Sunday of the
Publican and the Pharisee

19 January / 1 February

Lenten Triodion Begins

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

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 1: When the stone had been sealed by the Jews; / while the soldiers were guarding Thy Most Pure Body; / Thou didst rise on the third day, O Saviour, / granting life to the world. / The Powers of Heaven therefore cried to Thee O Giver of Life: / glory to Thy Resurrection O Christ! / Glory to Thy Kingdom; / Glory to Thy Dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 1: As God, Thou didst rise from the tomb in glory, / Raising the world with Thyself. / Human nature praises Thee as God, for death has vanished. / Adam exults O Master, Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage, and cries to Thee; / Thou art the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ.

Kondak for the Publican and the Pharisee, Tone 4: Let us flee the bragging of the Pharisee, and learn the humility of the Publican, while crying out unto the Saviour with groanings: Be gracious unto us, O Thou Who alone dost readily forgive.

Vespers

Lord I have Cried, Tone 1, on 10: Octoechos 7; Triodion 3 (Brethren, let us not pray as the Pharisee); G: Triodion (Almighty Lord); Sunday Dogmatic Tone 1. Aposticha: Octoechos, G: Triodion (Mine eyes are weighed down), N: Theotokion in the Triodion (Thou art the temple and portal).

Matins Gospel I

After the Matins Gospel **Publican and the Pharisee, Troparion, Tone VIII** — Open to me the doors of repentance, O Life-giver. For my spirit rises early to pray towards Thy holy temple, bearing the temple of my body all defiled. But in Thy compassion, purify me by the loving kindness of Thy mercy.

Theotokion: Make straight for me the paths of salvation, O Mother of God. For I have profaned my soul with shameful sins, and have wasted my whole life in easy-going indifference. But by thy intercessions deliver me from all uncleanness.

Tone VI — Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of Thy compassions, blot out my transgression. When I think of the multitude of ghastly things I have done, wretch that I am, I tremble at the fearful day of Judgment. But trusting in the mercy of Thy loving kindness; like David I cry to Thee: Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy.

(Note: These penitential songs are sung on Sundays during the Great Fast from the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee to the fifth week.)

Epistle: II Timothy 3: 10-15

10 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

ALL WHO DESIRE TO LIVE GODLY IN JESUS CHRIST WILL SUFFER PERSECUTION

True faith will be persecuted in this world. The Saviour Himself said this to His apostles clearly and publicly (Jn. 16:32). And St. Apollinarius of Hierapolis, writing against the Montanist heretics, asserts: 'Let them tell us, before God, who of all their prophets, beginning with Montanus and his wives, has been persecuted by the Jews and killed by the ungodly. No-one. Who among them has been arrested for the name of Christ, and crucified? Again, no-one ...Heresies are usually closer to the worldly and demonic spirit, and therefore the world and the demons do not persecute their own. To be constantly under persecution, with short breathing-spaces, is a distinguishing mark of the Faith and of the Orthodox Church. This persecution has existed throughout the whole of history, whether externally or internally; externally from unbelievers and internally from heretics.

The Lord Jesus both foretold this and showed it by His own example. And the apostles said it, and showed it by their own example. And all the God-bearing Fathers of the Church, and confessors and martyrs, said this, and showed it by their own example. Can we have any further doubt that it is by the narrow gate that one enters into the Kingdom of God? No; in this there is no foundation or justification for doubt. Can sheep live among wolves and not be molested by them? Can a candle burn among cross-draughts and not be bent to and fro? Can a fruit-tree grow on a high road and be left alone by passers-by? And so, can the Church of devout souls not be persecuted again and again - by pagans, by idol-worshippers, by heretics, by schismatics, by passions and vices, by sin and lawlessness, by the world and by demons? Thus, not one godly soul can remain without persecution, either external or internal, until it is parted from the body and from this world. Maybe someone will challenge this, and expound something different, according to his assessment and logic. But that would not help either the understanding or the logic of a single man. Thousands of those crucified have spoken otherwise; thousands of those burned by fire have cried otherwise; thousands of those beheaded have proved otherwise, and thousands of those drowned have testified otherwise. Oh, my brothers, the Christian faith is strong, not only when it is in accord with secular understanding and logic, but when (and even especially when) it is opposed to them. All who desire to live godly lives shall be persecuted. This the apostles foretold at the beginning of the Christian era, and twenty Christian centuries give a many-voiced echo, confirming the truth of this prophecy. O risen Lord, give us light that we may be godly to the end and strength that we may endure persecution likewise to the end. To Thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic, The Prologue, 27th April

Gospel Luke 18: 10-14

10 Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not like other men— extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess. 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner! 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

FOR EVERYONE WHO EXALTS HIMSELF WILL BE ABASED, AND HE WHO HUMBLES HIMSELF WILL BE EXALTED.

The Lord ceaselessly purges the passion of pride in many ways. This passion, more than any other, disturbs our thoughts, and for this reason the Lord always and everywhere teaches on this subject. Here He is purging the worst form of pride. For there are many offshoots of self-love. Presumption, arrogance, and vainglory all stem from this root. But the most destructive of all these kinds of self-love is pride, for pride is contempt of God. When a man ascribes his accomplishments to himself, and not to God, this is nothing less than denial of God and opposition to Him. Therefore, like enemy to enemy, the Lord opposes this passion which is opposed to Him, and through this parable He promises to heal it. He directs this parable towards those who trust in themselves and who do not attribute everything to God, and who, as a result, despise others. He shows that when righteousness—which is marvelous in every other respect and sets a man close to God—takes pride as its companion, it casts that man into the lowest depths and makes demonic what was God-like just a short time before.

