

29th Sunday After Pentecost

Sunday After Nativity, Commemoration of the Holy Righteous Ones: Joseph the Betrothed, David the King and James the Brother of the Lord

30 December / 12 January



Resurrection Tropar, Tone 4: When the women disciples of the Lord / learned from the Angel the joyous message of Thy Resurrection / they cast away the ancestral curse / and elatedly told the Apostles / death is overcome / Christ God is risen / granting the world great mercy.

Tropar of the Nativity according to the Flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ (Tone 4): Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath shined upon the world the light of knowledge; for thereby, they that worshipped the stars were taught by a star to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. O Lord, glory be to Thee.

Tropar of the Holy Righteous Ones, Tone 2: O Joseph, proclaim thou the glad tidings to David, the ancestor of God, for thou hast seen a Virgin give birth; with the shepherds didst thou give glory; with the Magi didst thou worship; by an angel wast thou instructed. Entreat Christ God, that He save our souls!

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 4: My Saviour and Redeemer / as God rose from the tomb and delivered the earth-born from their chains / He has shattered the gates of hell, / and as Master, / He has risen on the third day.

Kondak of the Nativity according to the Flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ (Tone 3): Today the Virgin giveth birth to Him Who is transcendent in essence; and the earth offereth a cave to Him Who is unapproachable. Angels with shepherds give glory; with a star the Magi do journey; for our sake a young Child is born, Who is pre-eternal God.

Kondak of the Holy Righteous Ones, Tone 3 (Spec. Mel: "Today the Virgin..."): Today the divine David is filled with gladness, and Joseph doth offer praise with James. They rejoice, receiving a crown through their kinship with Christ; and they laud Him that hath ineffably been born on earth, and cry aloud: O Compassionate One, save them that honour Thee!

One can learn all about King David, the son of Jesse, from the Book of Kings. and for holy James see October 23rd. Righteous Joseph is so named in the Gospel (Matt. 1:19), and for this, God entrusted the most holy Virgin to his protection and gave him great honour in the economy of human salvation. Although Joseph was of the royal lineage of David, he himself was a simple carpenter in Nazareth. He took the most holy Virgin from the Temple into his home at the age of eighty, and entered into rest at the age of a hundred and ten.

Vespers

Lord I have Cried, Tone 4, on 10: Octoechos 3; Feast 4 (Come let us rejoice in the Lord); Saints 3 (Let us all praise King David); G: Saints (Let us celebrate the memory); N: Sunday Dogmatic in the 4th tone.
Aposticha: Octoechos; G: Saints (Thy birthgiving); N: Feast (Today is the invisible Nature).

Matins Gospel VII

EPISTLE: Galatians 1: 11-19

11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. 14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and remained with him fifteen days. 19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

IT PLEASSED GOD ...WHO CALLED ME THROUGH HIS GRACE, TO REVEAL HIS SON IN ME, THAT I MIGHT PREACH HIM AMONG THE GENTILES

Christ says in another place, 'No one knows who the Son is, save the Father; and who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son wills to reveal Him' (Luke 10:22). You observe that the Father reveals the Son, and the Son the Father; so it is as to Their glory, the Son glorifies the Father, and the Father the Son; 'glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You' (John 17:1,4). But why does he say, 'to reveal His Son in me,' and not 'to me?' It is to signify that he had not only been instructed in the faith by words, but that he was richly endowed with the Spirit, that the revelation had enlightened his whole soul, and that he had Christ speaking within him...The object, he says, of His thus specially revealing Himself to me, was not only that I might myself behold Him, but that I might also manifest Him to others ...that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, thus touching beforehand on that great ground of his defence which lay in the respective characters of the disciples; for it was necessary to preach differently to the Jews and to the heathen.

St. John Chrysostom. Commentary on Galatians, Chapter 1. B#57, p. 11

GOSPEL: St. Matthew 2: 13-23

13 When the Wise Men had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and stay there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. 14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt, 15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt I called my son. 16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, 18 In Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. 19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. 21 And he arose, took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: 23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

THAT IT MIGHT BE FULFILLED WHICH WAS SPOKEN BY THE PROPHETS, "HE SHALL BE CALLED A NAZARENE"

