



## 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

### Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos

#### 9 / 22 December

**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.

**Troparion of St Anna tone 4:** Today the bonds of barrenness are loosed;/ for God listened to Joachim and Anna./ He promised them although it was beyond hope / that they should bear a divine child./ From this child was born incarnate the Infinite God,/ Who told the Angel to cry to her:/ Rejoice, full of grace; the

Lord is with thee.

**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.

**Kontakion of St Anna Tone 4:** Today creation celebrates Anna's conception which was effected by God./ For she conceived the Maiden who conceived the Word/ Who is beyond all words.

---

#### Vespers

Lord I have Cried, Tone 1, on 10: Octoechos 6; St. Anna 4 (The barren woman); G: St. Anna (The all-glorious great mystery); N: Sunday Dogmatic in the 1<sup>st</sup> tone. Aposticha: Octoechos; G/N: St. Anna (Today the mystic flower beginneth).

#### Matins Gospel IV

#### **EPISTLE: Ephesians 5: 9-19**

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), Finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

## NOT AS FOOLS, BUT AS WISE, REDEEMING THE TIME, BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL

The acquisition of God's Spirit is also capital, but grace-given and eternal, and it is gained in very similar ways, almost the same ways as monetary, social and temporal capital. God the Word, the God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, likens our life to a market, and the work of our life on earth He calls buying, and says to us all: Buy till I come, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. That is to say, economize the time for receiving heavenly blessings through earthly goods. Earthly goods are virtuous acts performed for Christ's sake and conferring on us the grace of the Holy Spirit, without whom there is not and cannot be any salvation; for it is written: 'By the Holy Spirit is every soul quickened and by purity exalted, yea, is made bright by the Three in One in holy mystery' [from Orthodox Matins hymn]. The Holy Spirit Himself enters our souls, and this entrance into our souls of Him the Almighty ...is only granted to us through our own assiduous acquisition of the Holy Spirit, which prepares in our soul and body a throne for the all-creative presence of God with our spirit according to His irrevocable word: I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people (Lev. 26:12) ...Most of all it is given through prayer; for prayer is somehow always in our hands as an instrument for acquiring the grace of the Spirit ...prayer is always possible for everyone, rich and poor, noble and simple. strong and weak. healthy and suffering, righteous and sinful ...Trade thus spiritually in virtue. Distribute the gifts of the grace of the Holy Spirit to them that ask, as a candle, burning with earthly fire, lights other candles for the illumining of all in other places, but diminishes not its own light.

*St. Seraphim of Sarov, Conversation with Nicholas Motovilov Concerning the Aim of the Christian Life.  
B#26, pp. 269-270.*

### Second Epistle Galatians 4: 22-31

### **GOSPEL: ST. LUKE 17: 12-19**

Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

### **"WERE THERE NOT TEN CLEANSED?"**

Again the Saviour manifests unto us His glory, and by working godlike miracles, endeavours to win senseless Israel unto faith, obdurate though he was, and unbelieving. What argument then will avail him at the day of judgment for refusing to accept salvation through Christ? Especially when they themselves heard His words, and were eyewitnesses of His ineffable miracles? For which reason He said Himself of them, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." And again, "If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin, but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father." The cleansing of the lepers, as I said just above, was a plain demonstration (of His miraculous power): for by the law of Moses they were shut out of the cities and villages, as being impure.

And why did He not rather say, "I will, be you cleansed;" as he did in the case of another leper: but commanded them rather to show themselves unto the priests? It was because the law gave directions to this effect to those who were delivered from leprosy: for it commanded them to show themselves to the priests, and to offer a sacrifice for their cleansing. He commanded them therefore to go, as being already healed, and, that they might, so to speak, bear witness to the priests, as the rulers of the Jews, and ever envious of His glory, that wonderfully, and beyond their hope, they had been delivered from their misfortune by Christ's willing that they should be healed. He did not heal them first, but sent them to the priests, because the priests knew the marks of leprosy, and of its being healed. He sent them to the priests, and with them He sent also the healing.

What however was the law of leprosy, and what the rules for its purification, and what the meaning of each of the particulars commanded by the law, we have more fully described at the commencement of our Saviour's miracles as recorded by Luke, and referring thither such as are anxious for learning, let us now proceed to what follows. The nine then, as being Jews, falling into a thankless forgetfulness, did not return to give glory to God: by which He shows that Israel was hard of heart, and utterly unthankful: but the stranger,---for as being a Samaritan he was of foreign race, having been brought thither from Assyria: for the phrase is not without meaning, "in the middle of Samaria and Galilee:" ---returned with a loud voice to glorify God. It shows therefore that the Samaritans were grateful, but that the Jews, even when benefited, were ungrateful.