The words of the Pharisee at first resemble the words of a grateful man. For he says, God, I thank Thee. But the words that follow are full of foolishness. He does not say, "that Thou hast made me to depart from extortion and iniquities," but Instead, "I thank Thee that I am not an extortioner or worker of iniquity." He attributes this accomplishment to himself, as something done by his own strength. How can a man who knows that what he has, he has received from God, compare other men to himself unfavorably and judge them? Certainly, if a man believed that he had received as a gift good things that in truth belong to God, he would not despise other men. He would instead consider himself just as naked as his fellow men in regards to virtue, except that by the mercy of God his nakedness has been covered with a donated garment. The Pharisee is proud, ascribing his deeds to his own strength, and that is why he proceeds to condemn others. By saying that the Pharisee stood, the Lord indicates his haughtiness and lack of humility. In the same way that a humble-minded man is likewise humble in his demeanor, this Pharisee by his bearing displays his pride. Although it is also said of the publican that he stood, note what follows: he would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, so that he was stooped in posture. But the eyes of the Pharisee, together with his heart, were lifted up to heaven in boastful exaltation. Nevertheless, the manner in which the Pharisee arranged the words of his prayer can still instruct us. First he says what he is not, and then he declares what he is. After stating, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, pointing to the failings of others, then he declares his good deeds, that he fasts twice a week and gives tithes of all that he possesses. The order of his prayer shows us that we must first refrain from wickedness, and then set our hand to virtue. One must not only turn away from evil, but also do good (Ps. 33:14). It is the same for a man who wants to draw pure water from a muddy spring: only after he has cleaned out the mud can he draw pure water.

Consider this as well: the Pharisee did not say, "I thank Thee that I am not an extortioner or an adulterer, as other men are." He could not endure even the association of his name with such vile terms, and so he uses them in the plural, casting these terms at other men, and avoiding the singular, which might associate him with sin. Having said, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, by contrast he points to himself, saying, I fast twice in the Sabbath, meaning, twice in the week, for the week was called "the Sabbath," deriving its name from the last day of the week, the day of rest. The day of rest was called Sabbat, and the week was called Sabbata, being the plural form of Sabbat. Whence it is that mian Sabatton is the first day of the week, which we call "the Lord's Day" (Sunday). Among the Hebrews mian means the same thing as first.

There is also a more profound explanation of this parable. Against the passion of adultery, the Pharisee boasted of his fasting, for lustful desires arise from eating and drinking to excess. By restraining his body through fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, as was the practice of the Pharisees, he kept himself far from such passions. He also resisted extortion and injustice by giving tithes of all his possessions. "I am so opposed to extortion and to wronging others," he says, "that I give alms of everything I have." Some believe that a simple and single tithe is prescribed by the law; but those who carefully examine the law will find three forms of tithing prescribed. You may learn this from Deuteronomy if you apply yourself diligently (Dt. 12:11,17).

So much for the Pharisee. Now we turn to the publican and observe that he is the Pharisee's exact opposite. He stood afar off, and kept himself at a great distance, not only in physical location, but in his demeanor, in his words, and by his compunction of heart. He was ashamed to lift up his eyes to heaven, for he considered his eyes unworthy of heavenly vision because they had desired to see and enjoy the good things of earth. And he smote upon his breast, striking his heart, as it were, because of its evil designs, and awakening it because it had been sleeping. The publican said no other words than, God be merciful to me a sinner.

By doing this he went down to his house counted righteous, rather than the other. For every proud heart is unclean in the Lord's eyes, and the Lord resisteth the proud but He giveth grace to the humble (Prov. 3:34, I Pet. 5:5).

But one might wonder why it is that the Pharisee is condemned for speaking a few boastful words, while Job receives a crown for speaking many such words (Job 29). The answer is that the Pharisee stood and spoke these vain words under no compulsion, and he condemned others for no reason. But with Job, his friends pressed him and bore down upon him more fiercely than did his own calamities, telling him that he was suffering these things because of his sins. Job was compelled to enumerate his good deeds, but he did so for the glory of God, and so that men would not be misled from the path of virtue. For if men came to hear that Job was suffering because what he had done was sinful, they would not act as Job had. As a result they would become haters of strangers instead of hospitable to strangers, merciless instead of merciful, and unrighteous instead of righteous; for such were the good deeds of Job. Therefore Job enumerated his virtues so that others would not be misled and harmed, and this was why he spoke as he did. Shall we not say that his words, which may seem boastful, in fact are radiant with humility? Oh that I were as in months past, he said, wherein God preserved me! (Job 29:2) Do you see that he attributes everything to God and does not judge others? Instead he is judged by his friends. But condemnation rightly falls upon the Pharisee, who attributed everything to himself and not to God, and judged others for no reason whatsoever. For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled and condemned by God; and he that humbleth himself when he is condemned by others shall be exalted and counted righteous by God. The Lord is saying, "You, O Christian, be the first to tell your sins, so that you may be counted righteous."

Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

Saints of the week

Fast Free Week

19 January / 1 February — Fast Day - Our Holy Father Macarius the Great - He was an Egyptian and one of the contemporaries of St Antony the Great. His father was a priest. He married in obedience to his parents' wishes, but his wife died very soon and he went off into the desert of Scetis, where he spent sixty years in toil and struggle, both physical and spiritual, for the Kingdom of heaven. When he was asked why he was so thin, both when he ate and when he fasted, he replied: 'From fear of God!' He succeeded so greatly in purifying his mind from evil thoughts and his heart from evil desires that God endowed him with abundant wonderworking gifts, such that he even raised the dead from the grave. His humility made men and demons marvel. A demon once said to him: 'There is only one thing in which I cannot excel you: that is not in fasting, for I never eat, nor in vigils, for I never sleep.' 'Then what is it?' asked Macarius. 'Your humility', replied the demon. Macarius often said to his disciple, Paphnutius: 'Condemn no man, and you will be saved.' He lived for ninety years. Before his death, St Antony and St Pachomius appeared to him from the other world and told him that he would die in nine days' time. And so it came to pass. Cherubim also appeared to him before his death and revealed the heavenly, blessed world to him in a vision, praised his labours and virtues and told him that they had been sent to take his soul to the heavenly Kingdom. He entered into rest in the year 390.