As to the fact that the prophet had foretold it, the apostles themselves in many places call Him a Nazarene. Was not this then, one may say, casting a shade over the prophesy touching Bethlehem? By no means: rather this very fact was sure greatly to stir up men, and to awaken them to the search of what was said of Him. Thus, for example, Nathanael also enters on the inquiry concerning Him, saying, 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' For the place was of little esteem, or rather not that place only, but also the whole district of Galilee. Therefore the Pharisees said, Search and look, for out of Galilee arises no prophet' (Jn. 7:52). Nevertheless, He is not ashamed to be named even from thence, signifying that He does not need any of the things of men; and His disciples He also chooses out of Galilee ...For this cause He does not chose for Himself so much as a house (Cf. Matt. 7:20) ...At His birth He is laid in a manger, and abides in an inn, and takes a mother of low estate; teaching us to think no

such thing a disgrace, and from the first outset trampling under foot the haughtiness of man, and bidding us give ourselves up only to virtue. For why do you pride yourself on your country, when I am commanding you to be a stranger to the whole world? (so He speaks); when you have leave to become such that all the universe will not be worthy of you? For these things are so utterly contemptible, that they are not thought worthy of any consideration, even amongst the philosophers of the Greeks, but are called externals, and occupy the lowest place.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily IX on Matthew II, 6, 7. B#54, pp. 58, 59.

This [Christmas] night bestowed peace on the whole world; so, let no one threaten; this is the night of the Most Gentle One - let no one be cruel; this is the night of the most Humble One - let no one be proud. Now is the day of joy, - let us not revenge; now is the day of good will, - let us not be mean. In this day of peace let us not be conquered by anger ... Today the Bountiful impoverished Himself for our sake; so, the rich one, invite the poor to your table. Today we received a gift, for which we did not ask; so let us give alms to those, who implore us and beg. This present day cast open the heavenly door to our prayers: let us open our door to those who ask our forgiveness.. Now the Divine Being took upon Himself the seal of humanity, in order for humanity to be decorated by the seal of Divinity.

St. Isaac of Syria. Christmas Sermon, from Tree of Life, Vol. 6 No.4, 1989.

Saints of the week

30 December / 12 January — Afterfeast of the Nativity of Christ - Fast-free period - The Holy Martyr Anysia - Born in Salonica of wealthy and eminent parents, she was brought up in the Christian faith. She was orphaned young, and gave herself over to pondering on God and prayer in her own home. Fired with the love of Christ, she often said: 'Oh, how false is the life of youth, for you either create scandal or are scandalised. Better is age, but oh, I am seized with sorrow at the length of time that separates us from heaven!' She sold her goods and gave away the proceeds to the poor, and herself lived from the labour of her own hands. She kept strict fasts, slept very little and always wept in prayer. When sleep overtook her, she said to herself: 'It is dangerous to sleep while the enemy keeps vigil.' At that time, the wicked Emperor Maximian issued a decree that any man was free to kill Christians when and where he came across them, without trial or sentence. This holy maiden once went out into the street to go to church. It was the day of a pagan festival of the sun. A soldier saw her fairness of face and went up to her with impure lust, asking her name. She made the sign of the Cross and said to him: 'I am Christ's handmaid, and I'm going to church.' When the impudent soldier came closer and began to speak as one deranged, she pushed him away and spat in his face. The soldier aimed a blow at her with his sword, and ran her through under the rib. This holy maiden suffered in 298 and was buried by Christians, and was crowned with a wreath of glory by God in the heavenly Kingdom. A church was built over her grave.

The Venerable Martyr Gideon - Gideon was a Greek by birth, of very poor parents. In his youth he was forced to embrace Islam. Repentant, he fled to the Holy Mountain, where he received the monastic tonsure in the Monastery of Karakallou. Desiring martyrdom for Christ, he received the blessing of his spiritual father and returned to the same place where he had become a Moslem. There, before the Turks, he openly confessed the Christian Faith and denounced Mohammed as a false prophet. The Turks shaved his head, placed him upside-down on a donkey, and led him through the town, but he rejoiced at this ridicule for the sake of Christ. They then chopped off all his fingers and toes with an axe, as they had once done to St. James the Persian (November 27). Finally they threw him into a place filled with excrement, where he gave up his holy soul to God in the year 1818, in Trnovo in Thrace. His miracle-working relics are preserved in the Church of the Holy Apostles in the village of Trnovo, and a part of his relics can be found in the Karakallou Monastery.

