

Sunday of the Paralytic

Fourth Sunday of Pascha

20 April / 3 May

Resurrection Tone 3: Let the heavens be glad; let earthly things rejoice; * for the Lord hath wrought might with His arm. * He hath trampled down death by death; * the first-born of the dead hath He become. * From the belly of Hades hath He delivered us * and Hath granted to the world great mercy.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 3: 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 the patriarchs they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Thy power.

Kondak of the Sunday of the Paralytic, Tone 3: As of old Thou didst raise the paralytic, O Lord, by Thy Divine presence, raise my soul which is paralysed grievously by all manner of sins and unseemly deeds, that being saved I may cry out: O compassionate Christ, glory be to Thy power.

Kondak of Pascha, Tone 8: Though Thou didst descend into the grave, O Immortal One, yet didst Thou destroy the power of Hades, and didst arise as victor, O Christ God, calling to the myrrh-bearing women, Rejoice, and giving peace unto Thine Apostles, O Thou Who dost grant resurrection to the fallen.



Vespers: Lord I have Cried, Tone 3, on 10: Resurrection 7; Paralytic 3 (O compassionate Christ); G: Paralytic (Jesus went up to Jerusalem to the Sheep's Pool); N: Sunday Dogmatic (How can we not marvel). Aposticha: The sticheron of the Resurrection 1 (O Christ, Who by Thy Passion); The Paschal Stichera, with their verses; G: Pentecostarion (In Solomon's Porch); N: Pascha (It is the day of resurrection) and Christ is risen from the dead x1.

Matins Gospel IV

Epistle: The Acts of the Apostles 9: 32 - 42

Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralysed. And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.

PETER RAISES TABITHA FROM DEATH

He sends them all out, imitating his master in this also (Ref. Mk.5:40). For where tears are - or rather, where miracles are, there tears have no place. Certainly not in the celebration of such a mystery. Listen, I beseech you: although something of a similar kind is not happening now, yet in the case of our dead, a great mystery is celebrating likewise ...Angels are present, commissioned from heaven ...sent from the King Himself to call their fellow servant, and I ask you, Do you weep? Do you not know what a mystery it is that is taking place, how awful, how dread, and worthy indeed of hymns and lauds? ...For it is a very great mystery of the Wisdom of God. As if leaving the dwelling, the soul goes forth, speeding on her way to her own Lord, and do you mourn? Why then you should do this on the birth of a child: for this in fact is also a birth, and better than that... For as the sun arises, clear and bright, so the soul leaving the body with a clear conscience, shines joyously ...Think what the soul must then be! in what amazement, what wonder, what delight!

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXI on Acts IX. B#55, pp. 138, 139.

Gospel: John 5: 1-15

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralysed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed." He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.'" Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?" But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

JESUS HEALS THE PARALYTIC BY THE POOL

Great is the profit of divine Scriptures, and all sufficient is the aid which comes from them ...for the divine oracles are a treasury of all manner of medicines. Whether it be needful to quench pride, to lull passion to sleep, to tread under foot the love of money, to despise pain, to inspire confidence, to gain patience - in the Scriptures we may find abundant resource. For what man of those who struggle with long poverty or who are nailed by a grievous disease will not, when he reads the passage before us, receive much comfort? Since this man had been a paralytic for thirty eight years, and he saw others delivered each year, and himself bound by his disease, not even so did he fall back and despair, though in truth not merely despondency for the past, but also hopelessness for the future was sufficient to overstrain him ...Yes, Lord, he says, but I have no man ...to put me in the pool. What can be more pitiable than these words? ...Do you see a heart crushed through long sickness? Do you see all violence subdued? ...He did not curse his day ...but replied gently ...Yes, Lord; yet he did not know who it was who asked him.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXXVII on John V, 1. B#58, p. 128.

Christ is Risen!

