

# Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles (Pentecost Sunday)

18 / 31 May

**Tropar Of Pentecost, Tone 8:** Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast shown forth the fishermen as supremely wise, by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them, didst draw the world into Thy net. O Lover of mankind, glory be to Thee.

**Kondak Of Pentecost, Tone 8:** Once, when He descended and confounded the tongues, the Most High divided the nations; and when He divided the tongues of fire, He called all men into unity; and with one accord we glorify the All-Holy Spirit.

**Vespers: Num. 11:16-17, 24-29; Joel 2:23-32; Ezek. 36:24-28**

**Matins Gospel St John 20: 19-23**

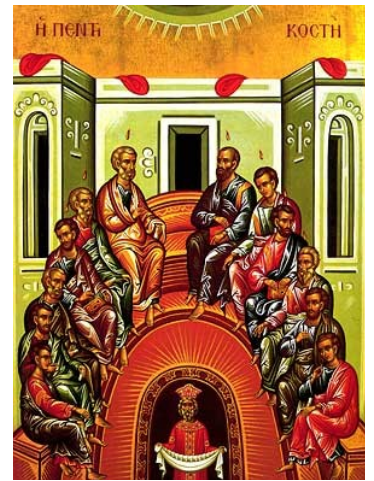
## **EPISTLE - ACTS OF THE APOSTLES - 2: 1-11**

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, people from Crete and Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

### **AND THERE APPEARED TO THEM DIVIDED TONGUES AS OF FIRE... AND THEY WERE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT**

So that by gradual increase ...and progress from glory to glory, the light of the Trinity might shine upon the more illuminated ...for this reason it was, I think, that He gradually came to dwell in the disciples. He measured Himself out to them according to their capacity to receive Him: at the beginning of the gospel, after the Passion, after the Ascension, making perfect their powers, being breathed upon them, and appearing in fiery tongues ...You see lights breaking upon us, gradually, and knowledge of such order of theology, as is better for us to maintain, neither proclaiming things too suddenly nor yet keeping them hidden to the end ...He said that all things should be taught us by the Spirit Himself, made clear at a later time, when such knowledge would be seasonable and capable of being received after our Saviour's restoration; when it would no longer be received with incredulity because of its marvellous character. For what greater thing than this did either He promise, or the Spirit teach ...If He is not to be worshiped, how can He deify me by baptism?... And indeed from the Spirit comes our new birth, and from the new birth our new creation, and from the new creation our deeper knowledge of the dignity of Him from whom it is derived ...Look at these facts: Christ is born; the Spirit is His forerunner. He leads Him up. He works miracles; the Spirit accompanies them. He ascends; the Spirit takes His place.

*St. Gregory of Nazianzus. Fifth Theological Oration, 26, 27, 28, 29. B#7, pp. 210 -211.*



## **GOSPEL - ST. JOHN 7:37-52 & 8:12**

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" So there was a division among the people because of Him. Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him. Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?" The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?" They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee." Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

### **IF ANYONE THIRSTS, LET HIM COME TO ME AND DRINK**

Those who come to the divine preaching and give heed to the faith must manifest the desire of thirsty men for water, and kindle in themselves a similar longing; so they will be able, very carefully, to retain what is said...For to show that men ought ever to thirst and hunger, He said 'Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness' (Matt.5:6) ... Elsewhere He calls it, 'eternal life,' but here, 'living water.' He calls that 'living' which ever works: for the grace of the Spirit, when It has entered into the mind and has been established, springs up more than any fountain, does not fail, never becomes empty ...He has represented its abundance by the expression 'springing' ...Consider the wisdom of Stephen, the tongue of Peter, the vehemence of Paul: how nothing bore, nothing withstood them, not the anger of multitudes, not the risings up of tyrants, not the plots of the devils, not daily deaths, but as rivers borne along with a great rushing sound, so they went on their way hurrying all things with them ...When He was about to send them (after the crucifixion) He said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (c.20:22) ...and then they wrought miracles.

*St. John Chrysostom, Homily LI on John VII, 1. 2. B#58, p. 184.*

O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. Because your loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips ...Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice. My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:1-8).

### **Come, o ye People (Pentecost).**

God is a holy Trinity. A Trinity consubstantial and indivisible. Consubstantial, that is, one essence, one nature. A Trinity indivisible: the Son has never been divided from the Father, nor the Holy Spirit from the Father or the Son, and never will be divided.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three gods, but one God, since They have one nature. But not only because of this. People also have one nature, one essence. But with people one cannot say that two or three persons are one person, no matter how close and amicable they may be. People not only have separate bodies, but each one also has his own will, his own tastes, his own moods. No matter how similar people may be in body and character, it still never happens that everything is in common or that everything is the same.

With the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity everything is in common. The boundless love of the Father for the Son, of the Son for the Father, and the same love between them and the Holy Spirit make Their will and all of Their actions to be common. They have one will, and everything is performed by Them together. Whatever

pleases the Father also pleases the Son and the Holy Spirit. Whatever displeases the Holy Spirit also displeases the Father. Whatever the Son loves, the Father and the Holy Spirit love also.

Everything is accomplished jointly by the Holy Trinity. At the creation of the world it says in the Bible: And God said, Let there be light: and there was light (Gen. 1:3). What does “said” mean? It means that God the Father created by His Word, by that Word of which the Gospel says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1) and which is the Only-begotten Son of God.

God the Father created everything by His Word; in other words, He accomplished everything through His Son. The Father does not create anything without the Son, just as the Son does not create anything without the Father, and the Holy Spirit always assists the Father and the Son. It is said in the Bible about the creation of the world: And the Spirit of God moved over the waters (Gen. 1:2). It “moved” over creation, but did not merely move over it — the word in the Hebrew original, which lacks an exact equivalent in Slavonic, signifies “to cover,” “to warm,” just as a brood-hen sitting on her eggs gives life to them by her warmth, and from them come forth living creatures.

