available to us the sacraments for this purpose: Baptism, Confession, Communion, and Holy Unction. But none of these can help us in the depth of our being or effect the necessary essential change in us without our own contributing effort and without that crowning virtue: humility. A baptism casually buried in the mire of subsequent sin, a perfunctory confession, communion taken without the fear and devout love of God, and holy unction received without fervent belief in its power of healing - all these are useless to us. Indeed they are a mockery and a sacrilege.

The change that must take place in us must be in the heart, 'with much groaning and weeping' (Cf. Rom.8:23). It must be real. For only the real and the pure can enter heaven.

Second Reading: St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews 7:26 – 8:2

The Gospel According To St. Mark 2: 1-12

1 At that time Jesus entered into Capernaum after some days, and it was noised that he was in the house. 2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door; and he preached the word unto them. 3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. 4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. 6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? 8 And immediately, when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? 9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed and walk? 10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) 11 I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. 12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

Brothers and sisters, we have lived this week in the light of last Sunday—the Triumph of Orthodoxy. A wonderful feature was pointed out to us in the Gospel which was then read: Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? (Jn. 1:45-46).

Both of them, Philip and Nathanael, wanted to believe in the right way, praise God rightly, that is, to be Orthodox. But for them it meant first of all to determine who was the true Messiah. With such an intention they approached Christ. Seeing Nathanael, Christ said, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. Nathanael saith unto Him, whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee” (Jn. 1:47-48).

What happened under the figtree we do not know. But we do know that Christ hit on just the right point, got right to the heart of this man. Here is Nathanael’s answer: “Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God” (Jn. 1:49). Nathanael truly and rightly praised Christ, and in this way he became the first Orthodox man. And all because Christ touched his heart, touched something intimate lying deep, deep within Nathanael’s heart.

The triumph of Orthodoxy always starts in a person’s heart, and only afterwards is it expressed externally. True, sometimes there are cases when the external attracts the heart, as if waking it up. But for this to happen, there must be something in the heart which makes such an awakening possible. God demands our heart. To serve God without heart, Orthodoxy without heart—this is the same as a man without heart.

And here today’s Gospel speaks about the same thing. A paralytic was brought to the Lord, carried by four people. Unable to get near Christ because of the multitude, they removed the roof of the house, broke through and lowered the bed on which the paralytic was lying. See how difficult it all was. This is the fulfilment of the commandment of love in external life. Yes, such is life in the triumph of Orthodoxy.

But where is its source? Let’s listen further: “When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mk. 2:5). These four had faith in their hearts, and this faith impelled them to make every effort to help; and seeing this faith, Jesus helped. The external happened as a result of the internal. God did not say at once to the paralytic: “Arise, take up thy bed,” but said, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” See, not the external first, but the internal. After all, sin was in the heart. A heart paralysed by sin could not sense God in Christ and could not rightly praise Him. And here Christ healed this heart, made it Orthodox. And then followed the external: “I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed and go thy way into thine house” (Mk. 2:11).

But what would have happened if the Lord had started with the second thing, with the external healing? The paralytic would have gotten up in the same way, would have taken his bed and gone, but only with a heart which was dead from sin. This would have been a living corpse. Here is what the Pharisees could not understand. “Whether is it easier?” said Christ to them, “to say to the paralytic, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to

say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the paralytic) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed and go thy way into thine house” (Mk. 2:9-11). To this paralytic the Lord gave both the internal and the external. And he walked home and brought there with him the quiet feeling of the triumph of Orthodoxy.

And here, St. Gregory Palamas, to whom this Sunday of Great Lent is dedicated, shows us so clearly by his whole life that Christian life, Orthodox life, always begins in our heart, and only then expresses itself in feats of asceticism.

Archbishop Andrei, The One Thing Needful.