St. Branwallader (Breward) of Cornwall and the Channel Islands, bishop of Jersey, (6th C.) - the day of the translation of his relics. Saint Branwallader was a Celtic or Welsh monk, who is said to have been a bishop in Jersey. It is believed that Branwallader worked with Saint Samson (f.d. July 28) in Cornwall and the Channel Islands, where he is remembered at Jersey in St. Brelade. He may also have travelled with Samson to Brittany in northern France. In the Exeter Martyrology, Branwallader is described a the son of the Cornish king, Kenen.

St. Nathalan - Born near Aberdeen, Scotland; died 678. Nathalan was a nobleman, who possessed a large estate which he gave to the poor in order to become an anchorite. Nathalan is especially praised for having earned his living by farming, "which approaches nearest to divine contemplation." He fed his neighbours from his produce

during times of famine, and found that farming served him as a type of penance. During his pilgrimage to Rome, Nathalan was consecrated bishop by the pope, because of his holiness and proficiency in profane and sacred learning. He took up residence at Tullicht (now in the diocese of Aberdeen), where he built a church, but he continued to use all his revenues for the relief of the poor as he had previously. He continued to earn his livelihood by the work of his hands, while living austerely, and preaching the Gospel. He is also credited with founding the churches at Bothelim and Colle.

Also commemorated on this day: Virgin-martyr Euphrasia (†303); Venerable Macarius of Alexandria († 394); Venerable Anthony the Stylite of Martqopi (6 th C); St. Arsenius, archbishop of Kerkyra (8th C); Translation of the Relics of St. Gregory the Theologian (950); Venerable Macarius the Faster of the Kiev Caves (12th C); Venerable Meletius the Gallesiote (†1286); Blessed Theodore of Novgorod, fool-for-Christ (†1392); Venerable Macarius of the Kiev Caves, deacon (14th C); St. Mark, archbishop of Ephesus (†c.1444); Venerable Macarius the Roman of Novgorod (16th C); Finding of the Relics of Monk Sabbas of Storozhev (1652); New Hieromartyr priest Peter Skipetrov (†1918); New Hieromartyr priest Nicholas Vostorgov (†1930); Martyr Theodore Gusev (†1940); Venerable Euthymius Kereselidze, confessor (†1944).

20 January / 2 February — Our Holy Father Euthymius the Great - Born in the Armenian town of Melitene near the River Euphrates in 377, of noble and eminent parents, he was their only son. His mother Dionysia had prayed for a child, and had a heavenly vision concerning his birth. He lived in asceticism from his youth, at first in the vicinity of his town, but then, after a visit to Jerusalem at the age of 29, in the Wilderness of Pharan, between Jerusalem and Jericho. He filled his days and nights with prayer and meditation, contemplation and physical toil. Many disciples gathered round him, such as Cyriac the Hermit, Sava the Sanctified, Theoctistus and others. He was, by God's gift, a great worker of wonders: he drove out demons, healed grave illnesses, brought forth water in the desert, multiplied bread and prophesied. He taught his monks the love of hardship, saying: 'If you eat bread that comes not from your own labours, that means that you eat the labour of another'. When one of the younger brethren desired to fast more than others, he forbade him and ordered him to come to the common table, so that he should not become proud through his too-great fasting. He also said that it is not good for a monk to move from place to place, for, he said: 'A tree that is frequently transplanted does not bear fruit.' Whoever desires to do good can do it in the place where he is. On love, he said: 'As salt is to bread, so is love to the other virtues.' He went off into the desert in the first week of the Great Fast and remained there in silence and meditation on God until before Easter. During his lifetime, a great monastery grew up near his cave, which was for centuries as full of monks as a hive of bees. His last command was that there should be loving hospitality to guests in the monastery, and that its gate should never be closed. He entered into rest at the age of 97. Patriarch Anastasius of Jerusalem was at his funeral. The Patriarch waited the entire day while a great mass of people gave the saint the last kiss, and only in the evening was he able to finish the funeral. On the seventh day after his death, Euthymius appeared to his disciple Domitian in light and joy. St Euthymius was a true 'son of light'. He entered into rest in the year 473.

St. Fechin, abbot - was probably born at Luighne (Leyney), Ireland. He was trained by St. Nathy, was founding Abbot of Fobhar, or Fore, in Westmeath, and died of the plague that devastated Ireland in the year 665.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Bassus, Eusebius, Eutychius and Basilides (†303); Righteous Emperor Leo the Great (†474); Venerable Euthimius the Silent (14th C) and Venerable Lawrence the recluse of the Kiev Caves (14th C); St. Euthymius, patriarch of Turnovo (†1403); Venerable Euthymius of Syanzhema (†1465); Venerable Euthymius of Arkhangelsk (†c.1523); Martyr Zachariah of Patrai (†1782); Righteous Theodore of Tomsk (†1864); New Hieromartyr Paul Dobromyslov, priest (†1940); Martyrs Thyrsus and Agnes.