St. Egwin, bishop of Worcester, (717), founder of Evesham Monastery - Our holy father Egwin was born of royal stock in the region of Worcester. When he came of age, he left the world and embraced the monastic life, wherein he soon achieved a high standard of excellence. He was ordained through all the degrees of the priesthood; and in 693, on the repose of the bishop of Worcester, he was elected to the Episcopal see by all the clergy and the people, and with the assent of King Ethelred of Mercia and the archbishop of Canterbury. In this exalted position he showed himself to be a pattern of all virtue: a father of orphans, a protector of widows, a righteous judge of the oppressed and comforter of the afflicted. And by his powerful preaching many were converted from paganism or from an evil way of life. The righteous, however, must expect tribulation in this world, and malicious tongues began to war against the saint. He decided to travel to Rome and put his case before the highest tribunal in the West. But before leaving, and although he was innocent of the charges brought against him, he imposed a severe penance upon himself both for his own sins and for the sins of his people. He locked his feet in iron fetters and threw the key into the river Avon. Thus bound, he set off on the arduous journey to Rome. As he and his companions were passing through an arid region of the Alps, they began to thirst. Those among his companions who did not acknowledge the bishop's sanctity asked him mockingly to pray for water as

Moses once did in the desert. But others, who did believe in him, rebuked the unbelievers and asked him in a different tone, with true faith and hope. The Saint prostrated himself in prayer to the Lord with his companions. On arising, they saw a pure stream of water gush forth out of the rock; whereupon everybody, believers and unbelievers alike, gave heartfelt thanks to God Who is wondrous in His saints. When they arrived in Rome and had prayed in the church of St. Peter, the Saint told his companions to go down to the river Tiber and see if they could catch a fish. They did as he said, and to their delight caught a medium-sized salmon which they brought to the holy father. When he saw it he gave thanks and ordered them to slit it open. Great was their astonishment when they found inside the fish the key which the Saint had cast into the river Avon. News of the miracle spread throughout Rome, and from all sides the faithful came to seek the holy man's blessing. Pope Constantine, who had heard of Egwin's arrival, the great labours of his journey and the miracle of the key, did not allow the Saint to prostrate before him, but himself asked his blessing. And for the rest of his stay in Rome he treated him with great respect, celebrating the Divine Liturgy with him and having many private talks together. The case against the Saint was examined and annulled, and he returned to England laden with honor. The people greeted him with joy, and by the decree of the archbishop he was restored to the see from which he had been dismissed. King Ethelred, too, received him with love, ready to fulfill whatever the Saint might petition. One of the Saint's first requests was to be granted the pastureland beside the Avon where he had thrown the key into the river. One of the king's shepherds had once had a vision at this same spot, in which a Virgin of extraordinary splendour appeared holding a hook in her hands and chanting psalms in the company of two other virgins, when the shepherd told this to the Saint, he turned it over in his mind for a long time, praying to God with vigils and fasting. Then, early one morning, after the Saint and three companions had spent the whole night in prayer, they set out barefoot to the spot, chanting, psalms and hymns. Parting company with the others, St. Egwin fell to the earth with tears and groans. On arising from his prayer, he saw three virgins, of whom the middle one was most wondrous to behold, shining in light and surrounded by an ineffable fragrance. In her hands she held a book, and a cross which shone with a golden radiance. When Egwin realized that this was the Most Holy Mother of God, she, as if approving his thought, blessed him with the cross and disappeared. This vision gave the Saint to understand that it was God's will that this place, later called Evesham, should be dedicated to the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary. And he determined to build a church there in accordance with a vow he had made during a period of especially fierce temptation. So he bought the land and carried out the task to completion, endowing the foundation with many gifts solicited from the kings of England. At his request, the Pope granted his undertaking independent status which was confirmed by a council of the English Church held at Alcester in 709. In 711 the Saint retired from his see and devoted himself exclusively to the government of his monastery at Evesham. With fastings and vigils, with tears and groans, he poured out his prayer to the Lord, and was accounted worthy of many visitations of the angels and the saints. He was particularly devoted to the Mother of God, whose praises were always on his lips. Already rich in years and Divine Grace, he fell ill in the monastery which he had founded, and, feeling the approach of death, he called together the brethren and said: "Most reverend and beloved sons, I beseech you, be zealous in observing the commandments of God, and keep the vows which you made to Him. For it is written: 'Make your vows and pay them to the Lord.' And as the Apostle says: 'Follow peace and holiness, without which none will see the Lord.'" Then, having commended them to the Father and having partaken of the Body and Blood of the Lord, he departed this life on December 30, 717. Great was the sorrow of the brethren and all the people. But during the burial of the Saint, sorrow at his departure was mixed with joy at his triumph. After his burial many miracles proved that St. Egwin had obtained great favour with the Lord. On praying to him, the blind were given their sight, the deaf their hearing, the sick in body and soul were healed. And so his fame spread throughout the country, and many came to his tomb to seek his intercession. Once a penitent, grieving over a serious crime he had committed, bound himself with a number of iron fetters. He vowed that he would not loose himself from them until God had shown him that he was loosed from the fetters of his sins. He dragged himself to several shrines of the saints, and after diligent prayer and fasting all but one of the fetters broke loose. The ninth fetter was fastened more tightly than the others, so that the flesh around began to swell. In hope of being released also from this one, the unfortunate man travelled to Rome, to the tombs of the holy Apostles. There, after heartfelt prayer, he was told in his sleep: "Go to England and seek the place of the blessed bishop Egwin, and when you have given him due veneration, you will obtain mercy," Joyfully, the penitent set off on his journey, and, arriving at the church of St. Egwin, spent several days there in prayer and fasting. One day, after the brethren had chanted the third hour and celebrated the Divine Liturgy, the ninth fetter snapped with such force that all the brethren heard it, and the penitent himself was thrown some distance as if by the hand of a man. When the brethren ascertained the truth of the miracle, they rejoiced and gave glory to God.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyr Zoticus the priest, feeder of orphans (c.340); Apostle of the 70, Timon the deacon (1st C); Martyr Philaret of Nicomedia and those with him (311); Martyrs Paulinus, Birus, Umbrius, Severus, Callistratus, Florentius, Arianus, Anthimus, Ubricius, Isidore, Euculus, Sampson, Studius, and Thespesius (c.362); Venerable Theodora of Caesarea (755); Venerable Theodora of Constantinople (940); St. Macarius, metropolitan of Moscow (1563); Finding of the relics of Venerable Daniel of Pereyaslavl (1652); New Martyr Maria Danilova (1946).