Second Reading: St. John 10: 9-16

Saints of the Week

23 February / 8 March — The Hieromartyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna - born a pagan. St John the Theologian brought him to the Christian faith and baptised him. Polycarp was left an orphan in early childhood and a noble widow, Callista, after a vision in a dream, took him in, rearing and educating him as her own son. Polycarp was God-fearing and compassionate from his early years. He made great efforts to emulate the life of St Bucolus, the then Bishop of Smyrna, and of the Holy Apostles John and Paul, whom he had met and heard. St Bucolus ordained him priest and, at the time of his death, proclaimed him his heir in Smyrna. The apostolic bishops, who had gathered for Bucolus's funeral, consecrated Polycarp bishop. From the very beginning he was endowed with the power of wonder-working. He cast out the evil spirit from a servant of some prince and put out a great conflagration in Smyrna by his prayers. Seeing these things, many pagans regarded him as one of the gods. He brought rain in a drought, healed sickness, had the gifts of insight and prophecy, and so forth. He suffered in the time of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Three days before his death, he prophesied: 'In three days I shall be consumed by fire for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ!' When, on the third day, the soldiers arrested him and took him for trial, he cried out: 'May this be the will of the Lord my God!' When the judge urged him to deny Christ and recognise the Roman gods, Polycarp said: 'I cannot exchange the better for the worse.' The Jews especially hated Polycarp and endeavoured to have him burned. When they placed him, bound, on the pyre, he prayed long to God. He was very old and grey, and he shone like an angel of God. All the people saw how the flames licked around him but did not touch him. Frightened by such a phenomenon, the pagan judge ordered the executioner to stab him with a lance through the flames. When this was done, a vast flow of blood gushed out and extinguished the whole fire, and his body remained whole and unburned. At the Jews' persuasion, the judge ordered that Polycarp's dead body be burned according to the Greek custom, and so they dishonourably burned dead him whom they had failed to burn alive, St. Polycarp suffered in the year 167, on Holy Saturday.

Our Holy Father Damian - a monk of the Monastery of Esphigmenou on Mt. Athos, was a contemporary and companion of the great Cosmos of Zographou. He lived a life of asceticism on Mount Samareia between Esphigmenou and Hilendar. He died peacefully in the year 1280 A.D. When he died, a pleasant and sweet-smelling aroma emitted from his body for forty days.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Gorgonia, sister of St. Gregory the Theologian (†372); Venerable Alexander the founder of the Monastery of the 'Unsleeping Ones' (†c.430); St. Polychronius, bishop of Apameia (†c.431); Venerable Hermits John, Antioch, Antoninus, Moses, Zebinas, Polychronius, another Moses, and Damian, Ascetics of the Syrian Deserts (5th C); Venerable John Theristes ("the Harvester") of Stylos (†1054); Venerable Moses of White Lake (†1480); Martyr Damian of Philotheou (†1568); Hieromartyr Lazarus of the Peloponnesus (†1618); Venerable Polycarp of Briansk (†1620); Venerable Nazarius of Valaam (†1809); New Hieromartyr Paul Kushnikov, priest (†1918); New Hieromartyrs Alexis Nikolsky, Michael Razhkin, and Nicholas Dimitrov, priests, and Martyr Sergius Borodavkin (†1938); Uncovering of the relics of Blessed Matrona of Moscow (1998); 'Sokolsky' Icon of the Mother of God. Movable feast on the second Sunday of Great Lent: Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica (†c.1360); Synaxis of all the saints of the Kiev Caves Monastery.

24 February / 9 March — The Finding of the Head of St John the Forerunner - The great and glorious Forerunner was beheaded at the wish and request of the wicked Herodias, wife of Herod. When John had been beheaded, Herodias ordered that his head should not be buried with his body, for she feared that the terrible prophet would somehow rise from the dead. So she took his head and buried it in some hidden and unworthy place, deep in the earth. Her lady-in-waiting was Joanna the wife of Chuza, a courtier of Herod's. This good and God-fearing Joanna could not bear that the head of the godly man should remain in an unworthy place, so she

disinterred it secretly, took it to Jerusalem and buried it on the Mount of Olives. Not knowing about all this, King Herod, when he heard about Christ and His great miracles, was afraid and said: 'It is John, whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead!' (Mk. 6:16). After a considerable time, an eminent government official came to believe in Christ, left his position in the world and became a monk. Under the name Innocent, he settled on the Mount of Olives, in precisely the place where the Baptist's head had been buried. Deciding to build himself a cell, he dug deep and found an earthen pot containing a head which, it was revealed to him secretly, was that of the Baptist. He venerated it and re-buried it in the same place. By God's providence, that wonder-working head went from hand to hand, disappearing into the darkness of forgetfulness and then being once more revealed, until it was finally taken to Constantinople in the middle of the 9th century, in the time of Patriarch Ignatius and the God-fearing Empress Theodora, mother of Michael and wife of Theophilus. Many miracles were performed by the head of the Forerunner. It is important and interesting to note that, while he was alive, John did not work a single miracle (Jn. 10:41), but to his relics was given the blessed power of working miracles;