21 January / 3 February — Our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor - By birth a citizen of Constantinople and at first a high-ranking courtier at the court of the Emperor Heraclius, he then became a monk and the abbot of a monastery not far from the capital. He was the greatest defender of Orthodoxy against the so-called Monothelite heresy, which developed from the heresy of Eutyches. That is to say: as Eutyches asserted that there is in Christ only one nature, so the Monothelites asserted that there is in Him only one will. Maximus resisted this assertion and found himself in opposition to both the Emperor and the Patriarch. But he was unafraid, and persevered to the end in proving that there are in the Lord two wills and also two natures. By his efforts, one Council in Carthage and one in Rome stood firm, and both these Councils anathematised the Monothelite teaching. Maximus's sufferings for Orthodoxy cannot be described: tortured by hierarchs, spat upon by the mass of the

people, beaten by soldiers, persecuted, imprisoned; until finally, with his tongue cut out and one hand cut off, he was condemned to exile for life in Skhimaris, where he gave his soul into God's hands in the year 662.

The Holy Hieromartyr Neophytus - Neophytus was born in Nicaea. While he was still a child and with God's Grace, he worked great miracles. Neophytus brought forth water from a rock and raised his dead mother. He was led by a white dove to Mount Olympus where he drove a lion from its cave and there, took up residence. At age fifteen, he was tortured for Christ in Nicaea during the reign of Emperor Diocletian. By no means would he deny Christ. After beatings and imprisonment, Neophytus was thrown into the fire, but God preserved his life. Then, they placed him before a hungry lion, but the lion ingratiated himself to Neophytus. The saint recognizing this lion as the same one in whose cave he practiced asceticism, began to pet him and ordered the lion to return to the cave. Then Neophytus was pierced with a lance and his soul took up habitation in the mansion of the Lord.

The Holy Martyr Agnes - As a thirteen year old girl, Agnes was thrown into the fire for the Faith of Christ and was then beheaded. She showed great miracle-working power during life and after death. Agnes suffered during the reign of Diocletian in the year 305 A.D.

St. Vimin (6th C) - the founder of the monastery of Holywood at Nithsdale. It is related that St. Vimin was an abbot in Fifeshire when he was consecrated bishop. He actively evangelized the region. In order to avoid the temptations to pride that accompanied his many miracles, he moved to a deserted place and founded Holywood (Sacrumboscum), which later became famous for producing many holy and learned men.

'Stabbed,' 'Comfort' or 'Consolation,' and 'Xenophon' Icons of the Mother of God - The Icon of the Mother of God, named the "Stabbed" ("Zaklannaya"), is situated in the Batopedeia monastery on Athos, in a church in honour of Saint Demetrios of Thessalonika, built on next to the cathedral church. The icon was written on canvas, and its name of "The Stabbed" it received from the following instance. A certain ecclesiarch, a deacon of the Batopedeia monastery, was occupied during a long service with the arrangement of the order, and getting delayed, he was late for refectory meal. The annoyed cook reminded him, that it was necessary to come on time. Offended, the deacon flew into such a rage, that he went off again to the church, and standing afront the icon of the Mother of God, he said: "How much time must I put in at serving Thee, O Mother of God? I have toiled, and toiled, and for everything I have nothing to show for it, not even a morsel of bread!". And with these words he struck Her on the cheek with a knife and pierced right through the canvas. From the wound blood splattered, and the face went pallid. The terrified transgressor fell down right in front of the icon, blind, senseless, his limbs went weak, and he was trembling all over, like Cain, the murderer of old. The hegumen, making all-night vigil for mercy and the saving of the hapless one, prayed fervently for him and after three years received news of his forgiveness. And actually, the deacon came to his senses, recovered his sight, and deeply repented of his thoughtless transgression. Settling himself afront the place of the icon stabbed by him, in repentance he spent all the rest of his remaining life before it.

Before the death of the deacon, the Mother of God appeared to him and was gladdened by his repentance, but said, that his impudent hand should undergo censure until the Second Coming of Christ. And when, according to the Athonite custom, after three years time the bones of the dead were uncovered, an astonishing sight struck everyone: all the bones of the repentant culprit were bright, but the impudent hand was decayed and blackened. This hand is kept at the monastery in memory of the unfathomable love of the Mother of God, ready to pardon all the offences borne by Her, both voluntary and involuntary.

The Icon of the Mother of God named "Xenophite Hodegetria": According to tradition, this wonderworking icon from time immemorial was situated at the Athonite Batopedeia monastery, in the cathedral. In the year 1730 from behind closed doors it disappeared not only from the church, but also from the monastery. They found the icon at the Xenophite monastery, a three hour journey from the Batopedeia monastery. Returned to the Batopedeia monastery, the icon was restored to its former place, and the fathers of the monastery took protective measures of precaution for preventing the theft of the icon. But again a second time the icon of the Mother of God left the Batopedeia monastery and appeared at Xenophe. Persuaded of the providential aspect of this event, the brethren of the monastery gave up on returning the icon to their monastery and left it at Xenophe. As a sign of their blessing, the brethren after several years furnished for the icon both tapers and oil.

The "Hodegetria" Icon at Xenophe is situated in the cathedral church, nearby a column of the left kleros-choir, the very same place it occupied at the Batopedeia monastery.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Eugene, Candidus, Valerian and Aquila (†303); Martyr Anastasius of Rome (†662); Venerable Neophytus of Vatopedi (14th C); Venerable Maximus the Greek; Venerable Timon of Nadeyev (†1840); New Hieromartyr Elias Berezovsky, priest (†1938).

