

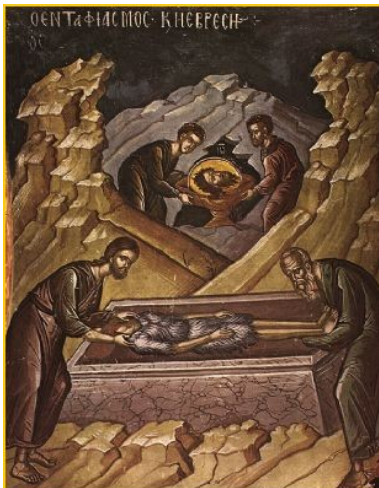
The Sunday of Orthodoxy / The First Sunday of Great Lent & First and second findings of the Honourable Head of John the Baptist

24 February / 9 March

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.

Troparion of the Forerunner tone 4: The head of the Forerunner has risen from the earth/ and sends forth healing rays of incorruption to all the faithful./ In heaven it is mustering a host of Angels,/ and on earth it is, assembling mankind/ to ascribe glory to our God.

The First Sunday of Great Lent, Troparion, Tone II : We worship Thy immaculate Image, O Good One, and ask forgiveness of our sins, O Christ God; for of Thy own will Thou wast pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh, to deliver from slavery to the enemy those whom Thou hadst created. Therefore we thankfully cry to Thee: Thou hast filled all things with joy, O our Saviour, by coming to save the world.



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.

Kontakion of the Forerunner tone 2: O Prophet of God and Forerunner of Grace,/ having obtained thy head from the earth as a most sacred rose,/ we are always receiving healings;/ for still as of old in the world thou preachest repentance.

Kondak First Sunday of Great Lent, Tone 8: The Uncircumscribable Word of the Father was circumscribed when he took flesh of thee, O Theotokos; and when He had restored the defiled image to its ancient state, He suffused it with divine beauty. As for us, confessing our salvation, we record it in deed and word.



Vespers: Lord I have Cried, Tone 4, on 10: Octoechos 3; Triodion 4 (The prophets, inspired by Thy Spirit); Forerunner 3 (Rejoice, O sacred and light-bearing head); G: Triodion (The grace of truth); N: Sunday Dogmatic Tone 4. 3 readings for the Forerunner: Isa. 40:1-3, 9, 41:17-18, 45:8, 48:20-21, 54:1; Mal. 3:1-3, 5-7, 12, 17-18, 4:4-6; Wisd. 4:7, 16-17, 19-20, 5:1-7. Aposticha: Octoechos; G: Forerunner (Like a most precious shrine); N: Triodion (Advancing from ungodliness to the true faith).

Matins Gospel IV

Epistle: St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews 11: 24-26, 32 - 12:2

24 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. ... 32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and

Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

WE ARE SURROUNDED BY SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

At all times, indeed, but specially then, when I reflect upon the achievements of the saints, it comes over me to feel despondency concerning my own condition, because we have not even in dreams experienced the things among which those men spent their whole lives, not paying the penalty of sins, but always doing rightly and yet always afflicted .. And having spoken of what befell the apostles (Cf. I Cor. 4:11, II Cor. 11:23-28,12:7, Phil. 1:12, II Tim. 3:11) ...Elijah suffered the same thing with them (II Kings 1:8) and the Son of Man (Matt. 8:20) ...For God 'has provided some better thing for us.' In order that they might not seem to have the advantage of us from being crowned before us, He appointed one time for crowning for all ...Do you see His tender carefulness?

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXVIII on Hebrews XI, 1, 2. B#58, pp. 491, 492.

Second Epistle II Cor. 4:6-15

Gospel John 1: 43-51

43 At that time, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. 46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! 48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. 49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel. 50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. 51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

"The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me" (Jn. 1:43). So the Holy Gospel begins this Sunday, recounting the calling of the Holy Apostles. Centuries have passed, and the same call is audible today, but now refers directly to us, "Follow Me." And we ask the Lord, "Where?" And the Church answers us by the very name of this Sunday, "into Orthodoxy!"