*St. Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St Luke, Homilies 113-116. B#42, pp. 465-466.*

## Second Gospel: St Luke 8: 16-21

### Saints of the week

**9 / 22 December — Nativity Fast— The Conception by St Anna of the Most Holy Mother of God -** St Joachim was of the tribe of Judah, and a descendant of King David. Anna was the daughter of Matthan the priest, of the tribe of Levi as was Aaron the High Priest. This Matthan had three daughters: Mary, Zoia and Anna. Mary was married in Bethlehem and bore Salome; Zoia was also married in Bethlehem and bore Elisabeth, the mother of St John the Forerunner; and Anna was married in Nazareth to Joachim, and in old age gave birth to Mary, the most holy Mother of God. Joachim and Anna had been married for fifty years, and were barren. They lived devoutly and quietly, using only a third of their income for themselves and giving a third to the poor and a third to the Temple, and they were well provided for. Once, when they were already old and were in Jerusalem to offer sacrifice to God, the High Priest, Issachar, upbraided Joachim: 'You are not worthy to offer sacrifice with those childless hands.' Others who had children jostled Joachim, thrusting him back as unworthy. This caused great grief to the two aged souls, and they went home with very heavy hearts. Then the two of them gave themselves to prayer to God that He would work in them the wonder that He had worked in Abraham and Sarah, and give them a child to comfort their old age. God sent them His angel, Gabriel, who appeared to each of them separately and told them that God had heard their prayer and that a daughter would be born to them. St. Anna conceived at once, and in the ninth month gave birth to the holy Virgin Mary who was blessed by God and all generations of men.

**St. Hannah, Mother of the Prophet Samuel -** Hannah was the wife of Elkanah from Ramathaim Zophim or Arimathea (I Samuel 1:1-2). Hannah had not given birth to any children because she was barren, and this caused her to weep and grieve bitterly. But the Merciful God showed pity on her and removed her barrenness because of her ceaseless sighs and prayers. Hannah bore a son, Samuel, and dedicated him to God from his childhood. Samuel was a great leader of the nation of Israel and a prophet, who anointed two kings, Saul and David. St. Hannah sang a hymn of thanksgiving to God, a hymn wonderful both in its wisdom and its beauty, which is used even to this day in the services of the Church (I Samuel 2:1).

**'Unexpected Joy' Icon of the Mother of God -** The Icon of the Mother of God, named "Unexpected Joy" (Nechayannaya Radost'), is written thus: in a room, upwards is an icon of the Mother of God, and beneath it a youth kneeling at prayer. The tradition about the healing of some youth from a bodily affliction through this holy icon is recorded in the book of Saint Dimitrii of Rostov, "The Fleece of Prayer" ("Runo Oroshennoe") [for the significance of the "Dew-Moistened Fleece" verse Judges 6: 36-40]. The youth out of habit was praying before the image of the All-Pure Virgin and suddenly he saw, that the image was alive, the wounds of the Lord Jesus exposed and bloody. In horror he exclaimed: "O Lady, who is it that hath done this?" To this the Mother of God replied: "Thou and other sinners by their sins do crucify My Son anew". Then only became apparent before him the abyss of his sinfulness, and for a long time in tears he prayed to the Mother of God and the Saviour for mercy. Finally, the unexpected joy of answer to his prayer and forgiveness of sins was given him.

**Also commemorated on this day:** St. Restitutus, bishop of Carthage (373); Martyr Valeria of Aquitaine (4th C); Martyr Sositheus of Persia (553); St. Sophronius, archbishop of Cyprus (6th C); Venerable Stephen the 'New Light' (912); Venerable Theodosius of Molchensk (1802); New Hieromartyr Vladimir Vinogradov, priest (1919); New Hieromartyr Vladimir Dzhurinsky, priest and his wife, Martyr Euphrosyne Dzhurinsky (1920); New Hieromartyrs Alexander Buravtsev, and Basil Yagodin, priests (1937)