Today's Gospel reading confirms us more and more strongly in the divinity of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The Gospels for the last two Sundays told us about the appearances of the Risen One. They were as if filled with the light of Christ's Resurrection: the wonderful appearances to the disciples, to Thomas, to the myrrh-bearers. But today's Gospel starts with a dismal, horrible picture: there is no brightness, no light. At the Sheep Gate there was a pool which had five porches. "In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered.... For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years" (Jn. 5:2-5).

Just picture this: thirty-eight years in such a terrible condition, in pain and suffering, without a doctor, without care, without medicine, and maybe even often without food. And this unfortunate man bore all this because he wanted to be well. He tried to enter the water after it was troubled, but he had no one to help him, was late, and did not receive healing. And so passed thirty-eight years. Why this is a human lifetime!

Suddenly everything changed. Jesus came up to him and said: "Rise, take up thy bed and walk. . ." and he walked (Jn. 5:8,9).

What happened? What took place? What happened is that the reason for his sickness was removed. Christ revealed this reason when He met this man in the temple and said to him: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (Jn. 5:14). Here is the reason—sin. Sin is the reason for all evil, for all our sufferings, for all our sicknesses. Yes, sin. . .sin alone. And Christ is the only one who can destroy it, who can forgive. But this is under one condition: "Sin no more."

We have lived through the Passion days, we have lived through the very death of Christ, the death of the Lamb of God, Who takes upon Himself the sin of the world. This means our sin, too. He, the Only Sinless One, has become the sacrifice for us before our Heavenly Father. And now we are walking in the Easter joy of the Risen Christ. And so week after week. But still we stumble, fall, sin. But let us not despond; let us turn to Him. The pool at the Sheep Gate was only a shadow of what Christ performed and is performing. He alone is the source of healing and forgiveness. He alone, as God, can forgive sins. Let us turn to Him, and He will say to us the same words He said to the paralytic: "Rise, take up thy bed and walk."

And we will rise and walk again in the light of His Resurrection. But let us remember His words to the paralytic, "Sin no more. " And let us not sin, because Christ is Risen!

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei

Saints of the Week

20 April / 3 May — Our Holy Father Theodore Trichinas - A citizen of Constantinople, he was the son of wealthy parents. He left parents, home and riches while still a young man and settled in a remote monastery in Thrace, where he undertook the most rigorous ascetic life. He slept on a stone so that he might have less sleep; he was always bareheaded and dressed in a hair-shirt, from which he was called 'Trichinas' or 'hairy'. Because of his great and self-inflicted sufferings for the sake of his soul's salvation, God granted him the gift of working miracles, both in his lifetime and after his death, and he died peacefully in about 400. Healing myrrh flowed from his relics.

The Holy Apostle Zacchaeus - At first, Zacchaeus was a tax collector and a sinner. When our Lord saw him in Jericho in a tree and entered his home, Zacchaeus was brought to repentance. Later on, Zacchaeus followed the Apostle Peter who appointed him bishop of Caesarea in Palestine where he faithfully served the Gospel and died peacefully.

St. Caedwalla, king of the West Saxons (689) - he became king by conquest being notoriously violent but then abdicated and went to Rome to become a Christian. He was baptised on Holy Saturday 689 being given the name Peter by Pope Sergius. Soon afterwards he was taken ill and died, still wearing his white baptismal robes. He was aged 30.

Also commemorated on this day: St. Betran, bishop of Scythia Minor (†c.378); St. Theotimus, bishop of Tomis in Moesia (Lesser Scythia) (†c.412); Sts. Gregory (†593) and Anastasius (†599), patriarchs of Antioch; Hieromartyr Anastasius II, patriarch of Antioch (†609); Venerable Anastasius of Sinai (†c.699); Venerable Athanasius (†1380) and Ioasaph (†1422), abbots of Meteora; Venerable Alexander of Oshevensk (†1479); Child-martyr Gabriel of Slutsk (†1690); St. Theodosius (Ganitsky), confessor, bishop of Kolomensk (†1937); Translation of the Relics of St. Nikolai (Velimirović) of Žiča (1991); 'Kipiazhszkaya' and 'Cyprus' Icons of the Mother of God. Movable feasts on the Sunday of the Paralytic: Righteous Tabitha of Joppa (1st C); Martyr Abraham the Bulgar (†1230); Synaxis of the Saints of Euboea.

