

Sunday of the Myrrbearing Women

Third Sunday of Pascha

6 / 19 May



Sunday of Myrrbearing Women. Troparion. Tone II — When Thou, the Deathless Life, didst go down to death, then didst Thou slay hell by the lightning flash of Thy Divinity. And when Thou didst raise the dead from the lower world, all the Powers of Heaven cried aloud: Christ our God, Giver of Life, glory to Thee.

Noble Joseph took Thy immaculate Body down from the Tree, wrapped It in a clean shroud and spices, and having embalmed It laid It in a new sepulchre. But on the third day Thou didst rise, O Lord, granting to the world great mercy.

To the myrrbearing women at the sepulchre an Angel appeared and cried: Myrrh is fit for the dead, but Christ has shown Himself a Stranger to corruption. So cry: The Lord has risen, granting to the world great mercy.

Kontakion, Tone II — Thou didst command the Myrrbearers to rejoice, O Christ our God, Thou didst dry the tears of our first mother Eve by Thy Resurrection, and Thou didst command the Apostles to preach: The Saviour has risen from the tomb.

Troparion of the Sunday, Tone II — When Thou didst descend to death, O Life immortal, / Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead! / And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead, / all the powers of heaven cried out: / O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to Thee!

Hymn to the Theotokos, Tone II — All beyond thought, all most glorious, / are your mysteries, O Theotokos. / Sealed in purity, preserved in virginity, / you were revealed to be the true Mother who gave birth to the true God. / Entreat Him to save our souls.

Kontakion of the Sunday, Tone II — Hell became afraid, O Almighty Savior, / seeing the miracle of Thy Resurrection from the tomb! / The dead arose! Creation, with Adam, beheld this and rejoiced with Thee! / And the world, O my Savior, praises Thee forever.

Righteous Job the Much-Suffering, Troparion, Tone I — Seeing the richness of the virtues of Job, / the enemy of the righteous plotted to steal them; / yet though he broke down the tower of his body, / he could not steal the treasure of his spirit; / for he who, having stripped me naked, took me captive / found the soul of the blameless one fully armed. / Wherefore, anticipating my need before the end, O Savior, // deliver me from the deceiver and save me.

Kontakion, Tone VIII: "As the firstfruits..." — Shown to be truthful and righteous, pious, blameless and sanctified, O most glorious one, / thou true favorite of God, thou hast enlightened the world with thy patience, O most patient and valiant one. // Wherefore, O thou who art divinely wise, we all hymn thy memory.

Matins Gospel III

Epistle: St. Acts of the Apostles 6: 1-7

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, Whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

THE FIRST SEVEN DEACONS

He performs the office of a deacon, who anoints the mind for holy endeavours and drives out passionate thoughts; he performs the office of a priest, who enlightens the mind by knowledge of what is, and destroys false knowledge; he performs the office of a bishop, who completes the mind's perfection by the sacred unction of knowledge of the worshipful Holy Trinity.

St. Maximos the Confessor. Second Century on Love. Text 21. B#9. p. 302.

The Gospel According To St. Mark 15: 43 - 16: 8

Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marvelled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James observed where He was laid. Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away--for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples--and Peter--that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN

Mark how great the women's assiduity. They had followed Him, ministering to Him, and were present even to the time of the dangers. This is why they also saw all; how He cried, how He gave up the ghost; how the rocks were rent and all the rest. These women were the first to see Jesus; and the sex that was most condemned first enjoys the sight of the blessings; this sex shows its courage the most. And when the disciples had fled, these were present. Joseph, who had been concealing his discipleship of late, now became very bold after the death of Christ. He was by no means an obscure person ...but one of the council ...He exposed himself to death, taking great enmity upon him from all by his affection for Jesus ...Do you see the women's courage? Do you see their affection? Do you see their noble spirit in matters of money? their noble spirit even unto death? Let the men imitate the women; let us not forsake Jesus in temptation ...But we neither feed Him when hungry, nor clothe Him when naked (Cf. Matt.25), but seeing Him go begging, we pass Him by. And yet if we saw Him in fact, everyone would strip himself of all his goods.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily LXXXVIII on Matthew XXVII, 1. B#54, p. 522.

"And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" (Mk. 16:1-3).