## **10 / 23 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Martyrs Menas, Hermogenes and EUGRAPHUS -**

Both Menas and Hermogenes were born in Athens. They both lived in Constantinople, where they enjoyed the high favour of the Emperor and the honour of the people. Menas was known for his great learning and gift of speech and, although he acted outwardly as a pagan, he was in his heart a convinced Christian. Hermogenes was Eparch of Constantinople, and was a pagan through and through. He was, however, a merciful man and performed many good deeds. When dissention broke out between the Christians and the pagans in the city of Alexandria, the Emperor Maximian (285- 305) sent Menas to calm the turmoil and drive the Christians from the city. Menas went and restored peace, but he also declared himself to be a Christian and brought many of the pagans to the true Faith by the power of his words and the witness of his many miracles. When the Emperor heard this, he sent Hermogenes to punish Menas and to liquidate the Christians. Hermogenes brought Menas to trial, and he cut off his feet and his tongue, gouged out his eyes and then threw him into prison. The Lord Jesus himself appeared to him there, to heal and console His suffering servant. When he saw Menas miraculously healed, Hermogenes was baptised and began to preach the mighty Faith of Christ, being made Bishop of Alexandria. Then the furious Emperor Maximian came himself to Alexandria and put Menas and Hermogenes to harsh torture, which they endured courageously with the help of God's grace. Beholding the fortitude of these soldiers of Christ and the miracles God wrought upon them, EUGRAPHUS, Menas's secretary, went into the judgement-hall and shouted to the Emperor's face: 'I too am a Christian!' The Emperor flew into a rage, took a sword and beheaded EUGRAPHUS himself, and then he commanded the executioner to behead Menas and Hermogenes. Their holy relics, thrown into the sea, floated in a miraculous way to Constantinople, where the bishop, forewarned in a dream, met them with great ceremony and buried them with honour.

**St. Ioasaph, bishop of Belgorod** - Sainted Joasaph was born at Proluka, in the former Poltava governance, on 8 September 1705, the feastday of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God. At Baptism he was named Joakim. He was descended from the old and venerable Little Russian (Ukrainian) lineage of the Gorlenkovi. In 1712 his father enrolled the 7 year old Joakim in the Kiev Spiritual Academy. Within the walls of the academy he felt the attraction towards monastic life. And over the course of 7 years he studied it further, and finally revealed his intent to his parents. For a long time his mother and father pleaded with their first-born son not to accept monastic tonsure. But in 1725, in secret from them, he became a "ryasophor" ("robe-wearing novice") with the name Ilarion at the Kiev Mezhygorsk monastery, and on 21 November 1727 he was tonsured in monk's-mantle with the name Joasaph at the Kievo-Bratsk monastery. This event co-incided with the completion of his studies at the spiritual academy. After the death of His Grace Varlaam, the Kiev cathedra-chair was governed by archbishop Raphael Zaborovsky. Archbishop Raphael directed his attention to the evident abilities of the young ascetic and drew him into still more widespread a service to the Church. He was entrusted the responsible obedience of the office of examiner of the Kiev archbishopric. In November 1734 archbishop Raphael ordained the monk-deacon Joasaph to the dignity of priest-monk, and he transferred over from the Bratsk monastery school to the Kievo-Sophia archbishop's house. At the same time he was appointed a member of the Kiev religious consistory. In fulfilling the office of examiner, he exerted much effort towards the correction of moral deficiencies among the parish clergy. The consistory office service of the saint proved a fine schooling for his administrative abilities. During this time he made a good study of the needs of clergy-servers, noting both the good points and the failings of the diocese. Herein in clear form developed Joasaph's many-sided ability for matter, combined with great inner spiritual efforts. He quickly rose up the ladder of spiritual perfection, to which he witnesses in his work, "The Conflict of the Seven Venerable Virtues with the Seven Deadly Sins".

On 24 June 1737 Priest-monk Joasaph was appointed head of the Holy Transfiguration Mgarsk monastery, with elevation to the dignity of hegumen. Here the hegumen worked with all his strength to get the monastery in good order, which was an old bulwark of Orthodoxy in the struggle with the Unia. In this monastery were situated relics of Sainted Athanasias, Patriarch of Constantinople and Lubensk Wonderworker (Comm. 2 May). And several times Sainted Athanasias appeared to Hegumen Joasaph, witnessing to his patronal protection.

In 1744 metropolitan Raphael elevated Hegumen Joasaph to the dignity of archimandrite. Towards the end of that same year he was called to Moscow and soon, at the direction of the Most Holy Synod, he was appointed vicar of the Holy Trinity Sergiev Lavra monastery. At this monastery of the Monk Sergei he likewise unstintingly fulfilled obedience to the Church (this year required much exertion for the rebuilding of the monastery after a conflagration).

On 2 June 1748 at the Petropavlovsk (Peter and Paul) cathedral in Peterburg, Archimandrite Joasaph was ordained bishop of Belgorod. Entering upon the archbishop cathedra-chair, Saint Joasaph strictly concerned himself with piety and the condition of the churches, with the proper making of Divine-services and especially the moral condition of his flock. The saint devoted great attention to the

education of the clergy, and the correct observance by them of churchly norms and traditions. And just as before, the saint worked with all his strength at the archpastoral service, without regard for his health. To his cell-attendant Stefan, on the eve of his repose, the saint forbade him to aspire to the priestly dignity and he predicted, that in case of disobedience he would meet with an untimely end. To another cell-attendant Vasili, the saint indicated that he would be a deacon, but would never attain the dignity of priesthood. And this prediction was afterwards fulfilled. On 10 December 1754 the saint died. Sainted Joasaph was glorified to the ranks of the Saints on 4 September 1911.