Our Holy Father Erasmus - a monk in the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev. He inherited great wealth from his parents and spent all on adorning churches, especially on silver-plating and gilding icons. When he had become impoverished and remained without anything, he was despised by all. The devil whispered to him that he squandered his estate in vain; instead of distributing his wealth among the poor, he gave it for the adornment of churches. Erasmus succumbed to this temptation and believed it for which he despised himself and fell into a state of despair and began to live aimlessly and lawlessly. When the hour of his death approached the brethren assembled around him and discussed his sins which he himself was not conscious of. All at once, he straightened up in bed and said: "Fathers and brothers, it is as you say; I am sinful and unrepentant, but behold St. Anthony and St. Theodosius appeared to me and after that, the All-Holy Mother of God told me that the Lord gave me more time for repentance." The Mother of God also spoke these encouraging words to him: "The poor you have with you in every place and my churches you do not." Erasmus lived for three more days, repented and fell asleep in the Lord. This teaches us that zeal for the Church and adornment of the churches is a task pleasing to God. St. Erasmus died in the year 1160 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Montanus, Lucias, Julian, Victor, Kvartilozia, Victorinus, Flavian, and Renus, at Carthage (†259); Finding of the Relics of the Holy Right-believing Prince Romanus of Uglich (†1486).

25 February / 10 March — St Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople - His predecessor, Patriarch Paul, secretly left the patriarchal throne, retired to a monastery and received the Great Habit. This was during the reign of Irene and Constantine. By Paul's advice, Tarasius, a senator and advisor to the Emperor, was chosen as Patriarch in 784. He quickly passed through all the stages of ordination and became Patriarch. A man of great physical stature and great zeal for Orthodoxy, Tarasius accepted this undesired state in order to help in the struggle of Orthodoxy against heresy, especially that of Iconoclasm. He was responsible for the summoning of the 7th Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 787, where the iconoclasts were condemned and the veneration of the holy icons was restored and confirmed. Tarasius was very compassionate to the poor and indigent, building them shelters and feeding them, but he was decisive with those in power in the defence of faith and morals. When the Emperor Constantine divorced his lawful wife, Maria, and took a kinswoman to live with him, seeking the Patriarch's blessing to remarry, Tarasius not only withheld his blessing, but first counselled and then reproached him, and finally excommunicated him. As death approached, those round him saw him answering the demons: 'I am not guilty of that sin, nor of that one', until he was incapable of speech. He then began defending himself with his arms, driving them away from him. As he breathed his last, his face shone as with the light of the sun. This truly great hierarch entered into rest in 806. He had governed the Church for 22 years and four months.

Also commemorated on this day: Hieromartyr Reginus, bishop of Skopelos (†c.355); Venerable Paphnutius of Kephala (4th C); Right-believing King Ethelbert of Kent (†616); Venerable Walburga, Abbess of Heidenheim (†779); St. Sylvester (Olshevsky), Archbishop of Omsk, confessor (†1920); New Hieromartyr Alexander Vinogradov, priest, and Nun-martyr Mstislava (Fokina) at Butovo (†1938); New Hieromartyr Nicholas Troitsky, priest (†1945).

26 February / 11 March — St Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza - This great bishop and pastor was born in Salonica of wealthy parents. He spent his youth to the age of 25 in his home town, then left his parents' home and worldly life and went off into the Egyptian desert. Under the guidance of an experienced spiritual father, the young Porphyrius became a monk and remained for five years. He then paid a visit to the Holy Land in company with his friend, the monk Mark. He lived another five years in asceticism in a cave near Jerusalem. But then his legs