Brothers and sisters! Can you imagine the state of mind these Myrrh-bearing women were in? For those who lived through Soviet times in Russia and through the persecution of the Church, it is so understandable. In some churches, as in the outskirts of Kiev, this service (the Burial of the Saviour) was performed at night. People made their way to such a church through dark streets. Anything could happen, you had to be careful of everything. Neighbours might hear that you went somewhere at night; and you could be stopped on the street. And the service itself in church and the carrying of the Shroud around the church could be interrupted by the authorities. One did not know if tomorrow, on Holy Saturday, this already semi-Easter Liturgy would be performed, because the priest might be arrested.

The Myrrh-bearers were in such a state of mind. They themselves were in danger of being arrested at any moment. Even in their homes they locked the doors from inside; they were afraid of any knock, any little sound. Two days before, Peter had denied that he too was with Jesus, meaning that he was one of His disciples. And before whom? Before a servant girl, and only because she might report him.

Such was the situation. Their Teacher had been condemned and sentenced to the most terrible death, had been executed. And now it was their turn: as the disciples of the executed Teacher they were outside the law. More than that—they were probably being sought already. The most sensible thing would have been to flee somewhere, to hide. But instead of that, they decided to go while it was still night to the sepulchre which was not far from the place of execution. They knew well that the entrance to the sepulchre was blocked by a stone, which as the Gospel says, was "very great" (Mk. 16:4), that it bore a seal, that Roman guards were guarding the tomb, and that these guards were armed and especially vigilant because they had been warned that the disciples might steal His body.

Actually, in terms of reason, what these weak women wanted to do was not only impossible, but was just a mad risk. And yet they went anyway. How? Why? What powerful force was drawing them? This force was the Word of God expressed in the Law of Moses. And fulfilling what was for them a holy law, they bought perfumes and went to anoint Him. This required their conscience. And this strength of faith in the Word of God, strength of love toward their tortured Teacher, and strength of hope that God would help—proved to be stronger than fear, stronger than reason, stronger than everything else.

And what happened? When they arrived, the guards had run away in fear. And when they entered the tomb, they saw a youth sitting on the right side, clad in white clothes; and they were terrified. But he said: "Be not afraid: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified; He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him" (Mk. 16:6).

Doesn't the same thing happen in our life? The Myrrh-bearers, fulfilling the Old Testament Law, the Law of Moses, bought perfumes and went to anoint His body, the body of Christ. And we, fulfilling the Law of the New Testament, the Law of Christ, must also acquire spiritual perfumes—His commandments: humility, meekness, peaceloving—and we must anoint His body with spiritual oil (that is, with love and mercy). And His Body is the Church of Christ. This is all our brothers and sisters in Christ; and more—this is even our enemies. How often in doing this, we subject ourselves to discomfort, losses, mockery, and sometimes even dangers. And what insurmountable obstacles are raised by our cold mind, our egotism! Not infrequently we yield, we retreat, we are afraid to express ourselves loudly and openly as His disciples.

But if we throw off this shameful fear and only begin to fulfil His teaching, only begin to follow in His footsteps, the same will happen to us that happened to the Myrrh-bearers: the obstacles will disperse of themselves, will fall away, like the stone from the door of the tomb. All those who would disturb us will run away; we will not even find them. Before us will be one thing—the illuminated sepulchre of Christ. And there will be such a clearness that all doubts will vanish. We will know what to do, how to act; and that which seemed impossible will become possible.

Let us from this day imitate the Myrrh-bearers and not fear to fulfil the will of Christ, not fear to be His disciples. Christ always conquered, always conquers, and always will conquer.

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei

Saints of the Week

6 / 19 May — Holy, Righteous and Longsuffering Job - a descendant of Esau, the grandson of Abraham, and lived in Arabia about 2,000 years before Christ. His father's name was Zareth and his mother's Bosora; his full name was Jobab. He was an honourable and God-fearing man, and was very rich. But when he reached the age of seventy-nine, God permitted heavy temptation from Satan to fall on him, as is written in detail in the Book of Job. In one day, Job lost all his great possessions and his sons and daughters. Then a great sickness fell on him, from which his whole body was covered with sores from top to toe, and Job lay on a rubbish heap outside the town and scoured his boils with sherds of broken pottery. But Job did not complain of God, but patiently endured all his sufferings to the end. Therefore the Lord restored his health and gave him riches greater than he had had before, and there were born to him seven sons and three daughters; as many as he had had before. And Job lived for 248 years, glorifying and praising God. Job is regarded as the model of patient endurance of every suffering that God sends us, and is a type of the suffering Christ.