Just be attentive. Tonight, when this week comes to a close and a new week of Great Lent begins, the Holy Church will say for our edification: "Lord, Thou hast given abundant gifts to those who fear Thee!" And we cannot say that we did not receive these gifts. We received the Sacrament of Confession, the Sacrament of the Eucharist —the Body and Blood of Christ, the Tree of Life. Yes, we undoubtedly received them. But do we have the state of mind which is expressed in the second part of the prayer: "Lord, Thou hast given abundant gifts to those who fear Thee." The gifts have been given, but are we those who fear God? Yet the fear of God is not an ordinary fear as before someone or something. No. This is the fear of losing what the Lord has given to our heart.

And at the same time, the Holy Church, while telling us that we have received the Grace and Gifts of God, reveals to us through the Apostle reading the states of mind we should possess. These are the states which should be possessed by those who have achieved everything which Christ gives. We know what these achievers have gone through: sufferings, beatings, bonds, prison; they were stoned, sawn asunder, exiled, died by the sword, wandered in the mountains. Those of whom the whole world was not worthy hid in ravines, in caves—they all bore witness to their faith, but they did not receive what had been promised. And this is because God provided for them something better, something worthy of them (Heb. 11:37-40).

Yes, as we see, God calls: “Follow Me! I will give you everything.” But at the same time, such sufferings, such experiences, such horrible things! Look around you, at our walls which are painted with the pictures of saints. All of them are now in the heavenly dwellings, and yet all of them experienced, as every one of us experiences, the way of our earthly existence. Look, among them were archbishops, bishops, priests, monks; there were farmers, nobles and princes, workers of all kinds; there were labourers, people of simple background; there were great scholars, there were illiterate people. And all of them experienced on earth every kind of suffering, grief, and horror. But they kept that which the Church requires. When the Church says through the words of Christ, “Follow Me,” she is showing us where to go: into Orthodoxy. In the Russian language, Orthodoxy means the Right Word, that word which is true, which we should not betray; the word which we too have given and are again giving every year.

After the Nativity of Christ (on the day of Circumcision), when the circumcision of our heart is accomplished, then we say, “We belong to Christ, we are Christian. Our will is His Will. Christ is our Life; Christ is our Goal; Christ is our Way.” And this way leads us into the Church. Bishop Theophan the Recluse shows us what to do in order to go the way of the Church. He addressed his flock (this was in the 1870’s) with the following words: “We know what technology teaches us, what mechanics teaches us, law, economics. But the Church teaches us about the movement of our heart. Learn and keep in your heart everything the Holy Church teaches, and receiving Godly forces through the sacraments, and quickening them through the holy services and prayers of the Church, go unswervingly the Way of Christ’s commandments under the guidance of lawful shepherds, and you will undoubtedly reach the Kingdom of Heaven and will be saved.”

And so, being zealous for salvation, all our attention should be directed to our heart, to inscribe on it Christian feelings and dispositions. Bishop Theophan reveals to us that the most important thing is in our heart, dispositions, those feelings which appear in the heart. External things are needed, but only in so far as they bear the spirit which spiritualises them. And social life will become true life only if into social relationships you bring spirit, which means heart, the heart of a true Christian. And family life will be true family life only if into all traditions of the external temporal family life we bring those relationships of the heart which God gives us in His Beatitudes: poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, peaceableness—out of this will come real family life. And this way, and only this way, into all phases of our life will come the Triumph of Orthodoxy.

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei

[Second Gospel Matt. 11:2-15](#)

On this day the Church commemorates the final ending of the Iconoclast controversy and the definitive restoration of the holy icons to the churches by the Empress Theodora, acting as Regent for her young son Michael III. This took place on the first Sunday in Lent, 11 March 843. There is, however, not only an historical link between the first Sunday and the restoration of the icons but also a spiritual affinity. If Orthodoxy triumphed in the epoch of the Iconoclast controversy, this was because so many of the faithful were prepared to undergo exile, torture, and even death, for the sake of the truth. The Feast of Orthodoxy is above all a celebration in honour of the martyrs and confessors who struggled and suffered for the faith: hence its appropriateness for the season of Lent, when we are striving to imitate the martyrs by means of our ascetic self-denial. The fixing of the Triumph of Orthodoxy on the first Sunday is therefore much more than the result of some chance historical conjunction.