By the Word of the Lord were the heavens established, and all the might of them by the Spirit of His mouth (Ps. 32:6). All that exists was created by God the Father through the Son and was brought to life by the Holy Spirit. In other words, everything the Father wanted or wants, immediately was or is fulfilled by the Son and is animated by the Holy Spirit. Thus was the world created, thus was all accomplished by the providence of God concerning the world and mankind.

In order to save man, who through sin had fallen away from God and became mortal, the Son of God, in accordance with the pre-eternal counsel of the Holy Trinity, obeying the will of the Father, came down to earth, was born of the Ever-Virgin Mary through the action of the Holy Spirit, proclaimed to the people the True God the Father and His Divine will, and taught the true worship of God. Having suffered for our sins, He descended in soul into hades, and, having freed the souls of the dead, He rose from the dead.

Even before His sufferings, Christ promised His Apostles, chosen by Him from among His disciples, to give them the power to loose and to bind — to remit people's sins or to leave them in their sins. After His Resurrection the Lord bestowed this gift of Grace not on any of the Apostles separately, but on all of them together: He established His Church, the repository of that Grace, and united in her all those who believe in Him and love Him.

Having promised His Apostles that He would invest them with power from on high, having sent them the Holy Spirit, and having accomplished all for which He came to earth, the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven, receiving in His humanity that glory and honor which He had as the Son of God since before the creation of the world.

In descending upon the disciples of Christ, according to the promise, the Holy Spirit confirmed them in the faith of Christ and through His Grace poured out upon them the gifts of God. He strengthened them for the preaching and fulfilment in life of Christ's teachings, for the building up of the Church established by Christ and put into action by the Holy Spirit.

The Church, standing on her foundation on earth and headed by the Son of God seated at the right hand of the Father, is mysteriously guided by the Holy Spirit. She inwardly links together all of her children and unites them with God. Through the Church, God's gifts of Grace are poured out on those striving to follow the way of Christ; they sanctify and fortify all good in them, and cleanse them from sin and every defilement, making them able to become receptacles of the radiance of the glory and power of God.

Through the Church man is made a partaker of the Divine nature, and he enters into the closest relationship with the Holy Trinity.

Not only the soul, but also man's body is sanctified and communes with God by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, through which he is united with the entire Holy Trinity. Through Divine Grace, with the participation of his own will and effort, man becomes a new creature, a participant in the eternal Kingdom of God.

Nature, too, is being prepared for the coming Kingdom of God, for the coming purification by fire of the consequences of man's sin and the curse that lies on her. She receives the first fruits of sanctification through the descent of the Holy Spirit on her at Theophany in the blessing of the waters and in many other Church rites, so that she may later become a new earth and a new heaven.

This will be accomplished at the time appointed by God the Father, and the Son of God will come in glory to pronounce judgment on the world.

Then those who have loved God and have been united with Him will shine with the rays of Divine light and will eternally delight in the uncreated light of the Triune Godhead of the Consubstantial, Life-creating, and Indivisible Trinity.

To God, our Creator and Saviour, be glory, honor, and worship unto everlasting ages:

“Come, O ye people, let us worship the Godhead in Three Hypostases: the Son in the Father, with the Holy Spirit; for the Father timelessly begat the Son Who is Co-ever-existing and Coenthroned, and the Holy Spirit was in the Father, glorified together with the Son; One Might, One Essence, One Godhead. In worshipping Whom let us all say: O Holy God, Who madest all things by the Son, through the cooperation of the Holy Spirit; Holy Mighty, through Whom we have known the Father, and through Whom the Holy Spirit came into the world; Holy Immortal, the Comforting Spirit, Who proceedest from the Father, and retest in the Son: O Holy Trinity, glory be to Thee” (Dogmaticon of Great Vespers of Pentecost).

*St. John Maximovitch*

### **Saints of the Week**

#### ***Fast Free Week***

**18 / 31 May — The Holy Martyr Theodotus, and the seven maiden martyrs: Tecusa, Alexandra, Claudia, Favina, Euphrasia, Matrona and Julia.** Theodotus was a married man and an innkeeper in Ancyra in the time of the Emperor Diocletian. Although he was married, he lived according to the words of the Apostle: 'Let them who have wives be as though they had not' (I Cor. 7:29). But he kept the inn on, in order to be able unsuspectingly to help Christians, and his inn was a refuge for persecuted Christians. Theodotus secretly sent help to the Christian refugees in the mountains, and secretly gathered the bodies of those who had been killed, giving them burial. At that time, seven maidens were taken for trial and tortured for Christ. They were tortured, mocked and then thrown into a lake. One of them, St Tecusa, appeared to St Theodotus and told him to take her body out of the lake and bury it. Under cover of night, Theodotus set off with a companion to carry out the martyr's wishes, and, led by an angel of God, succeeded in finding all seven bodies and burying them. But this friend betrayed him to the authorities and the judge put him to harsh torture. Theodotus endured all the tortures as though not in his own body, having his whole mind steeped in God. When the torturers had made his body one great wound and broken his teeth with stones, it was ordered that he be beheaded. When he was taken to the scaffold, many Christians wept for him, but St Theodotus said to them: 'Don't weep for me, my brethren, but glorify our Lord Jesus Christ, by whose aid I am finishing my course and overcoming the enemy.' Saying this, he laid his head on the block under the sword and was beheaded, in the year 303. A priest buried the martyr's body on a hill outside the city and a church dedicated to St Theodotus was later built on the site.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Martyrs Peter, Denise (Dionysia), and with them Andrew, Paul, and Christina of Lampsacus (†c250); Martyrs Heraclius, Paulinus, and Benedimus of Athens (†c.250); Martyr Euphrasia of Nicæa (†c.303); Martyrs Simeon, Isaac and Bachtisius in Persia (†339); Hieromartyr Potamon, bishop of Heraclea (†341); Martyrs David and Tarichan in Georgia (†693); Venerable Macarius of Altai (†1847); Righteous John Gashkevich of Korma, priest (†1917); New Hieromartyr Michael Vinogradov, priest, confessor (†1932); New Hieromartyr Damian Strbac of Grahovo, priest (†1941); New Hieromartyr Basil Krylov, priest (†1942); Holy Fathers of the Seven Ecumenical Councils; 'Pskov Caves' Icon of the Mother of God.