became weak and he was no longer able to walk. But he was always able, crawling on his knees, to be present at Divine Service. One night the Lord Himself appeared to him in a vision and healed him of the weakness in his legs, and he became completely well. When he was chosen as bishop of Gaza, Porphyrius accepted this obligation with a heavy heart. He found only 280 Christians in Gaza; the rest of the inhabitants being fanatical idol-worshippers. Only by his great faith and patience did Porphyrius succeed in bringing the people of Gaza to the Christian faith. He had to travel in person to Constantinople, to the Emperor Arcadius and the Patriarch, John Chrysostom, to beg for help in the unequal struggle against the idolators. Seeking support, he received it. The temples of the idol-worshippers were closed, the idols demolished and a fine church built with thirty marble pillars. There was especial help forthcoming from the Empress Eudoxia. Porphyrius lived long enough to see the whole city brought to the Christian faith, but only after great toil, suffering and tearful prayer on his part. He entered peacefully into rest in 421. He was a wonder-worker during his lifetime and after his death. His relics are preserved in Gaza to this day.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Sebastian and Christodulus (†c.66); Venerable Sebastian of Poshekhonye (†c.1500); New Martyr John Calphus (†1575); New Hieromartyr Michael Lisitsyn, priest (†1918); New Hieromartyr Peter Varlamov, priest (†1930); New Hieromartyr Sergius Voskresensky, priest (†1933); New Hieromartyrs John, bishop of Ryl'sk, and John Dunaev, priest (†1938); New Nun-martyr Anna Blagoveshchensky (†1938); 'Mezhetsk' Icon of the Mother of God.

27 February / 12 March — Our Holy Father Procopius of Decapolis - This saint came from Decapolis by the Sea of Galilee; hence his name. In youth, he gave himself to the monastic life and passed through all those prescribed labours that purify the heart and uplift the soul to God. When a persecution on the part of the wicked Emperor Leo the Isaurian broke out over icons, Procopius stood up and defended icons, showing that their veneration is not idolatry, for Christians know that to prostrate themselves before icons is not to prostrate before dead matter but before the living saints depicted on the icons. Procopius was bestially tortured, imprisoned, beaten and flogged with iron flails. When the wicked Emperor was murdered, being already a lost soul, the icons were returned to the churches and Procopius returned to his monastery, where he spent his remaining days in peace. In old age, he entered into God's Kingdom, where he beheld with joy the living angels and saints whose images were on the honoured icons on earth. He departed this life peacefully in the 9th century.

The Venerable Thalelaeus - Thalelaeus was a Syrian ascetic. At first he resided in the Monastery of St. Sabas the Sanctified near Jerusalem but later he settled in a pagan cemetery known for the apparitions of evil spirits and frightening things. In order to conquer fear within himself through faith in God, Thalelaeus settled in this cemetery where he lived for many years enduring many assaults from evil spirits both day and night. Because of his great faith and love for God, God endowed him with the gift of working miracles by which he did much good for the sick and suffering people. He died about the year 460 A.D.

Venerable Titus of the Kiev Caves - Titus was a presbyter and had a sincere Christian love for Deacon Evgarius as a brother for a brother. As much as their love in the beginning was true, later it became a mutual blood-feud and hatred sown by the devil. They hated each other so much that when one was censuring in the church, the other turned around and walked out of the church. Titus attempted many times to reconcile with his opponent but in vain. Titus became ill and everyone thought that he was going to die. He begged them to bring Evgarius to him in order to forgive him. Forcefully, they dragged Evgarius to the bedside of Titus, but Evgarius broke free and fled saying that he will not forgive Titus either in this world or the other world. As soon as he said this, he fell to the ground and died. Titus arose from his bed healthy and related how the demons were hovering around him until he forgave Evgarius and when he forgave him, the demons fled and attached Evgarius and angels of God surrounded Titus. He died in the year 1190 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Julian, Eunus (Kronion) his servant, Beza (Bisos) the soldier and Mekaros at Alexandria (†c.249); Martyr Gelasius the Actor of Heliopolis (†297); St. Macarius, bishop of Jerusalem (†333); Venerable Asclepius and Jacob of Syria (5th C); Venerable Stephen of Constantinople (†c.614); New Martyr Elias of Trebizond (†1749); New Hieromartyr priest Sergei Uvitsky (†1932); New Hieromartyr priest Peter Uspensky, and Martyr Michael Markov (†1938).

28 February / 13 March — The Hieromartyr Proterius - This saint was a priest in Alexandria at the time that the Patriarch there was the heretic Dioscorus, one of the founders of the Monophysite heresy which holds that in Christ there are not two natures but one. At that time, Marcian and Pulcheria were on the imperial throne.