The Holy Martyr Barbarus - a soldier during the reign of Julian the Apostate. When the emperor's commander Bacchus led the Roman army against the Franks, Barbarus, who was secretly a Christian, was serving in the army. In battle there appeared a certain hero on the side of the Franks, similar to Goliath of old and he challenged the Romans to send one of their men to come out to do battle. Commander Bacchus advised Barbarus to go. Barbarus prayed in his heart to the Living Lord, went out and defeated that giant. As a result, the Frankish army became confused and fled. Then the commander prepared a great celebration and ordered that sacrifices be offered to the idols. During the sacrificial offerings, the commander learned that Barbarus kept himself apart. When he was asked about that, Barbarus declared that he is a Christian. The commander informed the emperor and the emperor ordered that Barbarus be subjected to the most severe tortures. But Barbarus endured all with rare courage and composure. During his tortures, many miracles were manifested and many soldiers, witnessing this, accepted the Faith of Christ. Among them was the Commander Bacchus along with Callimachus and Dionysius. All three were beheaded for the Name of Christ and, after them, Barbarus was also beheaded in the year 362 A.D. Their souls took up habitation in the kingdom of Christ the Immortal King.

Also commemorated on this day: Sts. Myrrh-Bearing Women, righteous Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (celebration on the 3rd Sunday of Pascha). Right-believing Tamara, Queen of Georgia (movable holiday on the Sunday of Myrrh-Bearing Women). Sts. Mary and Martha, sisters of St. Lazarus (1st c.) (movable holiday on the Sunday of Myrrh-Bearing Women). All Saints of Thessalonica (celebration on the 3rd Sunday of Pascha) (Greek). New Hieromartyr Seraphim, archbishop of Phanarion and Neochorion (celebration on the 3rd Sunday of Pascha) (Greek). New Monk-martyr Elias (Ardunis) of Mt. Athos and Kalamata (1688) (celebration on the 3rd Sunday of Pascha) (Greek). New Martyr Demetrius of Peloponnesus (1803) (celebration on the 3rd Sunday of Pascha) (Greek). Venerable Micah, disciple of St. Sergius of Radonezh (1385). Venerable Job, abbot and wonderworker of Pochaev (1651). Martyr Barbarus the former robber in Epirus (9th c.). Translation of the relics (1675) of Venerable Pachomius of Nerekhta (1384). St. Edbert, bishop of Lindisfarne (698) (Celtic & British). Venerable Seraphim of Mt. Domvu (Greek). Translation of the relics (1238) of Venerable Sava I of Serbia (Serbia). Venerable Sinaites of Serbia: Romil of Ravanica, Romanos of Ravanica, Sisoje of Sinai and Sisojevac, Martirije of Rukumije, Grigorije of Gornjak, Zosim of Tuman and Gregory of Sinai.

Sts. Mamas, Pachomius and Hilarion, monks (Greek). Martyrs Demetrius, Danax, Mesiurs, Therin, and Donatus (Greek).

7 / 20 May — Commemoration of the Appearing of the Precious Cross over Jerusalem - In the time of the Emperor Constantius, St Constantine's son, and Patriarch Cyril of Jerusalem, the Precious Cross appeared one day at nine o'clock in the morning above Golgotha, and spread as far as the Mount of Olives. This Cross was brighter than the sun and more beautiful than the loveliest rainbow. The whole people—believers and unbelievers—left their work and watched this heavenly sign in fear and wonder. Many unbelievers were converted to faith in Christ, and also many Arians abandoned their wicked heresy and returned to Orthodoxy. Patriarch Cyril wrote a letter to the Emperor Constantius about this sign, the Emperor himself being inclined towards Arianism. This took place on May 7th, 357. Thus was it demonstrated by this means that the Christian faith does not lie in the worldly theorising of the sensual understanding of men, but in the power of God, shown forth through wonders and signs without number.