**The Venerable Angelina and St. Jovan the Despot** - Angelina was the daughter of the Albanian prince, George Skenderbeg, and the wife of Stefan, Despot of Serbia, who was the son of Despot George. She endured exile with her husband and shared with him all the bitterness of life in Serbia as well as in Albania and Italy. She raised her sons Maxim and Jovan in a truly Christian spirit. Following the death of her husband, she was tonsured a nun, devoting herself entirely to prayer, acts of charity and the building and restoring of holy churches. A faithful wife, an excellent mother and a perfect Christian, she in truth merited the title "Mother Angelina," as the people call her even now. Her miracle-working relics, together with those of her righteous husband Stefan and her devoted sons Maxim and Jovan, rest in the Monastery of Kru edol (although some of the relics were destroyed by the Turks). She entered into rest and took up her habitation in the Immortal Kingdom at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Martyr Eulalia of Merida (304); Martyr Gemellus of Paphlagonia (361); Venerable Thomas of Bithynia (10th C); New Hieromartyrs Jacob Shestakov and Alexander Shklaev, priest (1918); New Hieromartyr Eugraphus Pletnev, priest, and his son, Mikhail Pletnev (1918); New Hieromartyrs Alexander Tubеровsky, Anatolius Pravdoliubov, Eugene Kharkov, Constantine Bazhanov, Michael Kobozev, Nicholas Karasiov, priests, Monk-martyr Sergius Sorokin, Martyrs Gregory Berdenev, Dorotheus Klimashev, Eusebius Tryakhov, Laurentius Kogtyev, Michael Yakunkin, Peter Grishin, Alexandra Ustiukhina and Tatiana Yegorova (1937); New Hieromartyrs Nicholas Rozov and Alexis Vvedensky, priests (1938); Righteous Anna Ivashkina and Tatiana Byakirevoy, confessors (1948); Righteous Thecla Makusheva, confessor (1954); Righteous Anna Stoliarova, confessor (1958).

**11 / 24 December — Nativity Fast — Our Holy Father Daniel the Stylite** - Born in the village of Maroutha, near the city of Samosata in Mesopotamia, of Christian parents, Elias and Martha, he was a gift of God through the tearful prayers of his mother, who was barren, and was dedicated to God in his youth. He embraced the monastic state at the age of twelve and visited Simeon Stylites, receiving his blessing. Desirous of solitude, Daniel left his monastery and withdrew to an abandoned pagan temple on the shore of the Black Sea. He endured many assaults from demons, but overcame them all by prayer, endurance and the sign of the Cross. After that, he climbed up onto a pillar, where he remained till his death, enduring with equanimity both heat and cold, and attacks from both men and demons. Many disciples gathered around his pillar, and he led them towards eternal life by his example and his words. God rewarded His devoted servant with great grace in this life, and he worked many miracles of help to men, and foretold future events. People came to his pillar from all parts, seeking help and advice from the saint of God. Kings and patriarchs came to him, as well as simple folk. The Emperor Leo the Great used to bring his foreign guests, princes and nobles, and show them Daniel on his pillar: 'Here is the wonder of my empire!' Daniel foretold the day of his own death, taught his disciples as a father would his children, and took leave of them. At the time of his death, his disciples saw angels, prophets, apostles and martyrs around the pillar. Having lived in asceticism for eighty years, this angelic man entered into rest, and into the Kingdom of Christ in 489.

**The Venerable Nikon the Dry** - As a monk in the Monastery of the Kiev Caves, he was enslaved by the Tartars. He lived for three years in captivity: shackled, tortured and mocked. When his kinsmen brought the money to ransom him from his master, he refused, saying: "If the Lord had wanted me to be free, He would not have delivered me into the hands of these lawless men." Once he told his master that Christ would free him in three days. The Tartar thought that this meant that his slave was going to escape, so he severed his tendons below the knees. However, on the third day, Nikon was indeed instantly carried to Kiev by an invisible hand. After a period of time, the Tartar came to Kiev and recognized Nikon, his former slave. He repented and was baptized. The former master became the servant and disciple of his former slave. Nikon was called "the Dry" because of the great austerity of his bodily fasting, and he was a great clairvoyant and miracle-worker. He entered peacefully into rest in the Lord on December 11, 1101.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Martyr Barsabas of Persia (342); Martyrs Acepisus and Aeithalas (354); Martyr Mirax of Egypt (†after 639); Right-believing emperor Nikephoros Phokas (969); Venerable Luke the new Stylite (c.970); Venerable Leontius, monk of Monemvasia (1450); New Hieromartyr Theophan, bishop of Solikamsk, and with him two priests and five laymen (1918); New Hieromartyr Nicholas Vinogradov, priest (1937); New Hieromartyr John Bogoyavlensky, priest (1941); Venerable Kuksha of Odessa (1964); Synaxis of the saints of Georgia; 'Port- Arthur' Icon of the Mother of God.