22 January / 4 February —The Holy Apostle Timothy - One of the Seventy, he was born in Lystra of Lycaonia of a Greek father and a Jewish mother. His mother and grandmother were praised by the Apostle Paul for their sincere faith (2 Tim. 1;4-5) . He met the great Apostle for the first time in Lystra, and was the only witness of Paul's healing of the man lame from birth. Later, Timothy was an almost constant travelling-companion of Paul's, visiting Achaia, Macedonia, Italy and Spain with him. A great zealot for the Faith, a superb preacher and of a gentle spirit, Timothy contributed greatly to the spreading and establishing of the Christian faith. Paul called him his own son in the faith (I Tim. 1:2). After Paul's martyrdom, Timothy had St John the Evangelist as his teacher. But when the Emperor Domitian exiled John from Ephesus to the island of Patmos, Timothy remained in Ephesus as bishop. At the time of an idolatrous feast called Katagogium, the pagans, resentful of the Christians, made a merciless, masked attack on Timothy and killed him, in about the year 93. His honoured relics were later taken to Constantinople and buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles by the graves of St Luke the Evangelist and St Andrew the First-Called.

The Venerable Martyr Anastasius - Anastasius was a Persian by birth. His pagan name was Magundat. When Emperor Heraclius warred with the Persians, Magundat deserted to the Christians, went to Jerusalem where he was baptized and received the name Anastasius. It was not enough for him to be baptized, but, in order to give himself completely to serving the Lord he was also tonsured a monk.

Among his other mortifications, Anastasius joyfully read the hagiography of the holy martyrs and in reading them he moistened the book with his tears and ardently yearned for martyrdom. The Lord finally crowned him with the martyr's wreath. In prison for a long time, he was cruelly tortured, until Emperor Chozroes pronounced the death sentence. After that death sentence, Anastasius was suffocated under water and after being removed from the water, the executioner beheaded him and sent his head to the emperor. He suffered on January 22, 628 A.D., in the town of Bethsaloe near Nineveh.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Manuel, George, Peter, and Leontius, bishops, Sionius, Gabriel, John, Leontus, Parodus, and 377 others in Bulgaria (†814-817); Monk-martyr Anastasius of the Kiev Caves, deacon (12th C); Venerable Joseph the Sanctified of Crete (†1511); Venerable Macarius of Zhabyn, wonderworker of Belev (†1623); New Hieromartyrs Jacob Zyablitsky, John Dobrokhotov, John Korzhavin, John Rozanov, John Uspensky, Euthymius Tikhonravov, Nicholas Bukharin, and Peter Zyablitsky, priests (†1938).

23 January / 5 February — The Hieromartyr Clement, Bishop of Ancyra - He was born in 258 in the town of Ancyra of a pagan father and a Christian mother. His devout mother, Euphrosyne, prophesied a martyr's death for her son, and left this world when Clement was twelve years old. Her friend Sophia took Clement into her own home as her son and saw that he was brought up a Christian. Clement became so famed for his virtuous life that he was chosen as bishop of Ancyra at the age of twenty. He acquired a mature wisdom in his early years, and harnessed and conquered his body by great restraint. He ate only bread and vegetables, and never anything slaughtered or with blood. In the reign of Diocletian, he was tortured as terribly 'as anyone has ever been since the foundation of the world'. He spent twenty-eight years under torture and imprisonment. Eleven different torturers tormented him. When, at one time, they were smiting him on the face, spitting on him and breaking his teeth, he cried out to Domentian the torturer: 'You are doing me honour, O Domentian, not torturing me, for the mouth of my Lord Jesus Christ was struck in like manner, and His cheeks slapped; and lo, I, unworthy as I am, am now made worthy of this!' When he was brought before the Emperor Diocletian in Rome, the Emperor placed on one side various instruments of torture, and on the other side gifts—medals, clothing, money—whatever the Emperor was able to bestow, and then told Clement to choose. Christ's martyr, with a scornful glance at all the Emperor's gifts, chose the instruments of torture. And he was terribly tortured; piece by piece the flesh was flayed from his body until the bones showed white beneath. He was healed of these wounds, and was finally beheaded by a soldier in 312, while he was presiding at the Liturgy as bishop in the church in Ancyra. St Clement's miracles are without number.

St. Colman - Died c. 702. Saint Colman succeeded Saint Hierlug (Zailug) as abbot-bishop of Lismore in 698. During his rule the fame of Lismore monastery, Ireland reached its peak.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Mausimas the Syrian (4th C); Venerable Eusebius of Syria (4th C); Venerable Salamanes the Silent (†c.400); St. Paulinus the Merciful, bishop of Nola (†431); Venerable Gennadius of Kostroma (†1565); Translation of the relics of St. Theoctistus, archbishop of Novgorod (1786); Venerable Varlaam of Chikoy (†1846); New Monk-martyr Seraphim (Bulashov), Nun-martyrs Eudocia (Kuzminova) and Catherine (Cherkasova), and Martyr Militsa Kuvshinovoy (†1938); Commemoration of Sixth Ecumenical Council (680-681); Synaxis of the saints of Kostroma.

24 January / 6 February — Our Holy Mother Xenia - Born in Rome, she was the only daughter of a famous senator. Drawn by the love of Christ, she refused to marry as her parents desired. In order to escape this, she fled from her home with two of her slaves and came to the island of Kos, to a place called Mylassa, where she started a community for virgins, remaining there in asceticism till her death. Though she was a weak woman, she had a man's perseverance in fasting, prayer and vigils. She often spent entire nights standing in prayer, was dressed more poorly than her sisters, and on her bread, when she ate, she often put ashes from the censer. At the hour of her death (in 450), a wonderful sign appeared over the monastery: a wreath of stars encircling a cross more resplendent than the sun. Many of the sick were healed by her relics. Her two slaves girls followed the example of their abbess in all things, and when they died, they were buried, by their wish, at the feet of blessed Xenia.