31 December / 13 January — Apodosis of the Nativity of Christ - Fast-free period - Our Holy Mother Melanie the Roman - Born in Rome of devout and very wealthy parents, she was forced by them to marry a young nobleman, Pinian. She was taken very seriously ill in giving birth to her second child, and told her husband that she would be healed only if he vowed before God to live with her in future as brother and sister. Her husband agreed and Melanie, in her deep joy, was healed. When it pleased God to take both children to Himself, they agreed to sell all their possessions and give the proceeds to the destitute, the Church and the monasteries. They travelled through many lands and cities, everywhere doing good works. They visited famous spiritual guides in Upper and Lower Egypt, and received much instruction and inspiration from them. During all that time, Melanie lived in strict fasting, fervent prayer and the reading of the Holy Scriptures. She followed the practice of reading the Scriptures right through, the Old and New Testaments, every three years, living with her husband as with a brother and fellow-ascetic. Going to Alexandria, they received the blessing of the Patriarch, St Cyril. After that, they went to Jerusalem and settled on the Mount of Olives. There Melanie became an anchoress, and gave herself completely to pondering, fasting and prayer. She lived thus for fourteen years, after which she came out, to help others to salvation, and founded monasteries for men and women. At the invitation of her kinsman, the senator Volusianus, a pagan, she went to Constantinople and brought him to the Christian faith (something that Blessed Augustine, whom Volusianus knew, had been unable to do). She then returned to the Mount of Olives, where she went to God in 438, at the age of fifty-seven.

Holy and Righteous Joseph, King David and James the Lord's Brother - commemorated on the Sunday after the Nativity of Christ. One can learn all about King David, the son of Jesse, from the Book of Kings. and for holy James see October 23rd. Righteous Joseph is so named in the Gospel (Matt. 1:19), and for this, God entrusted the most holy Virgin to his protection and gave him great honour in the economy of human salvation. Although Joseph was of the royal lineage of David, he himself was a simple carpenter in Nazareth. He took the most holy Virgin from the Temple into his home at the age of eighty, and entered into rest at the age of a hundred and ten.

The Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ohrid - Theophylact was born on the island of Euripos and educated in Constantinople by the most eminent teachers of that time. As a priest of the Great Church, he was chosen bishop and sent, against his will, to Ohrid, where he remained about twenty-five years (from about 1082 to 1108). Chromatianus of Ohrid calls him "the wisest archbishop." A man of enormous learning, both secular and theological, of refined Byzantine tastes, melancholy and sensitive, Theophylact felt among the Slavs in Ohrid like an exile among barbarians. He wrote commentaries on the Four Gospels and other books of the New Testament. These are the best works of their kind after that of St. Chrysostom, and are read even today with great benefit. His other known works include his Letters and the Life of St. Clement of Ohrid. In old age, St. Theophylact withdrew from Ohrid to Thessalonica, where it is thought he finished his earthly life and took up his habitation in blessed eternity.