**12 / 25 December — Nativity Fast — St Herman, Wonderworker of Alaska** - at an early age entered the Holy Trinity Sergius Hermitage near the Gulf of Finland, where he was miraculously healed of a dangerous carbuncle by the Mother of God. He later moved to Valaam Monastery, which he greatly loved all his life. He was one of the ten monks selected by Abbot Nazarius for missionary travel to the far reaches of Russia - that part which is now Alaska. A church and school were founded and many adults and children baptised. Over the years the mission was reduced to St. Herman alone. He then chose Spruce Island as the place for his seclusion and monastic labour, naming it 'New Valaam'. He travelled at times to speak to others of Christ's boundless love for man and how one should love God. Before his repose in 1836, he attained such a degree of holiness that he was granted the gifts of miracle working and prophecy. He is a great benefactor to all those who thirst for their eternal heavenly homeland.

**St Spiridon the Wonderworker, Bishop of Tremithus** - The island of Cyprus was both the birthplace of this famous saint, and the place in which he spent his life in the service of the Church. He was of simple farming stock, and remained simple and humble to the end of his days. He married young and had children, but, when his wife died, he devoted himself entirely to the service of God. He was chosen for his devotion as Bishop of Tremithus, and even as a bishop did not change his simple style of life, taking charge of his cattle himself and tilling his own land. He consumed very little of his own produce, giving the greater part to the poor. He performed great wonders by God's power, making rain fall in a drought, stopping the course of a river, raising several of the dead, healing the Emperor Constans of a grave sickness, seeing and hearing angels, foreseeing future events and penetrating the secrets of the human heart. He turned many to the true Faith, and did much else. He was present at the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325, and, by his simple and clear expositions of the Faith, as well as by convincing miracles, brought back many heretics to Orthodoxy. He dressed so simply that once, when he was invited by the Emperor to the imperial court, a soldier took him for a beggar and struck him a blow. The meek and guileless Spiridon turned him the other cheek. He glorified God with many miracles, and was of great aid both to individuals and to the whole Church of God. He entered into rest in the Lord in 348, and his wonderworking relics now lie on the island of Corfu and continue to glorify God with many wonders.

**St. Finnian of Clonard, founder of Skelling Michael, Ireland (549)** whose tropar in Tone 8 is: Truly thou art the "Tutor of the Saints of Ireland",/ O Founder of Clonard, great Father Finnian./ As thou didst tirelessly teach the faith in thy native land,/ so teach us to follow thy example that many may come to know Christ/ and be led into the Way of Salvation; Born c.470 at Myshall, County Carlow, Ireland A pious youth, he founded three churches in Ireland while still a layman. Studied in Wales under Saint Cadoc and Saint Gildas. Monk. Great admirer of Saint Patrick. Considered one of the great founders of Irish monasticism. Founded the monastery at Clonard, Meath, Ireland c.520 which lasted a thousand years, and was a training centre for great Irish saints. Spiritual teacher of Saint Columba of Iona, Saint Columba of Terryglass, Saint Ciaran of Clommacnois, Saint Brendan the Voyager, Saint Nathy, Saint Nennius and others. Maintained close relations with the British Church. Often referred to as a bishop, there is no evidence he was ever so consecrated. Many miracles are attributed to him. Birds would gather around him because of his gentle holiness. Reported to have cleared parasitic insects, worms and vermin from the island of Flathlom and the regions of Nantcarfan. One report says that he fended off a party of Saxon raiders by causing an earthquake to swallow their camp. Died c.549-552 at Clonard, Meath, Ireland of plague; relics originally enshrined in Clonard, but were destroyed in the 9th century

**St. Colman of Glendalough, Ireland (659)** whose Tropar in Tone 8 is: Giving thy life to Christ in monastic poverty,/ thou didst teach us a God-pleasing set of values, O Father Colman./ Wherefore intercede with Christ our God that He will instil in us constancy of faith, patience in trials and freedom from worldliness/ that we may be found worthy of His great mercy.

**St. Columba of Leinster** whose Tropar in Tone 8 is: O pious Columba, as a disciple of our Father Finnian and a renowned struggler,/ thou didst shine forth in the ascetic life./ O Ireland's treasure, cease not to pray for those who labour,/ weeping and repenting, for the salvation of their souls.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Hieromartyr Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem (251); Martyr Synesius of Rome (c.275); Hieromartyr John of Zedazeni (9th C); Venerable Therapontus of Monza (1597); Hieromartyr Juvenaly of Alaska (1796); Martyr Peter the Aleut (1815).