The Triodion gives the text of a special ‘Office of the Triumph of Orthodoxy’, which is held at the end of Matins or, more commonly, at the end of the Divine Liturgy on this Sunday. The Office celebrates not only the restoration of the holy icons but, more generally, the victory of the true faith over all heresies and errors. A procession is made with the holy icons, and after this extracts are read from the synodical decree of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787). Then sixty anathemas are pronounced against various heretics dating from the third to the fourteenth century; ‘Eternal Memory’ is sung in honour of the emperors, patriarchs and fathers who defended the Orthodox faith; and ‘Many Years’ is proclaimed in honour of our present rulers and bishops. Unfortunately in many parts of the Orthodox Church today this impressive service has fallen into disuse; elsewhere it is performed in a greatly abbreviated form. Before the Triumph of Orthodoxy came to be celebrated on the first Sunday, there was on this day a

commemoration of Moses, Aaron, Samuel, and the prophets. Traces of this more ancient observance can still be seen in the choice of Epistle reading at the Liturgy (Hebrews 11: 24-6, 32-40), and in the Alleluia verse appointed before the Gospel: 'Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His Name'.

Saints of the Week

24 February / 9 March — The Finding of the Head of St John the Forerunner - The great and glorious Forerunner was beheaded at the wish and request of the wicked Herodias, wife of Herod. When John had been beheaded, Herodias ordered that his head should not be buried with his body, for she feared that the terrible prophet would somehow rise from the dead. So she took his head and buried it in some hidden and unworthy place, deep in the earth. Her lady-in-waiting was Joanna the wife of Chuza, a courtier of Herod's. This good and God-fearing Joanna could not bear that the head of the godly man should remain in an unworthy place, so she disinterred it secretly, took it to Jerusalem and buried it on the Mount of Olives. Not knowing about all this, King Herod, when he heard about Christ and His great miracles, was afraid and said: 'It is John, whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead ! ' (Mk . 6:16) . After a considerable time, an eminent government official came to believe in Christ, left his position in the world and became a monk. Under the name Innocent, he settled on the Mount of Olives, in precisely the place where the Baptist's head had been buried. Deciding to build himself a cell, he dug deep and found an earthen pot containing a head which, it was revealed to him secretly, was that of the Baptist. He venerated it and re-buried it in the same place. By God's providence, that wonder-working head went from hand to hand, disappearing into the darkness of forgetfulness and then being once more revealed, until it was finally taken to Constantinople in the middle of the 9th century, in the time of Patriarch Ignatius and the God-fearing Empress Theodora, mother of Michael and wife of Theophilus. Many miracles were performed by the head of the Forerunner. It is important and interesting to note that, while he was alive, John did not work a single miracle (Jn. 10:41), but to his relics was given the blessed power of working miracles;

Our Holy Father Erasmus - a monk in the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev. He inherited great wealth from his parents and spent all on adorning churches, especially on silver-plating and gilding icons. When he had become impoverished and remained without anything, he was despised by all. The devil whispered to him that he squandered his estate in vain; instead of distributing his wealth among the poor, he gave it for the adornment of churches. Erasmus succumbed to this temptation and believed it for which he despised himself and fell into a state of despair and began to live aimlessly and lawlessly. When the hour of his death approached the brethren assembled around him and discussed his sins which he himself was not conscious of. All at once, he straightened up in bed and said: "Fathers and brothers, it is as you say; I am sinful and unrepentant, but behold St. Anthony and St. Theodosius appeared to me and after that, the All-Holy Mother of God told me that the Lord gave me more time for repentance." The Mother of God also spoke these encouraging words to him: "The poor you have with you in every place and my churches you do not." Erasmus lived for three more days, repented and fell asleep in the Lord. This teaches us that zeal for the Church and adornment of the churches is a task pleasing to God. St. Erasmus died in the year 1160 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Montanus, Lucias, Julian, Victor, Kvartilozia, Victorinus, Flavian, and Renus, at Carthage; Finding of the Relics of the Holy Right-believing Prince Romanus of Uglich. Movable Feast on the first Sunday of Lent: 'Cyprus' Icon of the Mother of God in the village of Stromyn, Moscow Region.