Blessed Xenia of St Petersburg - Saint Xenia lived during the eighteenth century, but little is known of her life or of her family. She passed most of her life in Petersburg during the reigns of the empresses Elizabeth and Catherine II. Xenia Grigorievna Petrova was the wife of an army officer, Major Andrew Petrov. After the wedding, the couple lived in St Petersburg. St Xenia became a widow at the age of twenty-six when her husband suddenly died at a party. She grieved for the loss of her husband, and especially because he died without Confession or Holy Communion. Once her earthly happiness ended, she did not look for it again. From that time forward, Xenia lost interest in the things of this world, and followed the difficult path of foolishness for the sake of Christ. The basis for this strange way of life is to be found in the first Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:18-24, 1 Cor. 2:14, 1 Cor. 3:18-19). The Lord strengthened her and helped her to bear sorrow and misfortune patiently for the next forty-five years. She started wearing her husband's clothing, and insisted that she be addressed as "Andrew Feodorovich." She told people that it was she, and not her husband, who had died. In a certain sense, this was perfectly true. She abandoned her former way of life and experienced a spiritual rebirth. When she gave away her house and possessions to the poor, her relatives complained to the authorities. After speaking to Xenia, the officials were conviced that she was in her right mind and was entitled to dispose of her property as she saw fit. Soon she had nothing left for herself, so she wandered through the poor section of Petersburg with no place to lay her head. She refused all assistance from her relatives, happy to be free of worldly attachments. When her late husband's red and green uniform wore out, she clothed herself in rags of those colors. After a while, Xenia left Petersburg for eight years. It is believed that she visited holy Elders and ascetics throughout Russia seeking instruction in the spiritual life. She may have visited St Theodore of Sanaxar (February 19), who had been a military man himself. His life changed dramatically when a young officer died at a drinking party. Perhaps this officer was St Xenia's husband. In any case, she knew St Theodore and profited from his instructions. St Xenia eventually returned to the poor section of Petersburg, where she was mocked and insulted because of her strange behavior. When she did accept money from people it was only small amounts, which she used to help the poor. She spent her nights praying without sleep in a field outside the city. Prayer strengthened her, and in her heart's conversation with the Lord she found the support she needed on her difficult path. When a new church was being built in the Smolensk cemetery, St Xenia brought bricks to the site. She did this in secret, during the night, so that no one would know. Soon her great virtue and spiritual gifts began to be noticed. She prophesied future events affecting the citizens of Petersburg, and even the royal family. Against her will, she became known as someone pleasing to God, and nearly everyone loved her.They said, "Xenia does not belong to this world, she belongs to God." People regarded her visits to their homes or shops as a great blessing. St Xenia loved children, and mothers rejoiced when the childless widow would stand and pray over a baby's crib, or kiss a child. They believed that the blessed one's kiss would bring that child good fortune. St Xenia lived about forty-five years after the death of her husband, and departed to the Lord at the age of seventy-one. The exact date and circumstances of her death are not known, but it probably took place at the end of the eighteenth century. She was buried in the Smolensk cemetery. By the 1820s, people flocked to her grave to pray for her soul, and to ask her to intercede with God for them. So many visitors took earth from her grave that it had to be replaced every

year. Later, a chapel was built over her grave. Those who turn to St Xenia in prayer receive healing from illness, and deliverance from their afflictions. She is also known for helping people who seek jobs.

St. Cadoc of Llancarvan Wales - Son of Saint Gwynllyw, a king in Wales, a robber chieftain who led a band of 300; his mother, Saint Gladys, had been stolen in a raid on a neighbouring chief. Raised by an Irish monk; Cadoc's father had stolen the monk's cow, and when he came to demand its return, the king decided it was sign. Studied in Wales and Ireland. Priest. Once chased through a wood by an armed swineherd from an enemy tribe. His hiding place spooked an old, grey, wild boar that made three great leaps at him - then disappeared; Cadoc took this as a sign, and the location became the site of the great church and monastery at Llancarvan. He once saved his brother monks in a famine by tying a white thread to the foot of a (well-fed) mouse; he then following the thread to an abandoned, well-stocked, underground granary. Another time he and his brothers went out to meet a band of thieves, chanting and playing harps; it surprised the highwaymen so much, they turned and left. Lived as a hermit with Saint Gildas on the Island of Flatholmes off Vannes, Brittany. Established a monastery on a small island just off Brittany, joined by a stone bridge so local children could walk out for school. Returned to Britain to evangelize, and work with Christian survivors of Saxon raids. Born 6th century Welsh Died martyred by Saxons while serving at Mass c.580 near Weedon, Northamptonshire, England

Also commemorated on this day: Hieromartyr Felician, bishop of Foligno, and the Martyr Messalina (†250); Martyrs Babylas of Sicily and his two disciples: Timothy and Agapius (3rd C); Martyrs Paul, Pausirius, and Theodotian of Egypt (†303); Venerable Macedonius of Syria (†c.420); Venerable Philon, bishop of Carpasia (5th C); Venerable Lupicinus (†500); Translation of the relics of Venerable Anastasius the Persian (632); Venerable Neophytus the Recluse, of Cyprus (†1220); St. Gerasimus, bishop of Perm (†1441); Martyr John of Kazan (†1529); Venerable Dionysius of Olympus (†1541); New Martyr Nicholas Tsikura (†1918); Venerable Philippicus the priest; Martyr Barsimaeus and his two brothers; Venerable Zosimus of Mt. Sinai.