**13 / 26 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Martyrs Eustratius, Auxentius, Eugene, Mardarius and Orestes** - These five courageous men shone like five resplendent stars in the dark days of the anti-Christian Emperors Diocletian and Maximian. St Eustratius was a Roman general in the city of Satalios, Eugene was one of his comrades in arms and Orestes likewise a respected soldier. Auxentius was a priest and Mardarius a simple citizen who came, like Eustratius, from the town of Aravraca. The imperial governors, Lysias and Agricola, tortured Auxentius first as he was a priest. Beholding the innocent suffering of the Christians, Eustratius presented himself before Lycias and declared that he also was a Christian. While Eustratius was being tortured, Eugene stood up before the judge and cried out: 'I am a Christian too, Lycias!' When they were driving Eustratius and the other martyrs through the town, Mardarius saw them from the roof of his house, and he took leave of his wife and two frail daughters and

hastened after them, shouting into the faces of their tormentors: 'I am a Christian too, like the Lord Eustratius!' Orestes was a young and handsome soldier, who stood head and shoulders above all the other soldiers. One day, when he was at target practice in Lycias's presence, the Cross he was wearing fell from his breast, and Lycias realised that he was a Christian. Orestes openly confessed his faith, and was martyred with the others. Auxentius was beheaded, Eugene and Mardarius died under torture, Orestes was exposed on a red-hot iron grid and Eustratius died in a flaming furnace. St Blaise gave Communion to St Eustratius in prison before his death. Their relics were later taken to Constantinople, and are preserved in the church dedicated to them—The Holy Five Companions. They were seen alive in that church, and St Orestes appeared to St Dimitri of Rostov. A beautiful prayer by St Eustratius is extant, which is read at the Midnight Service on Saturdays: 'I glorify Thy majesty, O Lord for Thou hast regarded my lowliness and hast not shut me up in the hands of my enemies, but hast saved my soul from want ...'.

**The Holy Martyr Lucy the Virgin** - With her mother, Lucy visited the grave of St. Agatha in Catania, where St. Agatha appeared to her. Her mother, who had dropsy, was then miraculously healed in the church. Lucy distributed all her goods to the poor, and this embittered her betrothed, who accused her of being a Christian before Paschasius the judge. The wicked judge ordered that she be taken to a brothel in order to defile her. However, by the power of God she remained immovable, as if rooted to the earth, and not even a multitude of people was able to move her from that spot. Then an enraged pagan pierced her throat with a sword and she gave up her soul to God and took up her habitation in the Kingdom of Eternity. Lucy suffered in the year 304.

**St. Judoc, hermit of Ponthieu** - (Died AD 675) (*Welsh: Iudog; Latin: Iudocus; English: Joyce*). Prince Judoc (or Josse, as he was commonly called) was educated at the monastery of San Maelmon. On the abdication of his brother, Prince Judicael of Domnonee, around 636, Judoc immediately ascended the Domnonian throne. He asked for eight days to consider his position, but decided he too preferred the religious life and fled to Ponthieu where he became chaplain to the local Count. Judoc later retired from the World to Ray where he set up a small hermitage. Unfortunately, the locals took to worrying him for miracle cures and he was forced to move to Caer-Runiac (Saint-Josse-sur-Mer) to escape them. He lived there thirteen years, and then in the Valley of Pidrague before travelling on a pilgrimage to Rome. Judoc died some time after his return, on 13th December 675. St. Judoc's bones were enshrined at Saint-Josse, before being taken to Winchester New Minster in 902 by some refugee monks. Hence his popularity in England.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Martyr Antiochus of Sulcis (c.110); Venerable Columba of Terryglass (c.548); Venerable Odilia of Alsace (723); Venerable Arsenius of Mt. Latros (8th C); Venerable Arcadius of Novotorzhok (11th C); Venerable Mardarius, recluse of the Kiev Caves (13th C); Hieromartyr Gabriel, patriarch of Serbia (1659); St. Dositheus of Moldavia, metropolitan of Azov (1701); St. Gabriel (Kikodze), bishop of Ilmereti (1896); New Hieromartyr Alexander Yuzefovich, priest, and Martyr John Menkov (1920); New Hieromartyrs Alexander Pospelov, Alexis Rozhdestvensky, Vladimir Lozina-Lozinsky, Gregory Faddeev, and Jacob Gusev, priests (1937); New Hieromartyr Nicholas Amasiysky, priest (1938); New Hieromartyrs Emilian Kireyev and Basil Pokrov, Priests (1941); Venerable Ares of Egypt.