Proterius, a holy and devout man, stood up against Dioscorus, as a result of which he endured much misery. Then the 4th Ecumenical Council was summoned at Chalcedon, at which the Monophysite heresy was condemned. Dioscorus was cast down from the patriarchal throne and sent into exile, and in his place the orthodox Proterius was chosen. He governed the Church with zeal and love, a true follower of Christ. But the followers of Dioscorus did not stop creating confusion in Alexandria. In the face of such bloody chaos, Proterius left the town with the intention of going away for a time, but the Prophet Isaiah appeared to him on the road and said: 'Return to the town; I am waiting to take you.' Proterius returned and went into the church. Hearing of this, the insolent heretics rushed into the church, seized the Patriarch and stabbed him. About six of the faithful perished along with Proterius. Thus this wonderful pastor of Christ's flock received the crown of martyrdom for the truth of Orthodoxy, in 457.

Blessed Nicholas of Pskov, fool-for-Christ - Blessed Nikolai of Pskov for more than three decades assumed the exploit of holy fool. And quite a long while before death he acquired the gifts of grace of the Holy Spirit and was granted the gift of wonderworking and of prophecy. The Pskov people of his time called him Mikula (Mikola, Nikola) Sallos, which in translation from the Greek means "blessed, fool", and even during his lifetime they revered him as a saint, even calling him Mikula the Holy.

In February the year 1570, after a devastating campaign with an army of the Oprichniki against Novgorod, tsar Ivan the Terrible moved against Pskov, suspecting treason and preparing it a like fate of Novgorod. As the Pskov chronicler relates, "the tsar was come... with great fierceness, like a roaring lion, as though to tear apart innocent people and to shed much blood". All the city prayed for the averting of the tsar's wrath. Hearing the peal of the bell for matins throughout all of Pskov, the tsar was reading the inscription on the wonderworking Liubiatovsk (at Liubatov stood the tsar's army) Umilenie-Tenderness Icon of the Mother of God (Comm. 19 March). "Be kind of heart, – said he to his soldiers, – lay down the swords upon the stones, and let the killings cease".

All the inhabitants of Pskov came out upon the streets, and each family was on their knees at the gate of their house, bearing bread and salt for the meeting of the tsar. On one of the streets Blessed Nikolai ran out towards the tsar, astride a stick as though galloping an horse, and cried out to the tsar: "Ivanushko, Ivanushko, eat the bread-salt, and not Christian blood". The tsar gave orders to catch the holy fool, but he disappeared.

Having forbidden the killings, Ivan the Terrible still intended to punish the city. The tsar heard the molieben at the Trinity cathedral, he venerated the relics of holy nobleborn Prince Vsevolod-Gabriel (Comm. 11 February), and he desired to receive the blessing of Blessed Nikolai. When the tsar arrived at the cell of the saint, that one said: "Hush, come in, (wouldst thou have nothing, traveller), to have a drink of water from us, there is no reason thou shouldst shun it". The holy fool offered the tsar for a bite a piece of raw meat. "I be a Christian and do not eat meat during Lent", – said Ivan to him. "Thou drinkest human blood", – the saint answered him, instructing the tsar "by many terrible sayings", that he should cease the killings and not plunder the holy churches of God. But Ivan did not heed him and gave orders to take the bell from the Trinity cathedral, and then, in accord with the prophecy of the saint, the finest horse of the tsar collapsed. The prayer and the lecture of the saint awakened the conscience of the tsar. Frightened by the coming to pass of the prophecy and denounced in his wicked deeds, Ivan the Terrible ordered a stop to the plunder and fled from the city. The Oprichniki, witnessing this, wrote: "The mighty tyrant... departed beaten and shamed, driven off as though by an enemy. Thus did a worthless beggar terrify and drive off the tsar with his multitude of a thousand soldiers".

Blessed Nikolai died on 28 February 1576 and was buried in the Trinity cathedral of the city saved by him. Such honours were granted only to the Pskov princes, and later on, archpastors. The local veneration of the saint began all of 5 years after his death. In the year 1581, during a siege of Pskov by the soldiers of the Polish king Stefan Bathory, to the blacksmith Dorofei appeared the Mother of God together with a gathering of Pskov saints praying for the city, among whom also was Blessed Nikolai (the account about the Pskovo-Pokrovsk Icon of the Mother of God is located under 1 October).