**19 May / 1 June — Day of the Holy Spirit - The Hieromartyr Patrick, Bishop of Brussa with three priests: Acacius, Menander and Polyenus** - they suffered for the Christian faith in the time of Julian the Apostate in Asian Brussa. The imperial governor, Junius, brought Patrick to a hot water spring and asked him: 'Who created this healing water, if not our gods, Aesculapius and the others, whom we worship?' St Patrick answered: 'Your gods are demons; and this water, like all other water, was created by Christ, our Lord and God.' Then the governor asked: 'And will this Christ of yours save you if I throw you into this boiling water?' The saint replied: 'If He wills, He can keep me whole and uninjured, although I would wish, in this water, to be parted from this temporal life, that I may live eternally with Christ; but let His holy will be done, without which not a hair of a man's head can fall.' Hearing this, the governor ordered that Patrick be thrown into the water. The boiling drops fell on all sides, and scalded many of the onlookers, but the saint remained untouched, as though he were standing in cold water. Seeing this, the governor was wild with shame and commanded that Patrick and three of his priests be beheaded with axes. So these goodly followers of Christ said their prayers and laid their heads under the executioner's axe. When they had been beheaded, their souls were taken merrily to Christ's Kingdom of light, to reign eternally.

**St. Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury (988)** - nephew of the Archbishop of Canterbury, spent a privileged youth at the court of King Athelstan and eventually became abbot of Glastonbury. English monastic life had almost totally disappeared as a result of the Viking invasions. Dunstan set about vigorously reviving it. He founded monasteries at Bath, Exeter, Malmesbury, and elsewhere, drawing up new rules for their good order. He installed monks in Winchester, in Chertsey, Surrey, and Milton Abbas, Dorset and restored the old abbey of Abingdon. After a period of exile King Edgar recalled him to be Archbishop of Canterbury in the year 960. There he founded an abbey to the east of the city, along with three churches dedicated to St Mary, Saints Peter and Paul, and St Pancras. As a skilled metalworker, scribe and bell-founder himself, he stimulated the revival of church art and illuminated manuscripts. He also loved to play the harp and wrote several fine hymns.

**Venerable Cornelius, abbot of Komel** - The Monk Kornilli of Komel'sk was descended from the boyar (noble) family Kriukov. His brother Lukian served at the court of the Moscow Great Prince. When Lukian, getting up in years, decided to set off to the monastery of the Monk Kirill of Beloezersk, there also followed after him Kornilii, who from a young age yearned after the solitary life. Having taken vows, the young Kornilii began his monastic exploits with a difficult obedience – he wore heavy chains in the bakery, and in his spare time of rest he occupied himself with the copying of church books. Because of his love for solitude, the Monk Kornilii later left the Beloezersk monastery, and he visited Rostov. At Novgorod Sainted Gennadii (Comm. 4 December) attempted to hold on to him, but the ascetic settled in a desolate spot not far from Novgorod. When people began to visit here also, yearning for the monastic life, he moved on to the Tver' Savvatiev wilderness monastery, and later in the year 1497, he settled in the Komel'sk forest, not far from Vologda, where he built himself a cell. To this place of the ascetic activity of the Monk Kornilii monks began to gather, and in 1501 he built a wooden church there in honour of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Mother of God. And in that year Metropolitan Simon ordained him priest-monk. In 1512, when the number of brethren had grown, the monk constructed a stone church and he wrote down for the brethren an Ustav (Rule), compiled on the basis of the Ustavs of the Monks Joseph of Volotsk and Nil of Sorsk. This was the third Ustav, written by Russian saints for monastics. The Monk Kornilii of Komel'sk distinguished himself with liberality towards the unfortunate, and during a time of famine he constructed an orphanage for children on the monastery courtyard. For his love towards the poor and orphaned, the Monk Kornilii was many times granted graced vision of the Monk Anthony the Great (Comm. 17 January), for whom he had a especial reverence, and he raised up a church at his monastery in honour of the great ascetic. The strictness of life of the saint provoked some of the brethren to grumbling, and the Monk Kornilii was compelled to leave the monastery and he settled at Lake Sursk, 70 versts from his monastery. At times also he pursued asceticism at the Trinity-Sergiev Lavra. Interceding for the monks of the Korniliev monastery, Great Prince Vasilii Ivanovich urged the monk to return to his own monastery. The ascetic gave in, and having returned to his own monastery, he transferred its guidance to his disciple Lavrentii and secluded himself in his cell.