**14 / 27 December — Nativity Fast - The Holy Martyrs Thyrsus, Leucius and Callinicus** - Saints Thyrsus and Leucius were eminent citizens of Bithynian Caesarea; the latter being baptised and the former still a catechumen. Callinicus, however, was a pagan priest who offered sacrifice to idols. When Cumbricius, heir to the Emperor Decius, began to torture and murder the Christians, the intrepid Leucius stood before him and reproached him: 'Why have you begun to make war on your own soul, Cumbricius?' The enraged judge ordered that he be flogged and tortured, and then beheaded with the sword. In terrible torment, Leucius went to his execution as joyfully as if he were going to a wedding. When he beheld Leucius's courageous death, blessed Thyrsus was inflamed with divine zeal and, like Leucius, went before the judge and rebuked him for his crimes and his lack of belief in the one, true God. He was therefore beaten and cast into prison. He was healed of his wounds by the invisible hand of God, which also opened the prison doors and led him forth. Thyrsus went at once to Phileas, the Bishop of Caesarea, to be baptised by him. After his baptism, he was again seized and tortured, but he endured all the torments as if in a dream and not in reality. Many idols fell down through the power of his prayer. When he saw this, Callinicus, a pagan priest, was converted to the Christian faith, so both he and Thyrsus were condemned to death. Callinicus was beheaded with the sword, and Thyrsus was placed in a wooden coffin to be sawn asunder, but God's power prevented this and the saw could not penetrate the wood. Then Thyrsus arose from the coffin, praying and thanking God for his sufferings, and he peacefully gave his soul into the Lord's hands. At the end of the fourth century, the Emperor Flavian built a church to St Thyrsus near Constantinople, and placed his holy relics in it. The saint appeared in a vision to the Empress Pulcheria, and suggested that she bury the relics of the Forty Martyrs beside his own. The Holy Martyrs Philemon, Apollonius, Arrian and others; St. Hybald, Abbot in Lincolnshire, England (7th c.) - Benedictine abbot at Bardney, Lincolnshire, England. Mentioned by the Venerable Bede as an acquaintance of Saint Chad. Hermit in later life. Some churches, the village of Hibaldstowe, and other locations are named in his honour. Died c.690 of natural causes; relics at Hibaldstowe, Lincolnshire, England.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Martyrs Philemon, Apollonius, Arianus and Theoctychus of Alexandria, and four guards converted by the Martyr Arianus (286-287); St. Venantius Fortunatus, bishop of Poitiers (600); Venerable Hibald of Lincolnshire (7<sup>th</sup> C); Venerable Folcwin of Théroouanne (855); St. Hilarion, metropolitan of Suzdal (1707); New Hieromartyr Nicholas Kovalev, priest (1937); New Hieromartyr Bassian, Archbishop of Tambov (1940).

**15 / 28 December — Nativity Fast — The Hieromartyr Eleutherius** - A good fruit of a good tree, this wonderful saint had noble and eminent parents. He was born in Rome, where his father was in imperial service. His mother, Anthea, heard the Gospel from the great Apostle Paul himself, and was baptised by him. Being early left a widow, she entrusted her only son to the education and service of the Bishop of Rome, Anacletus. Seeing how greatly Eleutherius was gifted and illumined by the grace of God, the bishop ordained him deacon at the age of fifteen, priest at eighteen and bishop at twenty. Endowed by God with wisdom, he made up for what he lacked in years. This godly man was made bishop in Illyria, with his seat at Valona in Albania. He kept his flock like a good shepherd, adding to their number from day to day. The Emperor Hadrian, a persecutor of Christians, sent a commander, Felix, with soldiers, to seize Eleutherius and take him to Rome. When the furious Felix arrived in Valona and went into the church, and heard and saw God's holy hierarch, his heart was suddenly changed and he became a Christian. Eleutherius baptised him and set off with him for Rome, as merrily as though he were going to a feast, not to trial and torture. The Emperor put the gently-born Eleutherius to harsh torture, flogging him, burning him on an iron grid, boiling him in pitch and burning him in a fiery furnace. But, by God's power, Eleutherius was delivered from all these deadly torments. Seeing all this, Choribus the governor proclaimed that he himself was a Christian. Choribus was tortured and then beheaded, and so also blessed Felix. Finally, the imperial executioners cut off the honoured head of St Eleutherius. When his mother, holy Anthea, came and stood over the dead body of her son, she was also beheaded. Their bodies were taken to Valona, where St Eleutherius glorifies the name of Christ to this day by many wonders. He suffered in the time of Hadrian, in the year 120.