April 21 / May 4 — The Hieromartyr Januarius and those with him - This saint was Bishop of Benevento in Italy. In the time of a persecution under Maximian, he was brought before the judge and tormented with various tortures, which he endured patiently. When they threw him into the flames, they were cooled by an invisible dew and the martyr stood uninjured in it and sang the praises of God. Then they flayed his body with iron flails until the bones showed white, but the martyr patiently endured all. His deacon, Faustus, and his reader, Desiderius, were watching the torture and wept for their spiritual father. Then they too were bound and taken with their bishop to the town of Pozzuoli, and cast into prison. There were in the same prison for the sake of Christ the Puetolian deacons Proclus and Sossus and two simple, Christian men, Eutychius and Acutius. All seven were thrown next day to the wild beasts, but the beasts would not touch them. They were all then beheaded, and the Christians of the city of Naples secretly took the body of St Januarius to their city and buried it in the church. To this present day innumerable wonders are worked at this saint's grave. One among many remembered is this: a poor widow, whose only son had died, took the icon of St Januarius out of the church and laid it on her dead son, weeping and imploring the saint's aid, and her son was restored to life. St Januarius suffered with honour in 305.

St. Beuno, abbot of Clynnog Fawr, England (c.640) - born and educated in Herefordshire before founding his main monastery. When he died a stone oratory was built over his tomb; later his relics were translated to a new church (Eglwys y Bedd) where miracles were reported. He is considered to be the most important local saint of North Wales. Remains of the primitive oratory were excavated in 1914.

St. Maelrubba (642-722) Apostle of the Picts - born in Ireland he became a monk at Bangor; later founded a monastery at Applecross on the west coast of Scotland. From there he evangelised Skye and penetrated as far north as Loch Broom. He also build a church on an island in Loch Maree, where his spring was famous for its healing properties.

St. Ethilwald, hermit of Farne (d. 699) - he was a monk and a priest of Ripon, who succeeded Cuthbert in the Inner Farne hermitage in 687. Almost nothing is known of him. Once Guthrid, the future abbot, with two monks of Lindisfarne, visited him by boat; on the return journey they were saved from shipwreck in a sudden storm by his prayers. Many miracles have been reported due to his intercession.

The Holy Martyr Theodore and Company - Theodore suffered for the Faith of Christ in Perga of Pamphylia during the reign of Antonius. Theodore was young and of handsome countenance. When the governor of that province chose him, along with other young men, who were to be sent to the imperial court for service, Theodore objected and declared that he is a Christian. Because of that, he underwent many kinds of tortures and was then tossed into the fire. But, water bubbled out of the ground and quenched the fire. The governor attributed this to some magic of Theodore. But, the martyr said: "This is not the work of my power but Christ my God. If you want to know the power of your gods, light another fire and toss in one of your soldiers and then I hope you will see their power and the Almighty power of my God." Indeed, the governor wanted to cast one of his soldiers into the fire but they, out of fear, implored him to throw in their place Dioscorus, the pagan priest. The pagan priest Dioscorus then begged the governor to throw in the idol of Zeus and the other idols and, if they are gods, they will easily save themselves. Dioscorus said this because he had turned to Christ in his heart since he saw the miracle that took place with St. Theodore. Learning of this, the governor sentenced Dioscorus to death by burning; also delivered over to death by the governor were Theodore and the two soldiers, Socrates and Dionysius and Theodore's mother, Philippa. Theodore was crucified on a cross on which he expired on the third day. Socrates and Dionysius were pierced with a spear and Philippa was beheaded. All were crowned with the wreaths of glory in the Kingdom of Christ.