During the time of a Tatar incursion against the Vologda region the Monk Kornilii, in protecting the brethren, set out with them to the Beloezersk outskirts. The monk died at age 82 on 19 May 1537. Many disciples of the Monk Kornilii were also glorified by sanctity of life: the Monks Gennadii of Liubimograd (Comm. 23 January), Kirill of Novoezersk (Comm. 4 February), Irodion of Iloezersk (Comm. 28 September), Adrian of Poshekhonsk (Comm. 5 March), Lavrentii and Kassian of Komel'sk (Comm. 16 May).

The all-church celebration to the Monk Kornilii (19 May) was established on 25 January 1600 by Patriarch Job and a council of bishops. The Life of the Monk was compiled by his disciple Nathanael in the year 1589. There exists a service and a praise to the Saint, and the Ustav written by the Monk Kornilii has been preserved.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Martyr Parthenius of Rome (†250); Martyr Acoluthus of Egypt (†303); Martyr Theotima of Nicomedia (†311); Venerable John, bishop of Gothia (†790); Right-believing prince Vladimir Monomakh (†1125); Monk-martyrs of Kantara: John, Conon, Jeremiah, Cyril, Theoctistus, Barnabas, Maximus, Theognostus, Joseph, Gennadius, Gerasimus, Mark, and Germanus (†1234); Holy Right-believing Great Prince Demetrius Donskoy of Moscow (†1389), and his wife Eudocia, Euphemia in monasticism (†1407); Venerable Cornelius of Paleostrov (†c.1420); Holy Right-believing John (Ignatius in monasticism), prince of Uglich (†1522); Venerable Sergius of Shukhtom (†1609); New Hieromartyr Matthew Voznesensky (†1919); Hieromartyr Victor Karakulin (†1937); New Hieromartyrs Onuphrius, archbishop of Kursk and Oboysk, and Anthony, bishop of Belgorod, Alexander Yeroshov, Alexander Saulsky, Basil Ivanov, George Bogovlensky, Hippolytus Krasnovsky, Maxim Bogdanov, Mitrophan Vilgelmsky, Michael Deineka, Nicholas Kulakov, Nicholas Sadovsky, Paul Bryantsev, and Paul Popov, priests, and Martyr Michael Voznesensky (†1938); New Monk-martyr Valentine (Lukyanov) (†1940); Synaxis of the Hieromartyrs of Kharkov; Synaxis of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Belgorod. Movable feast on the Day of the Holy Spirit: 'Rudoselskaya' Icon of the Mother of God.

**20 May / 2 June — The Holy Martyr Thaleleus** - born in Lebanon, his father's name being Berucius and his mother's Romylia, he was an eighteen-year-old youth, handsome and well-grown and with ginger hair. A doctor by profession, he suffered for Christ in the reign of Numerian. When he courageously confessed his faith in Christ the Lord before the judge, the latter commanded the two executioners, Alexander and Asterius, to bore through his knees, pass a rope through the pierced bone and hang him from a tree. But the executioners, as though the unseen power of God had deprived them of sight, bored through a plank and hung it on the tree. When the judge discovered this, he thought that the executioners had done it deliberately, and ordered that they be flogged. Then Alexander and Asterius cried out under the flogging: 'The Lord is alive to us; from now on, we are become Christians. We believe in Christ, and suffer for Him.' Hearing this, the judge ordered that they be beheaded. Then the judge took the awl, to bore through Thaleleus's knees himself, but his hand was paralysed and he had to ask Thaleleus to heal him, which the kindly martyr, with Christ's aid, did by his prayers. Then he was thrown into water, but showed himself alive to the judge (for Thaleleus was praying within himself that God would not have him die at once, but would let his tortures continue). When he was thrown to the wild beasts, they licked his feet and rubbed tamely round him. He was finally beheaded and entered into eternal life in 284.

**The Holy Martyr Asclas** - Asclas suffered in the town of Antinoe in Egypt during the reign of Diocletian. He was flogged, scraped, burned with candles but he remained unwavering in the Faith to the end. When the tormentor Arrian was crossing the Nile by boat Asclas, through prayer, stopped the boat in the middle of the river and would not allow it to move until Arrian wrote that he believes in Christ as the One and Almighty God. But, ascribing this miracle to a magical skill of Asclas, the tormentor forgot what he wrote and continued to torment the man of God. Finally, they tied a stone around his neck and tossed him into the Nile river. On the third day Christians found the body of Asclas along the shore with the stone around his neck (as the martyr foretold them before his death) and honourably buried him in the year 287 A.D. Leonides, the holy martyr, also suffered with him. Arrian, their tormentor, later repented, believed in Christ with his whole heart and openly began to express his faith before the pagans. The pagans also killed him and so Arrian, a one-time tormentor of Christians, was made worthy of the martyr's wreath for Christ.

**The Uncovering of the relics of St. Alexei, Metropolitan of Moscow and all Russia** - The Uncovering of the Relics of Sainted Alexei, Metropolitan of Moscow and All Rus': Before his blessed end in 1378 Saint Alexei, Metropolitan of Moscow, gave final instructions to place his body in the Chudov monastery at the Kremlin and directed the place of burial outside the altar of the church, not wishing in his humility, to be buried in the temple. But the pious Great Prince Dimitrii Ivanovich Donskoy (1363-1389), deeply esteeming the great Hierarchy, gave orders to place the body of Metropolitan Alexei inside the church, near the altar.