St. John of Beverley, bishop of York (721) - Born in Harpham (Humberside), Yorkshire, England; died at Beverley, England, May 7, 721; canonized in 1037; feast of translation, October 25. Saint John trained for the priesthood and monastic life in Kent under the direction of SS. Adrian and Theodore, but returned to Yorkshire upon completing his studies to become a monk at Whitby Abbey, which was then under the rule of Saint Hilda. John founded a monastery in Humberside, England, on the site of a small church dedicated to Saint John the Evangelist, where he asked to be buried. In 687, after the death of Saint Eata, John he was consecrated bishop of Hexham. He is said to have shown special care for the poor and the handicapped. Whatever time he could spare from his episcopal duties he spent in contemplation. At regular seasons, especially during Lent, he retired to pray in a cell by the church of Saint Michael beyond the Tyne, near Hexham. He would take with him some poor person, whom he would serve during his retirement. He was transferred York as archbishop upon the death of Saint Bosa in 705, and Saint Wilfrid succeeded him at Hexham as part of the final settlement of the latter's long dispute with the Northumbrian kings. He continued his practice of periodic retirement for spiritual refreshment. His chosen retreat was an abbey that he had built at Beverley, then a forest. Not until old age had worn him out did he resign his office to Saint Wilfrid the Younger in order to spend the last four years of his life in the peace of his beloved abbey at Beverley.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyr Acacius the Centurion at Byzantium (303). Repose of Venerable Nilus, abbot of Sora (1508). Venerable John of Zedazeni in Georgia, and 12 disciples: Venerables Shio Mgvime, David of Gareji, Anthony of Martq'ophi, Thaddeus of Urbnisi or Stepantsminda, Stephen of Khirsa, Isidore of Samtavisi, Michael of Ulumbo, Pyrrhus of Breta, Zenon of Iqalto, Jesse (Ise) of Tsilkani, Joseph of Alaverdi, and Abibus of Nekressi (6th c.) (Georgia). Uncovering of the relics (1815) of Venerable Nilus the Myrrh-gusher of Mt. Athos. Synaxis of All Holy Russian Sovereigns Commemorated on Athos. Icons of the Most Holy Theotokos "Zhirovits" (1470) and "Lubech" (11th c.). New Martyr Pachomius of Patmos (1730) (Greek). St. Domitianus, bishop of Maastricht (560) (Neth.). St. Lydia of Philippi (1st c.). Uncovering of the relics of St. Euthymius the Great.

8 / 21 May — The Holy Apostle and Evangelist John - The main commemoration of this great Apostle and Evangelist is on September 26th, but on May 8th is commemorated a wonderful revelation about his grave. When St John was more than a hundred years old, he took seven of his disciples, went outside the city of Ephesus and told the disciples to dig a grave in the form of a cross. Then the old man went down alive into the grave and was buried. When the faithful later opened John's grave, they did not find the body in it. And on May 8th each year a dust arose from the grave, from which those suffering from many diseases were healed.

Our Holy Father Arsenius the Great - This glorious saint was born of a patrician family in Rome and was well educated in the secular sciences and philosophy as well as in spiritual wisdom. Abandoning all the vanity of the world, he dedicated himself to the service of the Church and was a deacon of the great church in Rome. Unmarried, withdrawn, quiet and devout, Arsenius thought to live that way his entire life. But the Providence of God directed his path in life otherwise. Emperor Theodosius took him as a tutor and teacher of his sons Arcadius and Honorius, and installed him as a senator surrounding him with great wealth, honours and

luxury. But all of this burdened Arsenius' heart rather than pleasing him. It happened that Arcadius committed a wrong and for that Arsenius punished him. The offended Arcadius conceived a terrible revenge against his teacher and when Arsenius found out he changed into the clothes of a beggar, left for the seashore, boarded a boat and sailed to Egypt. When he arrived at the renowned Scete, he became a disciple of the glorious John Colobus [The Short] and dedicated himself to a life of asceticism. He considered himself dead and when someone informed him that a wealthy relative died and willed his entire estate to him, Arsenius replied: "But I died before him, how is it therefore that I could be his heir?" Withdrawn in a hermit's cell as in a tomb, throughout the entire day, he wove baskets of palm leaves, and at night, he prayed to God. He avoided men and all conversations with them. Only on feast days did he leave his cell and attend church to receive Holy Communion. In order not to become lazy, he often asked himself the question: "Arsenius, why did you come to the wilderness?" He remained in the wilderness for fifty-five years as a "desert dweller" and for that entire time was a model to the monks and a glory to monastics in general. In all, Arsenius lived one hundred years and died peacefully in the year 448 A.D. after prolonged labour and voluntarily imposing hardships upon himself and took up habitation in the kingdom of Christ the Lord, Whom he loved with all his heart, all his mind and all his soul.