Also commemorated on this day: Desiderius, reader; Eutychius and Acutius, laymen (†c.305); Martyrs Isaacius, Apollo, and Codratus (†303); St. Maximian, patriarch of Constantinople (†434); Venerable James of Stromynsk Monastery, Radonezh (14th C); Venerable Athanasius of Vysotsky the Younger (†1395); Righteous Alexius of Bortsumani (†1848); New Hieromartyr John Prigorovsky, priest (†1918); Righteous confessor Nicholas Pisarevsky, priest (†1933); New Hieromartyr Alexis Protopopov, priest (†1938); Finding of the relics of Venerable Theodore, abbot of Sanaxar Monastery(1999).

April 22 / May 5 — Our Holy Father Theodore the Sykeote - His birthplace was the village of Sykeon in Galatia, because of which he was named 'the Sykeote'. While still a ten-year-old boy, Theodore gave himself to strict fasting and night-long vigils under the eye of an elder, Stephen, who lived in his house. His mother, Maria, was a rich widow and intended her son to devote himself to a soldier's calling. But St George appeared to her in her sleep and told her that Theodore was destined for the service, not of an earthly king, but of the King of heaven. St George also appeared to Theodore many times, either to instruct him or to save him from some danger in which the evil demons had placed him. He also had several visions of the most holy Mother of God. Theodore's asceticism exceeded in its severity the asceticism of all the other ascetics of his time. He tormented his body in hunger and thirst and iron girdles and standing all night in prayer. All this—only to link his soul in love to God and to achieve total mastery over his body. The merciful Lord's love responded to Theodore's love. He gave him great power over evil spirits and over all the ills and pains of men. He became known on all sides as a miraculous healer. For his great purity and devotion, he was chosen against his wishes as Bishop of Anastasioupolis. He spent eleven years in episcopal service, and then begged God to release him from this service in order to devote himself again to his beloved asceticism. After that, he returned to his monastery, where, in old age, he gave his soul to the Lord for whose sake he had undergone so much voluntary suffering. He died at the beginning of the reign of the Emperor Heraclius, in about 613.

Our Holy Father, the Monk Vitalis - During the time of the Alexandrian Patriarch John the Merciful, a young monk appeared who, as soon as he arrived, compiled a list of all the prostitutes in Alexandria. The mortification (asceticism) of this young monk was exceptional and unique. During the day he would offer himself for hire to do the most difficult jobs and at night, he would enter the houses of ill repute, gave the earned amount of money to some prostitute and close himself in the room with her the entire night. As soon as they were locked up, Vitalis would beg the woman to lie down and sleep and he would spend the entire night in a corner of the room in prayer to God for that sinner. Thus, he would save the woman from sinning at least one night. The second night, he would go to a second, the third night to a third and so on until he had visited them all, and then, he again returned to the one with whom he started. By his counselling, many of the sinners abandoned their sullied trade. Some of them married, others entered convents and still others turned to a respectable work and income. Vitalis forbid all of these women to reveal the reason why he was visiting them. Because of this, Vitalis became a

scandal for all of Alexandria. The men began to scold him, spit upon him and to openly beat him on the streets. He bore all patiently, making known his good works to God and concealing them from men. When he died, everything about him became known. Many miracles of healing occurred over his grave. People from different places began to bring their sick to his grave. Spat upon by men, he was and remained glorified by the Omniscient God.

Also commemorated on this day: Holy Apostles Nathaniel, Luke (not the Evangelist), and Clement of the 70 (1st C); Martyr Epipodius of Lyon (†c.170); Martyrs Leonidas, Orator, Cyriacus, and Basil of Alexandria (†202); Martyr Nearchus, soldier (3rd C); Translation of the relics of the Right-believing prince Vsevolod (Gabriel in baptism) of Pskov (1834); New Hieromartyr Eustathius Malahovsky, priest (†1918); New Hieromartyr Platon, bishop of Banja Luka (†1941); New Martyr Demetrius Vlasenkov (†1942).