Also commemorated on this day: Righteous Abgar, king of Edessa (1st C); St. Anysius, bishop of Thessalonica (c.406); Venerable Gelasius of Palestine (5th C); Venerable Sabiana, abbess of Samtskhe (11th C); St. Peter (Mogila), metropolitan of Kiev (1646); New Hieromartyr Michael Berzin, priest, and Martyr Peter Troitsky, reader (1938); St. Dositheus the Confessor, metropolitan of Zagreb (1945); Venerable Gaius the Monk; 10 Virgin-martyrs of Nicomedia.

1 / 14 January — The Circumcision of Our Lord Jesus Christ - Fast-free period - On the eighth day after His birth, the divine Child was taken to the Temple and duly circumcised according to the Jewish Law that had been observed from the time of Abraham. At this time He was given the name Jesus, the name announced to the most holy Virgin by the Archangel Gabriel (Luke 1:31). The Baptism of the New Covenant was prefigured in the Circumcision of the Old Covenant. The Lord's Circumcision shows that He took true human flesh upon Himself, not its semblance as heretics later taught of Him. The Lord was truly circumcised, desiring thus to fulfil all the Law, which He Himself had given through our forefathers and the prophets. Fulfilling all the ordinances of the Law, He superseded them by Baptism in His Church, for, as the Apostle declares: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature"(Gal. 6:15). (In the Church Calendar, this Feast of the Lord has neither Forefeast nor Afterfeast.)

St Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea - was born in the reign of the Emperor Constantine, in about 330. While still unbaptised, he spent fifteen years in Athens studying philosophy, rhetoric, astronomy and other contemporary secular disciplines. Among his fellow-students were Gregory the Theologian and Julian, later the apostate emperor. When already of mature years, he was baptised in the Jordan together with his former tutor Evulios. He was Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia for nearly ten years, and died at the age of fifty. A great champion of Orthodoxy, a great torch of moral purity and zeal for the Faith, a great theological mind, a great builder and pillar of the Church of God, Basil fully

deserved his title "the Great". In the Office for his Feast, he is referred to as a bee of the Church of Christ, bringing honey to the faithful but stinging those in heresy. Many of the writings of this Father of the Church have survived—theological, apologetic, on asceticism and on the Canons. There is also the Liturgy that bears his name. This Liturgy is celebrated ten times in the year: on January 1st, on the Eves of Christmas and the Theophany, on every Sunday in the Great Fast with the exception of Palm Sunday, and on the Thursday and Saturday in Great Week. St Basil departed this life peacefully on January 1st, 379, and entered into the Kingdom of Christ.

Also commemorated on this day: New Hieromartyr Jeremiah (1918). New Hieromartyrs Platon, bishop of Revel, Estonia and Priests Michael and Nicholas (1919). New Hieromartyrs Alexander archbishop of Samara and with him John, Alexander, John, Alexander, Trophime, Viacheslav, Basil and James priests (1938). St. Athanasius of Poltava, wonderworker (1801). Martyr Basil of Ancyra (ca. 362). St. Emelia, mother of Sts. Macrina, Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa (375). St. Gregory, bishop of Nazianzus (374) and father of St. Gregory the Theologian. Martyr Theodotos. Venerable Theodosius of Tryglia, abbot. St. Fulgentius, bishop of Ruspe in North Africa (533). St. Eugendus, abbot of Condatin the Jura Mountains (510). St. Clarus of Vienne (ca. 660). St. Fanchea of Killeany (ca. 520).

2 / 15 January — St Sylvester, Bishop of Rome - Born in Rome, he was skilled from his early years in secular learning and in Christian doctrine, and his life was always governed by the precepts of the Gospel. He made good use of the tuition of a priest, Timothy, whose death for the Faith he witnessed, and, seeing the example of his teacher's self-sacrifice, nourished himself in that same spirit for the rest of his life. He became Bishop of Rome at the age of thirty, and reformed certain Christian customs; abolishing, for example, the Saturday fast that had up to that time been the rule among some Christians, and decreeing that only Great Saturday and those Saturdays that fall within fasting seasons should be so observed. By his prayers and miracles, he was instrumental in the conversion and baptism of the Emperor Constantine and his mother, Helena, and assisted Queen Helena in the finding of the Holy Cross. He governed the Church for twenty years, and, finishing with honour his earthly life, entered into the heavenly Kingdom in the year 335.

Our Holy Father Seraphim of Sarov - He was one of the greatest Russian ascetics and wonderworkers, with profound spiritual discernment. Born in 1759, he departed this life in 1833. He was distinguished by a great humility. When being praised by all the world, he referred to himself as "the poor wretch Seraphim".