And still now also at the Trinity cathedral do they venerate the relics of Blessed Nikolai of Pskov, who "of the flesh of folly wast, ... being manifest a citizen of Mount Jerusalem, ... having transformed the tsar's might and fierce mind to mercy".

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Basil the Confessor, companion of Venerable Procopius (†c.750); Holy Apostles Nymphas and Eubulus (1st C); Hieromartyr Nestor, bishop of Magydos in Pamphylia (†250); Venerable women: Marina, Kyra, and Domnica of Syria (†c.450); Martyr Kyranna of Thessaloniki (†1751); Holy Right-believing Great Prince Yaroslav; Hieromartyr Arsenius, metropolitan of Rostov (†1772). (February 29th) Venerable John Cassian of Rome (†435); Venerable John, called Barsanuphius, Bishop of Damascus (5th C); Venerable Germanus of Dacia (5th C); Monk-martyr Theocteristus of Pelecete Monastery (8th C); St. Oswald, archbishop of York (†992); Venerable Cassian, recluse of the Kiev Caves (14th C); ‘Devpeteruv’ Icon of the Mother of God.

1 / 14 March — Our Holy Mother, the Martyr Eudocia - Living in Heliopolis, a city of Phoenicia, during the reign of Trajan, she was at first a great harlot, then a penitent, a nun and finally a martyr. She gained great wealth from her harlotry. The reversal of her life was brought about, through the providence of God, by an elderly monk, Germanus, and that unintentionally. Coming to Heliopolis in the course of his work, he stayed at the house of a Christian woman whose home abutted onto Eudocia's. When at night he began, as was his monastic custom, to read the Psalter and a book on the Dreadful Judgement, Eudocia heard him and stood listening attentively to his every word until the end. Fear and dread took such hold on her that she remained awake until daybreak. As soon as it was dawn, she sent a servant to beg that monk to come to her. Germanus came, and they began a long conversation on that which the old monk had been reading the previous night, and especially on faith and salvation. The result of these discussions was that Eudocia asked the local bishop to baptise her. After her baptism, she gave all her goods to the church, to be distributed to the poor, dismissed her servants and slaves and retired to a women's monastery. She so devoted herself to the monastic life—to obedience, patience, vigils, prayer and fasting—that after thirteen months she was chosen as abbess. She lived fifty-six years in the monastery and was worthy in the eyes of God to be given the gift of raising the dead. When a persecution of Christians arose under the governor, Vincent, holy Eudocia was beheaded. Here is a wonderful example of how a vessel of uncleanness can be purified, sanctified and filled with a precious, heavenly fragrance by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

St. David of Wales, bishop (542 - 601) – of Welsh royalty. Son of King Sant of South Wales and Saint Non. Grandson of Ceredig, Prince of Cardigan. Uncle of King Arthur. Priest. Studied under Saint Paulinus. Collaborated with Saint Columba, Saint Gildas, and Saint Finnigan. Missionary and founder of monasteries. Following his contribution to the synod of Brevi in Cardiganshire, he was chosen primate of the Cambrian Church. Archbishop of Caerleon on Usk; moved the see to Menevia. Presided at the Synod of Brefi which condemned the Pelagian heresy. Encouraged and founded monasteries. First to build a chancel to Saint Joseph of Arimathea's wattle church at Glastonbury. After a vision in his monastery in the Rhos Valley, he set out next day with two monks to Jerusalem to aid the Patriarch. While there his preaching converted anti-Christians. It is said that once while he was preaching, a dove descended to his shoulder to show he had the blessings of the Spirit, and that the earth rose to lift him high above the people so that he could be heard by them all. Born at Menevia (now Saint David's), Wales. Died 601 at Mynyw, Wales. Name means beloved one.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Nestor, bishop, and Tribimius, deacon (†c.250); Martyrs Marcellus and Anthony (3rd C); Martyr Antonina (†c.305); Venerable Domnina of Syria (†c.450); Venerable Swithbert of Kaiserworth (†713); Venerable Agapius of Vatopedi (13th C); Venerable Martyrius of Zelenets (†1603); Martyr Parasevas of Trebizond (†1659); New Hieromartyrs, Basil Nikitsky, Benjamin Famintsev, John Streltsov, Michael Bukrinsky, and Peter Liubimov, priests, Monk-martyr Anthony (Korz), Nun-martyrs Alexandra (Dyachkova), Anna (Makandina), Olga (Zhiltsova), Martyr Basil Arkhipov, Martyr Nadezhda (Abakumova) (†1938); Hieromartyr Alexander (Ilyenkov), priest (†1942); Hieromartyr Basil Konstantinov-Grishin, priest (†1943).