25 January / 7 February — St Gregory the Theologian - Born in Nazianzus of a Greek father (who later became a Christian and a bishop) and a Christian mother, he studied in Athens before his baptism with St Basil the Great and Julian the Apostate. He often foretold to Julian that he would be an apostate and a persecutor of the Church, and so it came to pass. Gregory was especially influenced by his mother, Nonna. He was baptised when he had completed his studies. St Basil consecrated him bishop of Sasima, and the Emperor Theodosius quickly called him to the vacant archiepiscopal throne of Constantinople. His works were manifold, the best-known being his theological writings, for which he received the title 'the Theologian'. He is particularly famed for the depth of his Sermons on the Holy Trinity. He also wrote against the heretic Macedonius, who taught wrongly of the Holy Spirit (that the Spirit was a creature of God), and against Apollinarius who taught that Christ did not have a human soul but that His divinity was in place of His soul. He also wrote against the Emperor Julian the Apostate, his sometime schoolfellow. In the year 381, when a quarrel broke out in the Council concerning his election as archbishop, he withdrew himself, declaring: 'Those who deprive us of the (archiepiscopal) throne cannot deprive us of God.' He then left Constantinople and went to Nazianzus, remaining there in retirement, prayer and the writing of instructive books until his death. And, although he was in weak health all his life, he lived to the age of seventy. His relics were later taken to Rome, and his head to the Cathedral of the Dormition in Moscow. He was, and remains, a great and wonderful light of the Orthodox Church, as much for the meekness and purity of his character as for the unsurpassable depth of his mind. He entered into rest in the Lord in the year 389.

The Holy Martyr Felicitas and Her Seven Sons - As a Christian, Felicitas was condemned to death along with her seven sons during the reign of Emperor Antoninus in the year 164 A.D. She implored God only that she not to be killed before her sons, so that she might be able to encourage them during their torture and death in order that they would not deny Christ. According to God's Providence, it so happened. With joy, this superb mother accompanied her sons one by one until she had witnessed the death of all seven sons. Then, she herself, with gratitude to God, received a martyr's death. She and her sons suffered in Rome where their relics repose.

New Hieromartyr Vladimir, Metropolitan of Kiev - The holy Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev was the first bishop to be tortured and slain by the Communists at the time of the Russian Revolution. Basil Nikephorovich Bogoyavlensky was born in the province of Tambov of pious parents on January 1, 1848. His father, a priest, was later murdered. The young Basil graduated from the Theological Academy in Kiev in 1874, and taught in the Tambov seminary for seven years before he was ordained to the holy priesthood.

His wife died in 1886, and their only child died shortly thereafter. The bereaved widower entered the Kozlov monastery in Tambov and was given the name Vladimir. In 1888 he was consecrated bishop of Staraya Rus, and served as a vicar bishop of the Novgorod diocese. In 1891 he was assigned to the diocese of Samara. In those days people of his diocese suffered from a cholera epidemic and a crop failure. Bishop Vladimir devoted himself to caring for the sick and suffering, inspiring others to follow his example.

In 1892 he became Archbishop of Kartalin and Kahetin, then in 1898 he was chosen as Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna. He served fifteen years in this position.

Metropolitan Vladimir was distinguished by his compassion for the poor, and for widows and orphans. He also tried to help alcoholics and those who had abandoned the Church. The Metropolitan was also interested in the education of children in school, especially those who were studying in the theological schools.

In 1912, after the death of Metropolitan Anthony, he was appointed Metropolitan of Petrograd, administering that diocese until 1915. Because he disapproved of Rasputin, Metropolitan Vladimir fell out of favor with the Tsar, and so he was transferred to Kiev. On November 5, 1917 it was he who announced that Saint Tikhon (April 7) had been elected as Patriarch of Moscow.

The “Ukrainian Congress” was also calling for an autonomous Ukraine and for the creation of a Ukrainian Church independent from the Church of Russia. Metropolitan Vladimir suffered and grieved because of this question, warning that such a division in the Church would allow its enemies to be victorious. However, at the end of 1917, a Ukrainian Dominion was formed, and also a separate Ukrainian church administration (“rada”) led by the retired Archbishop Alexis Dorodnitzin. This uncanonical group forbade the commemoration of Patriarch Tikhon during church services, and demanded that Metropolitan Vladimir leave Kiev.

In January 1918 the civil war came to Kiev, and the two forces vied for control of the city. Many churches and monasteries were damaged by the cannon fire. The Bolsheviks seized the Kiev Caves Lavra on January 23, and soldiers broke into the churches. Monks were taken out into the courtyard to be stripped and beaten. At six thirty on the night of January 25, five armed soldiers and a sailor came looking for Metropolitan Vladimir. The seventy-year-old hierarch was tortured and choked in his bedroom with the chain of his cross. The ruffians tortured the Metropolitan and demanded money.

When they emerged, the Metropolitan’s cell attendant approached and asked for a blessing.The sailor pushed him aside and told him, “Enough bowing to these blood-drinkers. No more of it.” After blessing and kissing him, the Metropolitan said, “Good-bye, Philip.” Then he walked calmly with his executioners, just as if he were on his way to serve the Liturgy.

Metropolitan Vladimir was driven from the monastery to the place of execution. As they got out of the car, the holy martyr asked, “Do you intend to shoot me here?”

“Why not?” they replied.

After praying for a short time and asking forgiveness for his sins, Metropolitan Vladimir blessed the executioners, saying, “May God forgive you.” Then several rifle shots were heard.

In the morning, some women came to the gates of the Lavra and told the monks where the Metropolitan’s body could be found. He was lying on his back, with bullet wounds near his right eye and by his right collarbone. There were also several cuts and gashes on the body, including a very deep chest wound. The hieromartyr was carried into the Lavra church of Saint Michael, where he had spent his last days at prayer.