On 20 May 1431 the stairway of the temple, at which the saint rested, crumbled from old age. During the time of construction of a new temple, the undecayed remains of Saint Alexei were uncovered. At a Sobor-Council of Russian hierarchs celebration of Metropolitan Alexei was established on the day of his repose, 12 February, and on the day of the uncovering of his relics, 20 May. In 1485 the relics of the saint were transferred into a church

consecrated in his name. At present they rest at the Patriarchal Theophany cathedral in Moscow. The account about Saint Alexei is located under 12 February.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Venerable Zabulon and Susanna, parents of St. Nina, Equal-to-the-Apostles (3rd-4th C); Martyr Ethelbert, king of East Anglia (†794); Venerable Nicetas, John, and Joseph of hios (†c.1050); St. Dovmont (Timothy in baptism), prince of Pskov (†1299); Venerable Stephen of Piperi (Serbia) (†1697); Venerable Olympiada (Verbetska), abbess of Kozelschansk convent (†1938).

**21 May / 3 June — The Holy Emperor Constantine and the Empress Helena** - Constantine's parents were the Emperor Constantius Chlorus and the Empress Helena. Chlorus had further children by another wife, but by Helena he had only the one, Constantine. Constantine fought two great battles when he came to the throne: one against Maxentius, a tyrant in Rome, and the other against Licinius not far from Byzantium. At the battle against Maxentius, when Constantine was in great anxiety and uncertainty about his chances of success, a shining cross, surrounded by stars, appeared to him in the sky in full daylight. On the cross were written the words: 'In this sign, conquer!' The wondering Emperor ordered that a great cross be put together, like the one that had appeared, and be carried before the army. By the power of the Cross, he gained a glorious victory over enemies greatly superior in number. Maxentius drowned himself in the Tiber. Immediately after this, Constantine issued the famous Edict of Milan, in 313, to put an end to the persecution of Christians. Conquering Byzantium, he built a beautiful capital city on the Bosphorus, which from that time was named Constantinople. At this time, Constantine fell ill with leprosy. The pagan priests and doctors advised him to bathe in the blood of slaughtered children, which he refused to do. Then the Apostles Peter and Paul appeared to him and told him to seek out a bishop, Sylvester, who would heal him of the disease. The bishop instructed him in the Christian faith and baptised him, and the leprosy vanished from the Emperor's body. When there was discord in the Church about the troublesome heretic Arius, the Emperor summoned the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, in 325, where the heresy was condemned and Orthodoxy confirmed. St Helena, the Emperor's devout mother, was very zealous for the Christian faith. She visited Jerusalem and found the Precious Cross of the Lord, and built the Church of the Resurrection over Golgotha and many other churches in the Holy Land. This holy woman went to the Lord in 327, at the age of eighty. The Emperor Constantine outlived his mother by ten years and entered into rest at the age of about sixty in 337, in the city of Nicomedia. His body was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople.

**St Constantine, Wonderworker of Murom** - The Blessed Holy Princes Konstantin (Constantine) and his sons Michael and Theodore (Feodor) of Murom lived during the XI-XII Centuries. Blessed Prince Konstantin, a descendant of Equal-to-the-Apostles Vladimir, besought of his father, prince Svyatoslav of Chernigov, to give him as his appenage-holding the city of Murom, which was inhabited by pagans, so as to enlighten this land with the light of the Christian faith. The prince sent his son Michael in the capacity of emissary to the Muromsk people, but the pagans murdered him. When prince Konstantin arrived in the city with his retinue, the people quieted down and accepted him, but for a long time they would not consent to give up their paganism. One time they made their way down to the dwelling of the prince, with the intent to kill him, but the prince intrepidly came out to the crowd with the Icon of the Murom Mother of God. The mutinous people unexpectedly quieted down and consented to accept holy Baptism, which was made over them at the River Oka. At the place of the murder of his son Michael, Saint Konstantin built a church in honour of the Annunciation, and later on another church in the name of the holy Passion-Bearers Boris and Gleb. In the propagation of the Christian faith amongst the Muromsk people, prince Konstantin zealously assisted his son, prince Theodore. In 1129 Saint Konstantin died and was buried in the church of the Annunciation alongside his sons, Blessed Michael and Theodore.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Hieromartyr Secundus, priest, and those with him in Alexandria (†356); Venerable Hospitius of Nice (†581); St. Cyril, bishop of Rostov (†1262); Venerable Helen (Jelena) of Decani, (†c1350); Venerable Cassian the Greek of Uglich, wonderworker (†1504); Monk-martyr Agapitus of Markushev (†1584); Martyr Pachomius of Mt. Athos (†1730); Venerable Moses of Ufa (†1982); Finding of the relics of Blessed Andrew of Simbirsk, fool-for-Christ (1998); Synaxis of the saints of Ufa; Synaxis of the saints of Karelia; Synaxis of the saints of Simbirsk; † Meeting of the 'Vladimir' Icon of the Mother of God; 'Oransk-Vladimir' Icon of the Mother of God.

**22 May / 4 June — The Holy Martyr Basiliscus** - a kinsman of St Theodore the Tyro, he was martyred together with Eutropius and Cleonimus (March 3rd). When these two were crucified and gave up the ghost, Basiliscus was taken back to prison. A change of governors occurring at this time, Basiliscus remained a long time confined in prison. He besought God with tears that He would not deprive him of a martyr's death for His sake. After he had prayed at length, the Lord Jesus appeared to him and promised to fulfil his desire, sending him to his village to say farewell to his mother and brothers. Thereupon the new governor, Agrippa, arrived and sent to have Basiliscus brought from the village immediately. On the way to the city of Amasea, the Lord worked great wonders through His martyr, bringing many of the people to faith in Christ. Agrippa ordered the martyr to offer sacrifice to Apollyon. "Apollyon" means "Destroyer", said Basiliscus, and, with fervent prayer, he knocked the idol to dust and burned the temple with fire from heaven. The terrified Agrippa attributed this all to magic, and ordered that Basiliscus be beheaded with the sword. Agrippa immediately became insane and, in his madness, went to the place of execution, found a little of the martyr's blood in the dust and smeared it on himself under his belt, being restored to health by it. Having come to his senses, he was baptised. Later, a certain Marinus, a citizen of Comana (the place of Basiliscus's execution) built a church over the martyr's relics, and many of the sick found healing there.