† Daily Scripture Readings †

Monday – Sixth Hour: Isa. 8:13-9:7; Vespers: Gen. 6:9-22; Prov. 8:1-21; Matins Gospel: Luke 7:17-30 (\$31)
Epistle: II Cor. 4:6-15 (\$176); Gospel: Matt. 11:2-15 (\$40)

Tuesday – Sixth Hour: Isa. 9:9-10:4; Vespers: Gen. 7:1-5; Prov. 8:32-9:11

Wednesday – Sixth Hour: Isa. 10:12-20; Vespers: Gen. 7:6-9; Prov. 9:12-18

Thursday – Sixth Hour: Isa. 11:10-12:2; Vespers: Gen. 7:11-8:3; Prov. 10:1-22

Friday - Sixth Hour: Isa. 13:2-13; Vespers: Gen. 8:4-21; Prov. 10:31-11:12

Saturday – Epistle: for Saturday: Heb. 10:32-38 (\$325); for the Departed: I Thess. 4:13-17 (\$270)
Gospel: for Saturday: Mark 2:14-17 (\$8); for the Departed: John 5:24-30 (\$16)

REFLECTION

St. Gregory Palamas learned much through heavenly revelations. After he had spent three years in stillness in a cell of the Great Lavra, it was necessary for him to go out among men and benefit them with his accumulated knowledge and experience. God revealed this necessity to him through an extraordinary vision: One day, as though in a light sleep, Gregory saw himself holding a vessel in his hand full to overflowing with milk. Gradually, the milk turned into wine which likewise spilled over the rim, and drenched his hands and garments. Then a radiant youth appeared and said: "Why would you not give others of this wonderful drink that you are wasting so carelessly, or are you not aware that this is the gift of God's grace?" To this Gregory replied: "But if there is no one in our time who feels the need for such a drink, to whom shall I give it?" Then the youth said: "Whether there are some or whether there are none thirsty for such a drink, you are obligated to fulfill your debt and not neglect the gift of God." Gregory interpreted the milk as the common knowledge (of the masses) of moral life and conduct, and the wine as dogmatic teaching.

The second time Gregory secluded himself in a monastery he was writing his Principles of Orthodoxy. On the eve of the Feast of St. Anthony the Great, the monks summoned him to the all-night vigil service, but he remained at his work in the cell while all the brethren went to church. St. Anthony suddenly appeared to him and said: "Perfect stillness is good, but sometimes it is necessary to be with the brethren." Convinced by this revelation, Gregory immediately went into church to the joy of all the monks.

HOMILY

-About enduring to the end-

**"But the one who perseveres to the end will be saved "
(St. Matthew 24:13).**

O Lord most wonderful, You have endured all, all to the end. That is why You became not only blessed but the source of blessings for all men who desire good for themselves throughout the ages of ages. The apostles endured all to the end and entered into blessed eternity. The saints willingly endured the difficulties and sufferings to the end and were glorified, both in heaven and on earth. The martyrs willingly endured all pains to the end and became the adopted co-inheritors of the Kingdom of Christ. Every founder of a new organization recruits followers for himself with the promise of good fruits and many pleasures but deliberately remains silent about the hardships and labors which lead to those fruits and pleasures. Our Lord Jesus is the only one Who spoke the whole truth to His followers, both the bitter and the sweet side of the truth. He did not promise fruits without service, nor glory without suffering, nor ultimate rest without the thorny path, nor victory without struggle, nor pleasure without bitterness, nor the kingdom without tears and self-denial.

Although our Lord counted the many difficulties which would befall His followers, in the end He does not abandon them without comfort. He gives meaning to their sufferings and does not leave them in darkness. He says, "**The one who perseveres to the end will be saved.**" What is that blessing which awaits those who endure to the end that He Jesus fully revealed and that has been witnessed even until today and is being witnessed by many saints, who, have either appeared in glory to the faithful from the other world or who, while yet in the flesh, were uplifted in the spirit to a vision of that glory and blessedness which await the faithful, the chosen and persevering?

O Lord, You are our strength. Help us to endure to the end with faith that You are beside us.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.