St Emilia - the mother of Saint Basil the Great. In her youth she desired to remain a virgin for life but was forced into marriage. Emilia gave birth to nine children and so inspired them with the Spirit of Christ that five of them became Christian saints: Basil the Great, Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, Peter, Bishop of Sebaste, Macrina and Theosevia. In her old age Emilia established a convent where she lived with Macrina her daughter and where she died in the Lord on May 8, 375 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerables Arsenius the Lover of Labor (14th c.) and Pimen the Ascetic (12th c.), of the Kiev Caves. Martyrs Nicephorus (1942). Translation of the relics (1785) of Venerable Arsenius of Novgorod, fool-for-Christ (1570). Venerable Hierax of Egypt (5th c.). The Monks Zosima and Adrian of Volokolamsk (15-16th c.). Venerable Cassian, recluse and faster of the Kiev Caves (13-14th c.). St. Macarius of Ghent, archbishop (1012) (Neth.). St. Iduberga, foundress of Nijvel (652) (Neth.). Commemoration of the healing of blinded Stephen by the Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos of Cassiopia. Hieromartyrs Indract and Comp, at Shapwick. St. Wiro, bishop of Utrecht. St. Odger, hierodeacon, of Odilienberg. St. Milles the Melode, monk(Greek)

9 / 22 May — Fast Day - St Nicolas the Wonderworker of Myra in Lycia - on this day is commemorated the translation of his relics. In the time of the Emperor Alexius I Comnenus and Patriarch Nicolas Grammaticus, in 1087, the body of this saint was taken from Myra in Lycia to the town of Bari in Italy. This came to pass because of a Moslem attack on Lycia. The saint appeared to a priest in Bari and commanded that his relics be taken there. At that time, the town of Bari was Orthodox and under the administration of an Orthodox patriarch. At the translation of the saint's relics, many miracles were wrought on those who touched them, and a healing myrrh flowed in abundance from them. Also on this day is commemorated the miracle worked by St Nicolas on Stefan of Decani, King of Serbia. This was when the saint restored the sight of the blind King Stefan.

The Holy Prophet Isaiah - This great prophet was of royal birth. He was born in Jerusalem of Amoz the brother of Amaziah, King of the Jews. By the great grace of God that was within him, Isaiah was made worthy to see the Lord of Sabaoth on His heavenly throne, surrounded by six-winged seraphim which cried unceasingly: 'Holy, holy, holy Lord of Sabaoth' (Is. 6). Isaiah prophesied many things, both to individuals and to nations. Once he walked for three days naked through the streets of Jerusalem, prophesying the imminent fall of the city to the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, and warning the King and the leaders of the people not to seek help from Egypt and Ethiopia, because they too would shortly be over-run by the same Sennacherib, but to seek the aid of the all-seeing God. And this prophecy, like all the rest, was literally fulfilled (37:31-35). But his most important prophecies were on the incarnation of God, on the conception of the most pure Mother of God, on John the Baptist and on many events in the life of Christ. This seer, because of his pure heart and zeal for God, also received the gift of working miracles. Thus, when the besieged city of Jerusalem was suffering from thirst, he prayed to God and water flowed out from beneath the hill of Sion. This water was named

Siloam (Sent), and it was to that water that, later, the Lord sent the man born blind, to wash himself and receive his sight (Is. 8:6; Jn 9:7). In the time of King Manasseh, when Isaiah thundered against the pagan practices of the king and the leaders of the people, comparing that generation with Sodom and Gomorrah, the anger of the leaders and the people was lifted up against this great prophet, and he was seized, taken out of Jerusalem and sawn in half. He lived and prophesied seven hundred years before Christ.