St. Seiriol. - (born c.494) (*Latin-Serialanus, English-Serial*) St. Seiriol the Fair was a younger brother of Kings Cynlas of Rhos and Einion of Llyeyn. He entered the religious life and lived in a small hermitage on the Eastern Peninsula of Ynys Mon (Anglesey). His two ruling brothers later decided this humble residence was far too lowly for their Royal brother and founded an important monastery around his cell. Thus, Seiriol became the first Abbot of Penmon Priory. His hermitage and holy-well can still be seen there today. Seiriol became a great friend of St. Cybi who lived at Caer-Gybi on Ynys Cybi (Holy Island) on the far side of Ynys Mon (Anglesey). The two would often walk several miles to meet up for prayers at the Clorach Wells in Llandyfrydog in the centre of the island. This journey with his back to the sun allowed St. Seiriol's complexion to remain so fair that he was given the epithet of "Gwyn". In old age, Seiriol retired to Ynys Lannog (Priestholm), just off the coast from Penmon. It became known as Ynys Seiriol in his honour, though it is now better known as Puffin Island.

Also commemorated on this day: Righteous Juliana of Lazarevo (1604). New Martyr Basil (1942). Venerable Sylvester of the Kiev Caves (12th c.). Hieromartyr Theogenes, bishop of Parium on the Hellespont (320). St. Gerasimus, patriarch of Alexandria. Venerable Theopemptos. St. Theodota, mother of the first Sts. Cosmas and Damian (3rd c.). Venerable Mark the Deaf. Martyr Sergius of Caesarea in Cappadocia (301). Martyrs Theopistos. St. Cosmas, archbishop of Constantinople (1081). Venerable Ammon of Tabennisi, monk (5th c.).

3 / 16 January — The Prophet Malachi - He was chronologically the last of the prophets, born after the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon in 538 B.C. He was unusually fair of face. According to folk-tradition, he was named 'the angel', perhaps because of his outward fairness, or because of his purity of spirit, or, again, perhaps, because of his companionship with an angel, with whom he often spoke face to face. At these times, others also heard its voice but were not worthy to look on its face. The young prophet spoke forth that which the angel revealed to him. He cried out against the ingratitude of Israel and the sins of the priests. Five hundred years before Christ, he clearly foretold the coming and work of St John the Baptist (3:7). But he was chiefly the prophet of the Day of Judgement (4:1-3). He went to God young in years, and after him there was no prophet in Israel until John the Baptist.

The Holy Martyr Gordius - born in Caesarea of Cappadocia, he was an officer in the Roman army under the Emperor Licinius. At the outbreak of a terrible persecution, he left the army and his former

rank and went into the Sinai desert. Alone on Mount Horeb, Gordius spent his time in prayer and in pondering the mysteries of heaven and earth. In particular he pondered on vanity and on the worthlessness of all for which people struggle and strive so on earth. He came finally to the desire to die and so move into that life that is without transience or corruptibility. With this desire, he went down into a town where pagan games were held. He presented himself to the governor as a Christian. The governor attempted in vain to turn him from the Faith with flattery and threats. Gordius remained unyielding and firm as diamond, saying: "It would obviously be an act of the greatest folly to trade this brief life for eternal torment and spiritual peril." Condemned to death, he hastened joyfully to the place of execution, speaking with the executioners on the way of the wonderful and sweet knowledge of Christ. With the name of Christ on his lips, he delivered his youthful body to the sword and his righteous soul to God in the year 320.

St. Genevieve - Genevieve is the Patroness of the city of Paris. Through fasting, prayer and almsgiving she was made worthy of the Kingdom of God and died on January 3, 512 A.D., in the eighty-ninth year of her life.

Also commemorated on this day: New Hieromartyr Basil Kolmogorov priest (1938). Venerable Abelard, abbot. St. Peter of Atroa (837). St. Thomais of Lesbos (10th c.). Venerable Euthymius (Taqaihvili) the Man of God of Tbilisi (1953). St. Findlugan of Islay (7th c.).