April 23 / May 6 — Fast Day – Mid-Pentecost - The Holy and Great Martyr George - This renowned and glorious martyr was born in Cappadocia, the son of rich and God-fearing parents. His father suffered for Christ, after which his mother moved to Palestine. When George grew up, he went into the army, in which he rose, by the age of twenty, to the rank of tribune, and as such was in service under the Emperor Diocletian. When this Emperor began a terrible persecution of Christians, George came before him and boldly confessed that he was a Christian. The Emperor threw him into prison, and commanded that his feet be put in the stocks and a heavy weight placed on his chest. After that, he commanded that he be bound on a wheel, under which was a board with great nails protruding, and thus be turned. He then had him buried in a pit with only his head above the ground, and left there for three days and nights. Then, through some magician, he gave him deadly poison, but in the face of all these tortures, George prayed unceasingly to God, and God healed him instantly and saved him from death, to the great amazement of the people. When he also raised a dead man to life by his prayers, many embraced the Christian faith. Among these was the Emperor's wife, Alexandra, and the chief pagan priest, Athanasius, the governor Glycerius and Valerius, Donatus and Therinus. Finally, the Emperor commanded that George and the Empress Alexandra be beheaded. Blessed Alexandra died on the scaffold before being killed, and St George was beheaded. This happened in the year 303. The miracles that have been performed at his grave are without number. Also are his appearances in dreams to those who, thinking on him, have sought his help, from that time up to the present day. Consumed by love for Christ, it was not difficult for holy George to leave all for this love—his status, wealth and imperial favour, his friends and the whole world. For this love, the Lord rewarded him with a wreath of unfading glory in heaven and on earth, and with eternal life in His Kingdom. The Lord further endowed him with the power to help in need and distress all who honour him and call on his name.

St. Ethelbert, king of East Angles - he was venerated as a martyr because of his violent death for political reasons at the hand of Offa, king of Mercia, whose daughter Aelfthryth he visited with a view to marriage. The body was buried by the river Lugg at Marden and later translated to Hereford where it remained until the Danes burnt it in 1050. Fragments of the original shrine at Hereford still remain - it was the second most popular pilgrimage centre of the times.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyr Alexandra the Empress (†303); Martyrs Anatolius and Proton (†303); Martyr Glycerius the farmer, Athanasius the magician, Valerius, Donatus, and Therinus (†303); Blessed George of Shenkursk, fool-for-Christ (15th C); 172 New Venerable Martyrs, Monks of the Monastery of the Twenty Phoenician Women (†1507); New Martyr George of Ptolemais (†1752); Martyr Lazarus of Bulgaria (†1802); New Hieromartyr John Anserov, priest (†1940); Venerable Sophia (Khotokuridu) (†1974). Movable feast on Mid-Pentecost: 'Mozdok' Icon of the Mother of God.

April 24 / May 7 The Holy Martyr Sabbas Stratelates - This famous Sabbas lived in Rome in the time of the Emperor Aurelian, and held a general's rank. He was of a noble Gothic family. He often visited Christians in prison, helping them from his abundance. Through his great purity and fasting, God gave him power over unclean spirits. When he was charged with being a Christian, he stood courageously before the Emperor, cast his officer's belt before him and publicly confessed Christ the Lord. He was tortured in various ways: flogged, flailed with iron rods, burned with torches. But he did not succumb to these deadly tortures, and was seen to be alive and well. His comrades, the soldiers, seeing clearly that God was helping Sabbas, accepted the Christian faith, and seventy of them were immediately beheaded at the Emperor's command. Christ the Lord Himself appeared to Sabbas in the prison in great light, and strengthened His martyr. Then Sabbas was condemned to death by

drowning. He was thrown into a deep river, where he gave his soul to God in the year 272. And his soul went to the Lord to whom he had remained faithful under many tortures.