The Holy Martyr Christopher - Third century martyr in the persecutions of Decius. His fame derives from the pious legend of him being a "Christ-bearer" (= Christopher). He was a powerfully built man who wandered the world in search of novelty and adventure. He came upon a hermit who lived beside a dangerous stream and served others by guiding them to safe places to cross. He gave Offero instruction in the truth of God. Offero took the hermit's place, but instead of guiding travellers, he carried them safely across the stream. One day he carried a small child across the stream; the child's weight nearly crushed him. When they arrived on the other side, the child revealed himself as Christ, and he was so heavy because he bore the weight of the world on himself. He then baptised Offero with water from the stream. Christopher's service at the stream led to his patronage of things related to travel and travellers, people who carry things.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Joseph of Optina (1911). New Hieromartyr Demetrius priest (1938). New Hieromartyr Basil priest (1939). Repose of the Venerable Shio of Mgvime (6th c.) (Georgia). Translation of the relics (1775) of Child-martyr Gabriel of Slutsk (1690). Martyr Epimachus of Pelusium, who suffered at Alexandria (250). Martyr Gordion at Rome (362). Venerable Nicholas, who lived in Vuneni, of Larissa in Thessaly (1400). Zaraysk Icon of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker (1225).

10 / 23 May —The Holy Apostle Simon the Zealot - One of the twelve Great Apostles, he was born in Cana of Galilee. The Lord Jesus came to his wedding with His Mother and His disciples, and, when the wine ran out, the Lord changed water into wine. Seeing this wonder, the newly-married Simon left his home and parents and bride, to go after Christ. Simon was called the Zealot because of his great and burning zeal for the Saviour and His Gospel. After receiving the Holy Spirit, he went off to preach the Gospel in Mauretania in Africa. As a result of his success in bringing many to the Faith of Christ, he was tortured and finally crucified like his Lord, who had prepared a crown of glory for him in His immortal Kingdom.

Our Holy Mother Isidora the Fool for Christ - Isidora lived in the fourth century and was a nun in a convent in Tabennisi. She pretended insanity in order to conceal her virtues and her mortification. Isidora performed the most menial tasks, fed on the leftovers on the dishes, served all and everyone and was despised by all and everyone. At that time, an angel of God revealed to the great ascetic Pitirim about Isidora's secret. Pitirim came to the convent and when he saw Isidora he bowed down to the ground before her. And so, she to him. Then the sisters informed Pitirim that she was insane. "All of you are insane" replied Pitirim, "and this one is greater before the Lord than I and all of you; I only pray that God will render to me that which is intended for her at the Dreadful Judgment!" Then the sisters became ashamed and begged both Pitirim and Isidora for forgiveness. From then on, everyone began to show respect for Isidora. And she, to escape the honours of men, fled the convent to a place unknown and died about the year 365 A.D.

St. Conleth, hermit and bishop of Kildare (c.520) - Skilled worker in gold and silver, and manuscript illuminator. Hermit in a cell in Old Connell, Ireland near the Liffey river. His reputation for holiness attracted would-be disciples. Friend and co-worker with Saint Brigid; they ran first double monastery together. First bishop of Kildare, Ireland c.490. Baptised Saint Tigernach of Clogher Died while on pilgrimage to Rome.

Also commemorated on this day: St. Simon, bishop of Vladimir and Suzdal (Kiev Caves) (1226). Martyrs Philadelphus, Cyprian, Alphaeus, Onesimus, Erasmus, and 14 others, in Sicily (251). Martyr Hesychius of Antioch (4th c.). Blessed Thais (Taisia) of Egypt (5th c.). Blessed Simon of Yurievits and Zharki, fool-for-Christ (1584). Icon of the Mother of God "Kiev-Bratsk" (1654). Venerable Laurence, monk, of Egypt (6th c.). Venerable Dionisius of Radonezh (14-15th

c.). Translation of relics (1670) of Martyr Basil of Mangazea (Siberia) (1602). St. Synesius of Irkutsk, friend of St. Sophronius (1787).