**The Holy Martyr John Vladimir, King of Serbia** - John Vladimir was of princely lineage from Zahumlje. His grandfather was called Hvalimir and his father Petrislav. As a ruler, he was wise, merciful, meek, chaste and brave. He fervently prayed to God and voluntarily built churches and supported them. However, he had difficult struggles both internally and externally. Internally, from heretics and the Bogomils and externally from Tsar Samuel and Tsar Basil who wanted to conquer him. Samuel deceitfully captured him and cast him into prison. While he languished in prison an angel of God appeared to him and foretold that he would shortly be freed, but that he would die a martyr's death. Getting to know him better, Samuel grew to like him and gave his daughter Kosara to be his wife. When Samuel died, his son Radomir was crowned Tsar. But Vladislav, his twin brother, slew Radomir and deceitfully summoned Vladimir and beheaded him in the year 1015 A.D. The relics of this saintly king repose uncorrupt in his monastery near Elbasan and over his relics, throughout the ages and even today, numerous miracles occur. In 1925, a church was built to honor this crowned martyr adjacent to the monastery of St. Nahum since John Vladimir was the benefactor of this glorious monastery.

**The Second Ecumenical Council** - This Council was called during the reign of Emperor Theodosius the Great in Constantinople in the year 381 A.D. Its goal was to confirm the Orthodox teaching concerning the Holy Spirit about Whom the Patriarch Macedonius of Constantinople erroneously taught. He erroneously taught that the Holy Spirit is God's creature and not a divine person [Hypostasis] equal to the Father and Son and One in essence with Them in the Holy Trinity. Macedonius was condemned by this Council and the teaching about the Holy Spirit was added to the Nicaean Symbol of Faith [the Nicene Creed].

**Holy and Righteous Melchisedek, King of Salem** - Melchisedek was a contemporary of our forefather Abraham. According to the words of the Apostle Paul he was a king, priest and proto-type of the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 7).

**Also commemorated on this day:** Hieromartyrs Donatus, bishop of Thmuis, Macarius, priest, and Theodore, deacon (†c.316); Virgin-martyr Quiteria (†476); Righteous James of Borovichi (†c.1540); Hieromartyr Zachariah of Prusa (†1802); Monk-martyr Paul at Tripolis, Peloponnesus (†1818); New Hieromartyr Maximus, bishop of Serpukhov (†1931); New Hieromartyr Michael Borisov, priest (†1942); Finding of the relics of Blessed Paul of Taganrog (1998). Martyrs Markella, Codratus, and Sophia the Healer; 'Tenderness' or 'Umilenie' Icon of the Mother of God. Movable feast on Pentecost Thursday: Icon of the Mother of God "Surety of Sinners" in Korets.

**23 May / 5 June — St Michael, Bishop of Synnada** - from his childhood, this wise and holy hierarch consecrated himself to the service of Christ. He laboured in asceticism together with Saint Theophylact of Nicomedia. Once, in a time of drought, these two holy men caused an abundance of rain to fall on the earth by their prayers. Because of the life of asceticism and chastity that Michael had led from his early youth, he was chosen and consecrated by Patriarch Tarasius as Bishop of Synnada. He took part in the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787. At the wish of the Emperor, he visited Caliph Harun al-Rashid to conduct peace negotiations. In the time of the wicked Emperor Leo the Armenian, he was deposed from his episcopal throne for his veneration of the holy icons and sent into exile, where he died in want and poverty, faithful to Orthodoxy to the end. He entered into the Kingdom of Christ the King in 818.

**Our Holy Father, the Martyr Michael** - After the death of his parents, Michael distributed all of his goods to the poor and went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Following that, he entered the monastery of St. Sabas the Sanctified where he was tonsured a monk. Michael was quite young and of a handsome countenance but, from much fasting, he appeared withered and pale. At that time, the Arabs ruled Jerusalem. One day Michael was sent by his spiritual father to the city to sell his handiworks. He was met on the streets by the eunuch of the Arabian queen who brought him to her to display his handiworks. When the queen saw this handsome monk she became inflamed with unclean passion and proposed carnal sin to the monk as once did the wife of Potiphar to the chaste Joseph. When Michael rejected the impure offer and began to flee, the angry queen ordered that he be beaten with canes and after that brought him to the king with the charge that he blasphemed the faith of Muhammad. The king proposed that Michael embrace the Islamic faith, but he refused. He was then given a potent poison to drink. Michael drank the poison but nothing happened to him. Then the king ordered Michael to be beheaded in the centre of Jerusalem. Monks discovered his body and removed it to the monastery of St. Sabas where they honourably buried him. St. Michael suffered for Christ and was glorified in the ninth century;

**Our Holy Mother Euphrosyne, Princess of Polotsk** - the daughter of Prince Vseslav of Polotsk. When her parents wanted to betroth her, she fled to a convent and was tonsured a nun. An angel of the Lord appeared to her three times and revealed to her where she must establish a new convent for virgins. She even attracted her sister Eudocia to the monastic life and many other maidens from the ranks of the aristocracy. Her cousin, Zvenislava, by birth Princess Borisov, brought all of her riches, clothes and precious stones and said: "All the beauty of this world, I consider vanity and these adornments prepared for my marriage, I give to the Church of the Savior and I, myself, wish to be betrothed to Him in a spiritual marriage and place my head beneath His good and easy yoke." Euphrosyne also tonsured her a nun and gave her the name Eupraxia. In her old age, Euphrosyne desired to die in Jerusalem and for that she prayed to God. God heard her prayers and, indeed, when she visited Jerusalem she died there. Euphrosyne was buried in the monastery of St. Theodosius on May 23, 1173 A.D.