4 / 17 January — The Synaxis of the Seventy Apostles - In addition to the twelve Great Apostles, the Lord chose besides seventy other, lesser, apostles and sent them to preach to the Jews. He sent them out two by two before His face, to each town and place, saying: "Behold, I send you as sheep among wolves" (Lk. 10:1-5). But as Judas, one of the Twelve, fell away from the Lord, so some among these Seventy withdrew from Him, not with the intention of betraying Him but from human weakness and lack of faith (Jn. 6:66). And as Judas's place was filled from among the other apostles, so the places of these were filled with others chosen. These apostles laboured in the same way as the twelve Great Apostles; they were the assistants of the Twelve in the spreading and strengthening of the Church of God in the world. They suffered much torture and malice, from men and from demons, but their firm faith and burning love for the risen Lord made them conquerors of the world and heirs of the Kingdom of heaven. St Eustathius, Archbishop of Serbia - born in the diocese of Budim, of God-fearing parents, he became a monk as a young man in Zeta, then moved on to greater asceticism at Hilandar. In time he became abbot of Hilandar, was then chosen to be Bishop of Zeta and, after some time had elapsed, to be Archbishop of Serbia. He was a man of great virtue and led Christ's flock with zeal and love. He entered peacefully into rest at a great age in 1279, exclaiming as death drew near: 'Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.' His relics are preserved in the crypt of the church at Pec.

The Eunuch of Queen Candace - The Apostle Philip baptised this negro eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). After his baptism, the eunuch returned home and began to teach about Christ. He was the first apostle of the Faith among the negroes of Ethiopia. He died a martyr and was counted worthy of the Kingdom of God. Our Holy Father, the Martyr Onuphrius of Hilandar.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Theoctistus, abbot at Cucomo in Sicily (800). Repose of St. Eustathius I (Eustace), archbishop of Serbia (1285). New Hieromartyrs Alexander, Stephen and Philippe priests (1933). New Hieromartyr Nicholas priest (1939). New Hieromartyr Paul priest (1941). Venerable Aquila, deacon of the Kiev Caves (14th c.). Martyr Zosimas the Hermit and Martyr Athanasius the Commentarisius (superintendent of prisoners), anchorites of Cilicia (3rd-4th c.). Martyrs Chrysantha and Euphemia. Venerable Euthymius the New of Thessalonica, monk. St. Gregory of Langres (539-540). Venerable Fathers Evagre, Ilia the Deacon, and the Disciples of the Thirteen Syrian Fathers (6th. c.). St. Symeon, metropolitan of Smolensk (1699).

5 / 18 January — Eve of Theophany — The Hieromartyr Theopemptus and the Holy Martyr Theonas - when the Emperor Diocletian gave orders for the persecution of Christians, Theopemptus, Bishop of Nicomedia, was the first to suffer for Christ. He was brought before the Emperor, who threatened him with death if he did not deny Christ. To that threat, the courageous bishop replied: 'It is written: "Fear not those who are able to kill the soul". You, O King, have power over my body. Do with it whatever you will!' He was cruelly beaten and starved, and tortured in many ways. Finally the Emperor called in a magician, Theonas, to trick the man of God in some way with magic. Theonas dissolved a very strong poison in water and gave it to Theopemptus to drink. Theopemptus made the sign of the Cross over the cup and drank the poison. Theonas, seeing that it had no effect on Theopemptus, turned to the Emperor and cried out: 'I too am a Christian, and worship the Crucified!' They were both condemned to death; Theopemptus was slain with the sword and Theonas buried alive in the year 298. They suffered with honour and became citizens of the Kingdom of Christ.

The Holy Prophet Micah the First (or Micaiah) - Micah was a contemporary of the Prophet Elias (9th century B.C.), and prophesied evil to King Ahab, who was killed in battle against the Syrians (I Kings 22:8; II Chron. 18:7). He prophesied entirely orally, writing nothing down. There was another Micah, in the eighth century, who prophesied the birth of the Lord in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2) and wrote one of the prophetic books.

Our Holy Mother Synclitica - a native of Macedonia and educated in Alexandria, she was a rich young woman of standing. She had many suitors, but refused them all and fled from her parents' home to a monastery. In the greatest self-denial, in vigils and prayer, she lived to the age of eighty. Her counsels to the nuns have always been regarded as true spiritual pearls, the wisdom she attained coming not from reading but through suffering and pain, through constant meditation and spiritual converse with the divine world. Her soul entered into that higher world in the year 350. Among other counsels, St Synclitica taught: 'Do not abandon a fast in time of sickness, for lo, those who do not fast fall into the same sicknesses.' Also: 'Treasure, when discovered, is quickly seized upon; so virtue, when it is made public, is quickly eclipsed and lost.'

Also commemorated on this day: New Hieromartyr Joseph and with him 37 Martyrs (1921). Virgin-martyr Eugenia (1933). New Hieromartyr Sergius priest (1934). Martyr Matthew (1938). Venerable Symeon of the Pskov Caves (1960). Venerable Apollinaris of Egypt (470). Sts. Phostorius the Hermit and Menas of Sinai (6th c.). Venerable Gregory of Crete, monk (820). Martyr Theodidus. Martyr Sais. St. Tatiana. New Monk-martyr Romanus of Carpenision, who suffered at Constantinople (1694). New Hieromartyr Romanus of Lacedaemonia (1695). St. Menas of Sinai (6th c.). Translation of the relics of St. Rumon, bishop, to Tavistock.

‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡

Monday - Hebrews 8:7-13; Mark 12:13-17

Tuesday - John 10:9-16 Matins Gospel; Colossians 2:8-12 (Circumcision); Luke 2:20-21, 40-52 (Circumcision); Hebrews 7:26-28, 8:1-2 (Saint); Luke 6:17-23 (Saint); 2 Timothy 4:5-8 (Sunday before the Theophany); Mark 1:1-8 (Sunday before the Theophany)

Wednesday - Matthew 11:27-30 (Matins Gospel); Hebrews 10:1-18; Mark 12:28-37; Galatians 5:22-6:2 (Venerable); Luke 6:17-23 (Venerable)

Thursday - Hebrews 10:35-11:7; Mark 12:38-44; 2 Timothy 2:1-10 (Martyr); Matthew 10:16-22 (Martyr)

Friday - Acts 13:25-33 Royal Hours: 1st Hour; Matthew 3:1-11 Royal Hours: 1st Hour; Acts 19:1-8 Royal Hours: 3rd Hour; Mark 1:1-8 Royal Hours: 3rd Hour; Romans 6:3-11 Royal Hours: 6th Hour; Mark 1:9-15 Royal Hours: 6th Hour; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7 Royal Hours: 9th Hour; Matthew 3:13-17 Royal Hours: 9th Hour

Saturday - 1 Timothy 3:14:4-5 (Saturday before the Theophany); Matthew 3:1-11 (Saturday before the Theophany); 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 (Vespers); Luke 3:1-18; 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 (Blessing of Waters, Epistle); Mark 1:9-11 (Blessing of Waters, Gospel)

REFLECTION

A story of the Divine Christ-child: When the holy family fled before Herod's sword to Egypt, robbers leapt out on the road with the intention of stealing something. The righteous Joseph was leading the donkey, on which were some belongings and on which the Most-holy Theotokos was riding with her Son at her breast. The robbers seized the donkey to lead it away. At that moment, one of the robbers approached the Mother of God to see what she was holding next to her breast. The robber, seeing the Christ-child, was astonished at His unusual beauty and said in his astonishment: ``If God were to take upon Himself the flesh of man, He would not be more beautiful than this Child!" This robber then ordered his companions to take nothing from these travelers. Filled with gratitude toward this generous robber, the Most-holy Virgin said to him: ``Know that this Child will repay you with a good reward because you protected Him today." Thirty-three years later, this same thief hung on the Cross for his crimes, crucified on the right side of Christ's Cross. His name was Dismas, and the name of the thief on the left side was Gestas. Beholding Christ the Lord innocently crucified, Dismas repented for all the evil of his life. While Gestas reviled the Lord, Dismas defended Him, saying: This man hath done nothing amiss. (Luke 23:41). Dismas, therefore, was the wise thief to whom our Lord said: Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise (Luke 23:43). Thus the Lord granted Paradise to him who spared Him in childhood.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the purity of the Most-holy Mother of God:

1. On the immaculate purity of her body: passionless and disciplined by fasting;
2. On the immaculate purity of her heart, in which a sinful desire never dwelt;
3. On the immaculate purity of her mind, in which a sinful thought never dwelt.

HOMILY

**-on the Most-holy Virgin, the Theotokos-
And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord (Luke 1:38).**

Here indeed, brethren, is a true handmaid of the Lord! If a handmaid is she who exchanges her will completely for the will of her Lord, then the Most-holy Virgin is the first among all of the Lord's handmaids. If a handmaid is she who, with intent and with complete attention, beholds her Lord, then again the Most-holy Virgin is the first among the handmaids of the Lord. If a handmaid is one who meekly and quietly endures all insults and trials, awaiting only the reward of her Lord, then again and again the Most-holy Virgin is the first and most excellent of all the handmaids of the Lord. She did not care to please the world, but only God; nor did she care to justify herself before the world, but only before God. She herself is obedience; she herself is service; she herself is meekness. The Most-holy Virgin could in truth say to the angel of God: **Behold the handmaid of the Lord.** The greatest perfection, and the greatest honor that a woman can attain on earth, is to be a handmaid of the Lord. Eve lost this perfection and honor in Paradise without effort, and the Virgin Mary achieved this perfection and this honor outside Paradise with her efforts.

Through the prayers of the Most-holy Virgin Theotokos, O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.