11 / 24 May — Fast Day - Ss Cyril and Methodius, Equal to the Apostles - brothers from Salonica, of eminent and wealthy parents, Leo and Maria. The elder brother, Methodius, spent ten years as an officer among the Slavs in Macedonia, and thus learned the Slavic language. After that, Methodius went off to Olympus and gave himself to monastic asceticism, and Cyril (Constantine) later joined him there. When the Khazarite king, Kagan, sought preachers of the Christian faith from the Emperor Michael, the Emperor commanded that these two brothers be found and sent to the Khazars. They converted Kagan to the Christian faith and baptised him, together with a great number of his nobles and an even greater number of the people. After some time, they returned to Constantinople, where they compiled a Slavic alphabet of 38 letters and began to translate the service books from Greek into Slavonic. At the invitation of Prince Rastislav, they went to Moravia, where, with great devotion, they spread and confirmed the Faith, made more copies of the books, brought them priests and taught the young. They went to Rome at the invitation of the Pope, and Cyril fell ill and died there, on February 14th, 869. Then Methodius returned to Moravia and laboured at the confirming of the Faith among the Slavs until his death. After his death—he entered into rest in the Lord on April 6th, 885 — his disciples, the Five Followers, with St Clement as bishop at the beginning, crossed the Danube and moved towards the south, to Macedonia, where, from Ochrid, they continued the work among the Slavs that Cyril and Methodius had begun in the north.

St Nicodemus, Archbishop of Pec - This great hierarch was a Serb by birth. He lived a life of asceticism on Holy Mt. Athos and was abbot of Hilendar Monastery. Following the death of Sava III, he was elected as the Archbishop of "All the Serbs and the Coastal Lands" in the year 1317 A.D. Nicodemus crowned King Milutin in the year 1321 A.D. He translated the Jerusalem Typikon into Serbian. [The Typikon is a book containing the rubrics (directions) for the celebration of the Divine Mysteries and other offices of the Orthodox Church.] In the introduction of this book, Nicodemus says: "Almighty God, Who knows our weaknesses, will give us spiritual strength, but only if we first display effort." He sincerely loved the ascetical life and laboured to strengthen it throughout the Serbian land. He laboured relentlessly to uproot the Bogomil heresy and to strengthen the Orthodox Faith. He died in the Lord in the year 1325 A.D. His miracle-working relics repose in the monastery in Pec.

Also commemorated on this day: Hieromartyr Mocius (Mucius), presbyter of Amphipolis in Macedonia (295). Equal-to-the-Apostles Rostislav, prince of Greater Moravia (870). New Hieromartyr Michael priest (1920). New Hieromartyr Alexander archbishop of Kharkov (1940). Venerable Sophronius, recluse of the Kiev Caves (13th c.). St. Joseph, metropolitan of Astrakhan (1671). New Martyrs Dioscorus and Argyrus of Thessalonica (1808) (Greek). Commemoration of the Founding of Constantinople (330). Venerable Comgall, founder and abbot of Bangor (ca. 603) (Celtic & British). St. Bessarion, Archbishop of Larissa (Greek). Martyr Acacius of Lower Moesia (Greek). New Martyr Olympia, abbess of Mitylene (1235) (Greek). Blessed Christesia, called Christopher (1771) (Georgia). St. Theophylact, bishop of Stavropol and Ekaterinodar (1872). St. Wiros, Irish missionary bishop to the Netherlands, in Limberg (710) (Celtic & British). St. Cathan of Bute (6th c.) (Celtic & British). St. Asaph, bishop of Llanellwyr, Wales (6th c.) (Celtic & British). St. Mayeul, abbot of Cluny (994) (Celtic & British). St. Tudy, abbot of the Tudy. St. Comgall, bishop and founder of Bangor Monastery (601). St. Bassus.

12 / 25 May — St Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus - born a Jew, but, seeing the power of the Christian faith, was baptised together with his sister, Callithrope. He became a monk at the age of twenty-six, in the monastery of St Hilarion. He later founded a monastery of his own, and became famed throughout Palestine and Egypt for his asceticism, his spiritual wisdom and the wonders he worked. Fleeing the praise of men, he went off to Egypt. On the way, he met Paphnutius the Great, who prophesied that he would be a hierarch on the island of Cyprus. And indeed, many years later, by God's providence, Epiphanius came to Cyprus, where he was unexpectedly chosen as bishop. He became bishop of the town of Salamis at the age of fifty, and governed the Church of God for thirty-six years. In all, he lived nearly ninety years on this earth, and entered into rest from this life to live eternally in the Kingdom of Christ. Before his