**The Third Finding of the Head of St John the Baptist** - in the eighth century, during a period of fierce iconoclasm, the head of St John the Baptist was taken to Comana, the place of St John Chrysostom's exile. When the iconoclast persecution ended in 850, in the time of the Emperor Michael and Patriarch Ignatius, the honoured head of St John was taken to Constantinople and placed in the church at the imperial court.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Holy Myrrh-bearer Mary, the wife of Cleopas (1st C); St. Synesius, bishop of Karpasia (5th C); Venerable Damian of Gareji, Georgia (†1157); Finding of the relics of St. Leontius, bishop of Rostov (1164); Venerable Paisius of Galich (†1460); Finding of the relics of martyrs Evdokia Sheykovoy, Daria Timaginoy, Daria Ulybin, and Mary Neizvestnaya (2001); Martyr Salonas the Roman; Synaxis of the saints of Rostov-Yaroslavl.

**24 May / 6 June — Our Holy Father Simeon Stylites of the Wonderful Mountain** - This wonderful and holy man was born in Antioch in 522, in the reign of the Emperor Justin I the Elder. His father perished in an earthquake and he was left alone with his mother, Martha. When he was six years old, he went away into the desert to John, a spiritual teacher there and, under his guidance, gave himself to a strict asceticism of fasting and prayer, to the wonderment of all who saw him. Whilst enduring fearful demonic trials, he received great comfort and grace from the Lord and His angels. Christ the Lord appeared to him in the form of a handsome youth, and, after this vision, Simeon's heart was inflamed with great love for Christ. He spent many years on a pillar, praying and singing psalms. Led by God, he took himself off to the mountain called 'Wonderful' by the Lord Himself, and is known as 'of the Wonderful Mountain' because of this. The measure of his love for God was such that rare grace was given him, by the help of which he was able to heal every sort of illness, tame wild beasts and perceive the most distant regions of the earth and the hearts of men. He was taken out of the body and saw the heavens, conversed with angels, harried the demons, prophesied, spent thirty days at a time without sleep and even longer without food, receiving nourishment at the hands of angels. The words of the Saviour: 'He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do'(Jn 14:12), were completely fulfilled in him. In the year 596, at the age of seventy-five, Simeon went to the Lord, to the eternal enjoyment of the vision of the face of God in the company of the angels.

**The Holy Martyr Meletius Stratelates along with 1218 Soldiers and their wives and children** - Meletius was accused of demolishing a pagan temple during the reign of Emperor Antoninus. Nailed to a tree, Meletius gave up his holy soul. Many soldiers under his the command, who refused to deny Christ their Lord, suffered with him. They all honourably suffered in the eleventh century and took up habitation in the kingdom of Christ the God.

**Our Holy Father Nikita Stylites** - As a youth, Nicetas lived an unrestrained and sinful life. Entering into church by chance, he heard the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "*Wash yourselves (from sin) and you will be clean*" ([Isaiah 1:16](#)). These words entered deeply into his heart and caused a complete turnabout in his life. Nicetas left his home, wife, property and entered a monastery near Pereyaslavl, where he lived an ascetical life of difficult mortifications until his death. He wrapped chains around himself and enclosed himself in a pillar for which reason he was called a Stylite. God endowed him with abundant grace so that he healed men of various tribulations. He cured Prince Michael Chernigov of palsy. Certain evil doers spotted the chains on him and, because of their brightness, thought they were made of silver. They killed him one night, removed the chains and carried them away. This occurred on May 16, 1186 A.D. After his death, he appeared to the Elder Simeon and ordered that his discovered chains be placed next to his body in the tombs.

**St. Vincent of Lerins** - + c 445. Perhaps of a noble family in Gaul, in early life he followed a military career but abandoned it to become a monk at Lérins in southern France. He is best known as the writer of the *Commonitorium*, where he formulates the Orthodox principle that the only true teachings are those which have been held 'everywhere, always and by all the faithful' (*Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus*). It is the Church which interprets the Scriptures and is the source of the Faith.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Martyrs Serapion the Egyptian, Callinicus the Magician, Theodore and Faustus (†c.218); Venerable Martha, abbess of Monemvasia and three nuns with her (†990); Translation of the relics of St. George of the Holy Mountain (1067); Venerable Gregory, archbishop of Novgorod (†1193).

### † Daily Scripture Readings †

**Monday** – Epistle: Eph. 5:8-19 (\$229); Gospel: Matt. 18:10-20 (\$75)

**Tuesday** – Epistle: Rom. 1:17-7, 13-17 (\$79); Gospel: Matt. 4:25-5:13 (\$10)

**Wednesday** – Epistle: Rom. 1:18-27 (\$80); Gospel: Matt. 5:20-26 (\$12)

**Thursday** – Epistle: Rom. 1:28-2:9 (\$81); Gospel: Matt. 5:27-32 (\$13)

**Friday** - Epistle: Rom. 2:14-29 (\$82); Gospel: Matt. 5:33-41 (\$14)

**Saturday** –Epistle: Rom. 1:7-12 (\$79 mid); Gospel: Matt. 5:42-48 (\$15)

### SYNAXARION READING

On this day, the Monday of Pentecost, we celebrate the all-holy and LifeCreating and Omnipotent Spirit, Who as God, and one of the Holy Trinity, and of one Honor, and one Essence, and one Glory, with Father and the Son.