St. Egbert of Lindisfarne (729) - a Northumbrian monk, born of noble parentage c. 639; d. 729. In his youth he went for the sake of study to Ireland, to a monastery, says the Venerable Bede, "called Rathmelsigi", identified by some with Mellifont in what is now County Louth. There, when in danger of death from pestilence, he prayed for time to do penance, vowing amongst other things to live always in exile from his own country. In consequence he never returned to England, though he lived to the age of ninety, and always fasted rigorously. Having become a priest, he was filled with zeal for the conversion of the still pagan German tribes related to the angles, and would himself have become their apostle, if God had not shown him that his real calling was to other work. It was he, however, who dispatched to Friesland St. Wigbert, St. Willibrord, and other saintly missionaries. St. Egbert's own mission was made known to him by a monk, who, at Melrose, had been a disciple of St. Boisil. Appearing to this monk, St. Boisil sent him to tell Egbert that the Lord willed him instead of preaching to the heathen to go to the monasteries of St. Columba, "because their ploughs were not going straight", in consequence of their schismatic practice in the celebration of Easter. Leaving Ireland therefore in 716, Egbert crossed over to Iona, where the last thirteen years of his life were spent. By his sweetness and humility he induced the Iona monks to relinquish their erroneous mode of computation; in 729 they celebrated Easter with the rest of the Church upon 24 April, although their old rule placed it that year upon an earlier day.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyr Alexander of Lyon (†177); Martyrs Pasicrates and Valentine at Dorostolum in Moesia (†228); Martyrs Eusebius, Neon, Leontius, Longinus, and others at Nicomedia (†303); Venerable Elizabeth, abbess, wonderworker of Constantinople (†540); Venerable Innocent, priest on the Mount of Olives (4th C); Venerable Thomas, fool-for-Christ of Syria (6th C); St. Wilfrid, archbishop of York (†709); Venerable Xenophon, of Mt. Athos (†1018); Venerable Sabbas and Alexius the Hermit of the Kiev Caves (13th C); Martyr Doukas (†1564); St. Symeon (Stefan), metropolitan of Transylvania (†1656); Sts. Elias (Iorest) (†1678) and Sabbas (Sava) (†1683), metropolitans of Ardeal (Transylvania); St. Joseph the Confessor, bishop of Maramures (Romania) (†1712); New Martyr George of Anatolia (†1796); New Martyr Nicholas of Magnesia (18th C); Righteous Alexis Toth, priest, of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania (†1909); New Martyr Sergius Archangelsky (†1938); Hieromartyr Branko of Veljusa, Serbia (†1941); 'Molchensk' Icon of the Mother of God.

April 25 / May 8 — Fast Day - The Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark - Mark was a companion and helper of the Apostle Peter in his journeys. Peter, in his first Epistle, calls him his son, not after the flesh but after the spirit (I Pet. 5:13). When Mark was with Peter in Rome, the faithful begged him to write down for them the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus, His miracles and His life. So Mark wrote his Gospel, which the Apostle Peter himself saw and testified to as true. Mark was chosen by the Apostle Peter to be bishop, and sent to Egypt to preach. And so Mark was the first preacher of the Gospel and the first bishop in Egypt. Egypt was oppressed by a thick darkness of paganism, idolatry, divination and malice. But, with the help of God, St Mark succeeded in sowing the seed of the knowledge of God in Libya, Ammonia and Pentapolis. From Pentapolis, he went to Alexandria, whither the Spirit of God led him. In Alexandria, he succeeded in establishing the Church of God, in giving her bishops, priests and deacons and in rooting everything firmly in faithfulness and devotion. Mark confirmed his preaching with many great miracles. When the pagans brought accusations against Mark as a destroyer of their idolatrous faith, and when the governor of the city began to search for Mark, he fled again to Pentapolis, where he continued his earlier work. After two years, Mark again returned to Alexandria, to the great joy of his faithful, whose number had already increased very greatly. The pagans took the opportunity to seize Mark, and they bound him firmly and began to drag him over the cobblestones, crying: 'We're taking the ox to the stall!' They threw him into prison all injured and bloodstained, where there appeared to him first an angel from heaven, who encouraged and strengthened him, and then the Lord Himself. Jesus said to him: 'Peace to thee, Mark My Evangelist!', to which Mark replied: 'And peace to Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ!' On the next day, the wicked people hauled Mark from prison and again dragged him through the streets with the same cry: 'We're taking the ox to the stall!' Utterly spent and enfeebled, Mark said: 'Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit', and thus breathed his last and went to the better world. His holy relics were given burial by Christians, and through the ages they give healing to people from every pain and ill.