**St. Stephen the Confessor of Sourozh** - Stephen was born in Cappadocia and educated in Constantinople under the Patriarch, St. Germanus. He withdrew into solitude and lived hidden from the world. An angel appeared to St. Germanus and ordered him to appoint Stephen bishop of the town of Sourozh (now Sudak in the Crimea), and the patriarch did so. The zealous Stephen converted many to Christianity. He suffered bitterly under Emperor Leo the Isaurian for the sake of icons. He prophesied to the emperor his impending death. Following this wicked emperor's evil death, Stephen was returned to his diocese, where he fed his God-pleasing flock and died peacefully at the end of the eighth century.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Venerable Paul of Mt. Latros (955); Martyr Eleutherius of Constantinople (c.305); Nun-martyr deaconess Susanna (in monasticism Johanna) of Palestine (4th C); Venerable Pardus, hermit of Palestine (6th C); St. Aubertus, bishop of Cambrai-Arras (†668); Venerable Offa, king of Essex (709); Martyr Bacchus the New (800); Venerable Nectarius of Bitola (1500); Venerable Tryphon of Pechenga, Kola (1583); Venerable Jonah of Pechenga (1590); New Hieromartyr Hilarion (Troitsky), archbishop of Verey (1929); New Hieromartyrs Alexander Rozhdestvensky, Basil Vinogradov, Viktorin Dobronravov, priests (1937); Synaxis of the saints of Crimea ; Synaxis of the saint of the Kola Peninsula.

### ‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡

**Monday** - John 10:9-16 (Matins Gospel); 1 Timothy 5:1-10; Mark 8:11-21; Ephesians 6:10-17 (Martyrs); Luke 21:12-19 (Martyrs); Hebrews 7:26-8:2 (St. Ioasaph); John 10:9-16 (St. Ioasaph)

**Tuesday** - 1 Timothy 5:11-21; Mark 8:22-26

**Wednesday** - 1 Timothy 5:22-6:11; Mark 8:30-34; Hebrews 13:17-21 (St. Spyridon); Luke 6:17-23 (St. Spyridon)

**Thursday** - Matthew 10:16-22 (Matins Gospel); 1 Timothy 6:17-21; Mark 9:10-16; Ephesians 6:10-17 (Martyrs); Luke 21:12-19 (Martyrs)

**Friday** - 2 Timothy 1:1-2, 8-18; Mark 9:33-41

**Saturday** - Galatians 5:22-6:2; Luke 14:1-11



**HYMN OF PRAISE**  
**SAINT SPYRIDON THE WONDERWORKER, BISHOP OF TREMITHUS**

Star of Cyprus and luminary of the Church,  
Holy Spyridon, defender of the Faith,  
Simple as a child, innocent as a child-  
By his simplicity, he shines on the world.  
What need is there for many words when speaking the truth?  
Utterly simple is God's truth:  
The Creator is One, in the Holy Trinity,  
In the Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit.  
The Son descended to the sinful earth  
And received flesh from the Pure Virgin  
In order to save men, because He is the Lover of Mankind.  
He performed many miracles  
By divine power, for He is Almighty.  
To mankind He gave a new rule,  
The rule of love and the rule of faith.  
Glorified, He now sits in heaven,  
And gathers the fruit of His labor.  
The sweet fruits of His labor  
Are holy men and holy women.  
He is the Rock of mankind's salvation;  
Outside this Rock there is no salvation.  
O Spyridon, O illuminator,  
O soldier of Christ, pray for us.

**REFLECTION**

Absolutely nothing will help us if we are not lenient toward the weaknesses of men and forgive them. For how can we hope that God will forgive us if we do not forgive others? St. Spyridon once sold a hundred goats to a merchant at an agreed price, and the saint told the buyer to lay down the money. The buyer, knowing that Spyridon himself never counted money, handed over enough money for ninety-nine goats and hid the money for one. Spyridon then counted out a hundred goats for him. But when the merchant and his servants drove off the goats, one of them returned bleating. He drove it off, but it returned again. And so the goat continually returned to the enclosure, not wanting to go with the other goats. The saint then whispered into the merchant's ear: "Observe, my son: this animal is not doing this in vain. Did you perhaps withhold her price?" The merchant became ashamed and acknowledged his sin. As soon as he paid the amount he had concealed, the goat immediately joined the other goats. On another occasion, some thieves entered Spyridon's sheepfold. When they had seized as many sheep as they wanted, they tried to leave the sheepfold, but an invisible force nailed them to the ground, and they were unable to move. At dawn, the bishop came to his sheepfold. Seeing the thieves, he reproached them mildly and instructed them to strive in the future to live by their own labors and not by thievery. He then took a sheep and gave it to them, saying, "Take this for your trouble, so that your all-night vigil not be in vain," and he dismissed them in peace.

Available on the net at <http://www.saintjonah.org/bltn/> or at <https://www.orthodoxrva.org/bulletins> where you can subscribe to the email list.