**Verse:** O every breath, glorify the Spirit of the Lord.

**Verse:** Through Whom the impudence of evil spirits is put to flight.

On this day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Holy Apostles concretely in the form of fiery tongues, sitting upon each of them in the upper room in which they were staying. In honor of the Holy Spirit, the Divine Fathers, who have arranged all things well, decreed that we celebrate this event

both separately and on the actual day of Pentecost. For, before His Passion, the Savior promised the coming of the Holy Spirit, saying; It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; (St. John 16:7). And again: “When He cometh, He will teach you and will guide you into all truth” (St. John 14:26; 16:13). And again: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall send you another Comforter, the Spirit of truth, Who proceedeth from the Father” (John 14:16; 15:26). And again, after the Passion, when He was ascending to Heaven, He said: “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (St. Luke 24:49). Therefore, having made these promises, He sent the Holy Spirit when the day of Pentecost came, while the Disciples were waiting in the upper room around the third hour of the day, it suddenly thundered from heaven, to such an extent that it resounded throughout the inhabited earth; and the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of fiery tongues to each one of them, and not only to the Twelve, but also to the Seventy, and they spoke in foreign tongues, that is, each of the Apostles spoke the languages of all the nations. However, it was not so much that a foreigner heard an Apostle speaking his own language, but rather, that the Apostle heard and spoke the language of each nation; hence, to those who had gathered they appeared to be drunk; for, not understanding how each Apostle could be conversing with them all individually, they supposed that he was drunk. Others were amazed, saying: “What is the meaning of this? These latter had assembled from all parts of the earth for the Feast; Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, who had some time previously been taken captive by Antiochos.” The Holy Spirit descended after the Ascension, ten days having elapsed, and not immediately after the Ascension, so that the Lord might make the Disciples more fervent as they awaited the Spirit. Some say that on each of these days each of the Angelic Orders approached and adored that deified flesh of the Lord. Therefore, after nine days were fulfilled, the Holy Spirit descended, when reconciliation had taken place through the Son, fifty days after Pascha, in commemoration of the old Law; for, Israel received the Decalogue fifty days after crossing the Red Sea. Consider also the symbols: there a mountain, here the upper room; there fire, here tongues of fire; instead of thunder and darkness, here there is a mighty wind. The Holy Spirit descended in the form of tongues, because this shows His affinity with the living Word; or because the Apostles were going to teach and convert the nations through the tongue; tongues of fire, because God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29), and also because fire has the property of cleansing; they were divided because of the different gifts of the Spirit. And just as at one time He divided into many languages and confounded those who

knew one language, so also now He divided into many languages those who knew one language, in order to gather together those who were scattered by those languages into the ends of the inhabited earth. The descent of the Spirit took place on the Feast in order that, with many people gathered together, the event might be recounted everywhere, and in order that those who happened to be there at the Passover and who saw what happened to Christ might be able to marvel. It occurred on Pentecost, because it was necessary that the Grace of the Spirit be poured out at the same time that the Law was given of old, just as Christ did on the Judaic Passover when He celebrated the proper Passover, the true Passover. The Holy Spirit did not sit in the mouths of the Apostles, but upon their heads, encompassing the nous itself, the principal part of the soul, and one which is superior to the body, from which the tongue derives the power of speech; or because the Spirit somehow emitted a sound through the tongues of fire when He Ordained the Apostles by touching their heads to be teachers of the entire world; for the laying on of hands is performed upon the head. The sound and the fire were manifested because these things occurred on Mount Sinai, so as to show that it was the same Spirit both then and now that gave the Law and appointed all things. The multitude was confounded by the sound of the wind, because they thought that all the predictions which Christ had made to the Jews about their destruction had come to pass. St. Luke said “tongues as of fire” (Acts 2:3), lest anyone should think about the Holy Spirit in corporeal terms. The Apostles were condemned for drunkenness. But Peter stood up and spoke in the midst of the crowd and exposed the falsity of this claim, citing the prophecy of Joel in his speech, and he converted about three thousand of them (Acts 2:41). The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter, since He is able to comfort and refresh us, and because in His love for mankind He intercedes before God for us with unutterable sounds (Romans 8:26), as our Advocate, just as Christ also does. For He, too, is called a Comforter or Advocate; for this reason, the Holy Spirit is said to be another Comforter. The Apostle says: “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous” (I St. John 2:1). The Holy Spirit is called “another” Comforter because He is co-essential with the Father and the Son; for the adjective “another “ (in the masculine gender) is applied to things of the same essence and nature, whereas we are accustomed to apply different (in the neuter gender) to different natures. The Holy Spirit is in both the Father and the Son in every respect. Hence, together with Them He creates the universe and the future resurrection, and He does whatsoever He wills; He sanctifies, appoints, renews, sends out, makes wise, and anoints the Prophets. To put it simply, He does all

things, possessing sovereignty of will and being almighty, good, upright, and governing. Through Him come all wisdom, life, and movement, whatever participates in holiness and life of any kind; in short, He has whatever the Father and the Son have, except for non-generation and generation, for He proceeds from the Father. When the Spirit was poured out upon all flesh, the world was filled with spiritual gifts of every kind, and through Him all the nations were guided to the knowledge of God, and every disease and infirmity was banished. Three times was the Holy Spirit given by Christ to the Apostles: before the Passion very indistinctly; more manifestly after the Resurrection, through insufflations; and now Christ sent Him down in concrete form; or rather, He descended, illuminating and sanctifying the Apostles more perfectly; and through them He reclaims the ends of the earth.

By the visitation of the Holy Spirit and the intercessions of the Apostles, O  
Christ God, have mercy on us. Amen.