death, he was invited to Constantinople by the Emperor Arcadius and his wife, Eudoxia, for the Council of Bishops which was forced, at the desire of the Emperor and Empress, to condemn St John Chrysostom. Arriving in Constantinople, he came to the Emperor's court, where the Emperor and Empress talked with him at great length, endeavouring to make him declare against Chrysostom. The citizens and Chrysostom heard that Epiphanius had agreed with the Emperor against him. Chrysostom therefore wrote him a letter: 'My brother Epiphanius, I hear that you have advised the Emperor that I should be banished: know that you will never again see your episcopal throne.' To this, Epiphanius wrote in return: 'John, my suffering brother, withstand insults, but know that you will not reach the place to which you are exiled.' And these two prophecies of the two saints soon came about. Refusing to agree with the Emperor on the exile of Chrysostom, Epiphanius took ship and set off for Cyprus, but died on the voyage. The Emperor sent Chrysostom into exile in Armenia, but the saint died on the road. Saint Epiphanius entered into rest in the year 403. Of his many writings the best-known is his 'Medicine Chest', in Greek, in which he explains and refutes eight heresies.

St Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople - Germanus was the son of the head imperial senator who was killed by Emperor Constantine Pogonatus. This same evil emperor castrated the senator's son, Germanus, and forcibly banished him to a monastery. As a monk, Germanus shone like a star by his life and good works. Because of that, he was chosen as the first bishop of Cyzicus and, when Anastatius II was crowned emperor, Germanus was elected as patriarch of Constantinople. As patriarch he baptized the ill-reputed Copronymos who, during the time of his baptism, soiled the water with his uncleanness. Then the patriarch prophesied that this child, when he becomes emperor, will introduce into the Holy Church some impure heresy. And this happened. When Copronymos became emperor, he restored the heresy of the iconoclasts. Leo Isaurian, the father of Copronymos, initiated the persecution of icons and when Patriarch Germanus protested, the arrogant Leo cried out: "I am emperor and priest!" He removed Germanus from the patriarchal throne and banished him to a monastery where this saint lived for ten more years until the Lord called him to Himself and to the heavenly kingdom in the year 740 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: Glorification (1913) of Hieromartyr Hermogenes (1612) the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. New Martyr Abbess Athanasia of the Smolensk Hodigitria Convent, near Moscow (1931). New Hieromartyr Peter priest (1937). Virgin-martyr Eudokia (1938). Venerable Dionysius, archimandrite of St. Sergius' Lavra (1633). Second Uncovering of the relics (1992) of Righteous Simeon of Verkhoturye (1642). St. Sabinus, archbishop of Cyprus (5th c.). St. Polybius of Cyprus, bishop of Rinokyr in Egypt (5th c.). Martyr John of Wallachia, at Constantinople (1662). Martyr Pancratius of Rome (304). St. Philp Argyrius (Silversmith) (395-408). Venerable Theodore of Cythera, monk (Greek). St. Anthony (Medvedev), archimandrite of St. Sergius' Lavra (1877).

‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡

Monday - Acts 6:8-7:5, 47-60; John 4:46-54; 1 Corinthians 1:18-24 (Cross);
John 19:6-11, 13-20, 25-28, 30-35 (Cross)

Tuesday - John 21:15-25 (Matins Gospel); Acts 8:5-17; John 6:27-33; 1 John 1:1-7 (Apostle);
John 19:25-27; 21:24-25

Wednesday - John 10:1-9 (Matins Gospel); Acts 8:18-25; John 6:35-39; Hebrews 13:17-21 (St. Nicholas); Luke 6:17-23 (St. Nicholas)

Thursday - John 21:15-25 (Matins Gospel); Acts 8:26-39; John 6:40-44; 1 Corinthians 4:9-16 (Apostle); Matthew 13:54-58 (Apostle)

Friday - John 10:9-16 (Matins Gospel); Acts 8:40-9:19; John 6:48-54; Hebrews 7:26-8:2 (Equals-to-the Apostles); Matthew 5:14-19 (Equals-to-the Apostles)

Saturday - John 10:1-9 (Matins Gospel); Acts 9:20-31; John 15:17-16:2; Hebrews 13:17-21 (St. Hermogenes); John 10:9-16 (St. Hermogenes)

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