St Anianus, Second Bishop of Alexandria - When Mark stepped out of the boat on dry land in Alexandria, the sandal on one foot became torn. Then, he saw a cobbler to whom he gave his sandal for repairs. In mending the sandal, the cobbler pierced himself with the needle in his left hand and blood began to flow and the cobbler screamed in pain. Then the apostle of God mixed some dust with his spittle and anointed the wounded hand and suddenly the hand became whole again. Astonished at this miracle, the cobbler invited Mark to his home. Hearing Mark's homily, Anianus [for that was the cobbler's name] was baptized; he and his entire household. Anianus displayed so much virtue and so much zeal for the work of God that St. Mark consecrated him bishop. This holy man was the second bishop of the Church in Alexandria.

Also commemorated on this day: Hieromartyr Stephen, bishop of Antioch (†479); St. Macedonius, patriarch of Constantinople (†516); Venerable Sylvester, abbot of Obnora (†1379); Venerable Basil of Poiana Mărului, Romania (†1767); New Hieromartyr Sergius Rokhletsov, priest, Righteous of Nadezhda (Semenova), confessor (†1938); 'Constantinople' Icon of the Mother of God.

April 26 / May 9 —The Hieromartyr Basil, Bishop of Amasea - Licinius, the brother-in-law of the Emperor Constantine, whose sister he had married, dissembled before the great Emperor, saying that he was a Christian. When he received authority over the whole of the East, he began, at first secretly but then publicly, to persecute the Christians and to uphold idolatry. His wife grieved greatly over this, but could not turn her husband back from this dishonour. Giving himself over to idolatry, Licinius gave himself over to all the passions, and especially to brutality towards women. Through this fall into such an impure passion, he desired to deflower the maiden Glaphyra, who was in waiting at the imperial court. She complained to the Empress, who sent her away from the court at Nicomedia secretly to the coast of Pontus. The maiden got as far as the town of Amasea, and was there warmly received by the bishop, Basil, and the other Christians. Glaphyra was very joyful that God had preserved her virginity, and wrote of this to the Empress. And the Empress rejoiced and sent her money for the Church in Amasea. But one letter of Glaphyra's, on its way to the Empress, fell into the hands of an imperial eunuch, who showed it to Emperor Licinius. Discovering where Glaphyra was to be found, he immediately sent orders that she and the bishop be brought to Nicomedia. In the meantime, Glaphyra died, and the soldiers brought only Basil, in bonds. After torture and imprisonment, this blessed man was beheaded and thrown into the sea, in the year 322. His priests, with the help of an angel of God, found his body near the town of Synope, took it out of the water with the aid of fishing nets and carried it to Amasea, where they gave it burial in the church which he had built by his labours. The Emperor Constantine raised an army against Licinius, overcame him, arrested him and sent him into exile in Gaul, where he ended his God-hating days.