In Moscow, the All-Russian Church Council was in session when word came of Metropolitan Vladimir’s death. Patriarch Tikhon and his clergy performed a Memorial Service for the New Martyr Vladimir. A commission was formed to investigate the circumstances of Metropolitan Vladimir’s murder, but it was unable to carry out its duties because of the Revolution. The Council decided that January 25, the day of his death, would be set aside for the annual commemoration of all of Russia’s martyrs and confessors killed by the Soviets.

St.Theneva (also known as St Dwyn) - British princess. When she became pregnant before marriage, her family threw her from a cliff. She survived the fall unharmed, and was soon met by an unmanned boat. She knew she had no home to go to, so got into the boat; it sailed her across the Firth of Forth to land at Culross where she was cared for by Saint Serf; he became foster-father of her son, Saint Kentigern.. Born British Isles. Died 7th century.

St. Eochod - Died 597. One of Saint Columba's (f.d. June 9) twelve companions, Saint Eochod was chosen by Columba to evangelize northern Britain. He is called the Apostle of the Picts of Galloway.

Tropar of St Eochod tone 6: The Picts of Galloway honoured thee as their Apostle,/ O righteous Hierarch Eochod,/ for at the behest of Father Columba/ thou didst open to them the Gospel of Salvation./ Wherefore, O Saint, cease not in thy pious labours,/ praying that our souls may be saved.

St. Theoritgitha - Virgin, novice-mistress of Barking on the Thames.

Also commemorated on this day: St. Castinus, bishop of Byzantium (†240); St. Bretanion (Vetranion), bishop of Tomis (†378); Venerable Publius of Syria (†c.380); Venerable Mares the Singer, of Omeros (†c.430); Venerable Demetrius the Skevophylax ("Keeper of the Sacred Vessels") of Constantinople (8th C); St. Moses, archbishop of Novgorod (†1362); Gregory of Golutvin (†1405); New Martyr Auxentius of Constantinople (†1720); Venerable Anatole of Optina, the Elder (†1894); St. Gabriel, bishop of Imereti (Georgia) (†1896); New Hieromartyrs Peter, archbishop of Voronezh (†1929), New Hieromartyr Basil, bishop of Priluki (†1930); New Hieromartyr Stephen Grachev, priest, and Martyr Boris Zavarin (†1938); 'Assuage My Sorrows,' and 'Comfort in Distress and Sorrow' Icons of the Mother of God.

† Daily Scripture Readings †

Monday – Epistle: II Pet. 1:20-2:9 (§66); Gospel: Mark 13:9-13 (§59)

Tuesday – Epistle: II Pet. 2:9-22 (§67); Gospel: Mark 13:14-23 (§60)

Wednesday – Epistle: II Pet. 3:1-18 (§68); Gospel: Mark 13:24-31 (§61)

Thursday – Epistle: for Thursday: I John 1:8-2:6 (§69); for Friday: I John 2:7-17 (§70)
Gospel: for Thursday: Mark 13:31-14:2 (§62); for Friday: Mark 14:3-9 (§63)

Friday - Vespers: Wisd. 3:1-9; Wisd. 5:15-6:3; Wisd. 4:7-15; Matins Gospel: Luke 15:1-10 (§78)
Epistle: Gal. 3:23-29 (§208); Gospel: Matt. 25:1-13 (§104)

Saturday – Vespers: Prov. 10:7, 6, 3:13-16; Prov. 10:31-32, 11:1-12; Wisd. 4:7-15; Matins Gospel: John 10:1-9 (§35 mid); Epistle: for Saturday: II Tim. 3:1-9 (§295); for the Hierarch: I Cor. 12:7-11 (§151)
Gospel: for Saturday: Luke 20:45-21:4 (§103); for the Hierarch: John 10:9-16 (§36)

GREAT LENT

Great Lent is the most important and most ancient of the fasts which extend over more that one day. It reminds us of the forty-day fast of the Saviour in the wilderness, and prepares us for Passion Week and for the joyous Feast of Feasts, the radiant Resurrection of Christ.

The Holy and Great Fast is a time for special prayer and repentance during which each of us should beseech the Lord for forgiveness of sins through Confession and preparation for Communion, and then worthily partake the Holy Mysteries of Christ in accordance with the commandment of Christ (John 6:53-56). During the Old Testament period the Lord commanded the sons of Israel to give each year a tithe (one tenth) of all that they possessed, and when they did so they received blessing in all their affairs.

In like manner the Holy Fathers established for our benefit that a tenth of the year, the period of Great Lent, be consecrated to God, so that we might be blessed in all our affairs and each year purify ourselves of our sins which we have committed during the course of the year.

Great Lent then serves as the God-ordained tenth of the year, for it equals approximately thirty-six days, excluding Sundays, during which we separate ourselves for a time from the distractions of life and all its possible enjoyments, and dedicate ourselves primarily to the service of God unto the salvation of our souls.

Great Lent is preceded by three preparatory Sundays. The first preparatory Sunday of Great Lent is termed the "Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee." This Sunday's Gospel parable of the Publican and the Pharisee is read in order to demonstrate that only prayer with heartfelt tears and humility, like those of the publican, and not with a recounting of one's virtues like the pharisee, can call down upon us the mercy of God. Starting with this Sunday and continuing until the fifth Sunday of Great Lent, following the reading of the Gospel, during the All-night Vigil, the contrite prayer is chanted, "The doors of repentance do Thou open to me, O Giver of Life..."

The Law of God, Fr. Seraphim Slobodskoy