St Stephen, Bishop of Perm - a Russian by birth. From an early age he was devoted to prayer and pious thoughts. As a young man, Stephen went to Rostov where he was tonsured a monk in the monastery of St. Gregory the Theologian. Learning about the Land of Perm, completely overrun with the weeds of heathenism, Stephen desired to become a missionary in this land. He immediately dedicated himself to the studying of the language of the Perms and when he mastered the language, he composed an alphabet and translated the ecclesiastical books into that language. With the blessing of the Metropolitan of Moscow, Stephen, as a presbyter, started out on his apostolic mission and with apostolic zeal began to preach the Gospel in this dense darkness of the heathenism of Perm. Having baptized a few souls, he endeavoured to build a church in Perm dedicated to the Holy Annunciation. When the Church of God flourished in Perm, he was consecrated as its bishop. Undergoing every hardship, affliction, maliciousness and humiliation, he succeeded to dispel the darkness among the heathens of Perm and to illuminate them with the Light of Christ. In his old age he returned to Moscow once more but, there ended his earthly life and took up habitation with the Lord in the year 1396 AD.

Also commemorated on this day: Righteous Virgin Glaphyra (†322); Venerable Richarius of Picardy (†645); Venerable Kalandion of Cyprus (8th C); Venerable George of Cyprus (†c.1091); Venerable Ioannicius of Serbia (13th C); New Hieromartyr John Pankov, priest, and his children Martyrs Nicholas and Peter Pankov (†1918); Venerable Justa. Commemoration of Orthodox soldiers slain on the field of battle. Movable feast on the Saturday of the Fourth Week after Pascha: Synaxis of New Martyrs of Butovo.

† Daily Scripture Readings †

Monday – Epistle: Acts 10:1-16 (§24); Gospel: John 6:56-69 (§24)

Tuesday – Epistle: Acts 10:21-33 (§25); Gospel: John 7:1-13 (§25)

Wednesday – Vespers: for Mid-Pentecost: Micah 4:2-3, 5, 6:1-5, 8; Isa. 55:1-13; Prov. 9:1-11; for the Great Martyr: Isa. 43:9-14; Wisd. 3:1-9; Wisd. 4:7-15; Matins Gospel: Luke 12:2-12 (§63)
Epistle: for Mid-Pentecost: Acts 14:6-18 (§34); for the Great Martyr: Acts 12:1-11 (§29)
Gospel: for Mid-Pentecost: John 7:14-30 (§26); for the Great Martyr: John 15:17-16:2 (§52)

Thursday – Epistle: Acts 10:34-43 (§26); Gospel: John 8:12-20 (§29)

Friday - Epistle: Acts 10:44-11:10 (§27); Gospel: John 8:21-30 (§30)

Saturday – Epistle: Acts 12:1-11 (§29); Gospel: John 8:31-42 (§31)

HOMILY

-About the testimony of reliable witnesses-

"But we have been eyewitnesses of His mighty glory" (2 Peter 1:16).

When the apostles speak about the glorious resurrection of the Lord, they speak in plurality. For each one of them gives his testimony and the testimony of other companions. Thus, the Apostle Peter writes: **"We do not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16).**

Nathaniel did not want to believe only by hearing. That is why the Apostle Philip invited Nathaniel to **"Come and see!" (St. John 1:46)**. Nathaniel came, saw and believed. So it was with the other apostles, until they approached Christ, until they heard, and until they saw, they did not want to believe. Cleverly devised myths did not attract the apostles. Their healthy natural thoughts sought visual facts and not myths.

O my brethren, our Faith is well established and proved. The trail of God is well blazoned in the world. No one has need to doubt. Christ's resurrection is well witnessed. No one need to despair. Doubt and despair are two worms that are born of fly larva of sin. He who does not sin, clearly sees the blazoned trail of God in the world and clearly recognizes the resurrection of Christ.

O resurrected Lord, strengthen us by the power of Your Holy Spirit so that we sin no more and that we do not become blinded to Your trail in the world and to Your glorious resurrection.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.