25 February / 10 March — St Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople - His predecessor, Patriarch Paul, secretly left the patriarchal throne, retired to a monastery and received the Great Habit. This was during the reign of Irene and Constantine. By Paul's advice, Tarasius, a senator and advisor to the Emperor, was chosen as Patriarch in 784. He quickly passed through all the stages of ordination and became Patriarch. A man of great physical stature and great zeal for Orthodoxy, Tarasius accepted this undesired state in order to help in the struggle of Orthodoxy against heresy, especially that of Iconoclasm. He was responsible for the summoning of the 7th Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 787, where the iconoclasts were condemned and the veneration of the holy icons was restored and confirmed. Tarasius was very compassionate to the poor and indigent, building them shelters and feeding them, but he was decisive with those in power in the defence of faith and morals. When the Emperor Constantine divorced his lawful wife, Maria, and took a kinswoman to live with him, seeking the Patriarch's blessing to remarry, Tarasius not only withheld his blessing, but first counselled and then reproached him, and finally excommunicated him. As death approached, those round him saw him answering the demons: 'I am not guilty of that sin, nor of that one', until he was incapable of speech. He then began defending himself with his arms, driving them away from him. As he breathed his last, his face shone as with the light of the sun. This truly great hierarch entered into rest in 806. He had governed the Church for 22 years and four months.

Also commemorated on this day: Hieromartyr Reginus, bishop of Skopelos; Venerable Paphnutius of Kephala; Right-believing King Ethelbert of Kent; Venerable Walburga, Abbess of Heidenheim; New Hieromartyr priest Alexander Vinogradov, and Nun-martyr Mstislava (Fokina); New Hieromartyr priest Nicholas Troitsky.

26 February / 11 March — St Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza - This great bishop and pastor was born in Salonica of wealthy parents. He spent his youth to the age of 25 in his home town, then left his parents' home and worldly life and went off into the Egyptian desert. Under the guidance of an experienced spiritual father, the young Porphyrius became a monk and remained for five years. He then paid a visit to the Holy Land in company with his friend, the monk Mark. He lived another five years in asceticism in a cave near Jerusalem. But then his legs became weak and he was no longer able to walk. But he was always able, crawling on his knees, to be present at Divine Service. One night the Lord Himself appeared to him in a vision and healed him of the weakness in his legs, and he became completely well. When he was chosen as bishop of Gaza, Porphyrius accepted this obligation with a heavy heart. He found only 280 Christians in Gaza; the rest of the inhabitants being fanatical idol-worshippers. Only by his great faith and patience did Porphyrius succeed in bringing the people of Gaza to the Christian faith. He had to travel in person to Constantinople, to the Emperor Arcadius and the Patriarch, John Chrysostom, to beg for help in the unequal struggle against the idolators. Seeking support, he received it. The temples of the idol-worshippers were closed, the idols demolished and a fine church built with thirty marble pillars. There was especial help forthcoming from the Empress Eudoxia. Porphyrius lived long enough to see the whole city brought to the Christian faith, but only after great toil, suffering and tearful prayer on his part. He entered peacefully into rest in 421. He was a wonder-worker during his lifetime and after his death. His relics are preserved in Gaza to this day.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Sebastian and Christodulus; Venerable Sebastian of Poshekhonye; New Martyr John Calphus; New Hieromartyr priest Sergius Voskresensky; New Hieromartyr John, bishop of Rylsk, and priest John Dunaev; New Nun-martyr Anna Blagoveshchensky; 'Mezhetsk' Icon of the Mother of God.

27 February / 12 March — Our Holy Father Procopius of Decapolis - This saint came from Decapolis by the Sea of Galilee; hence his name. In youth, he gave himself to the monastic life and passed through all those prescribed labours that purify the heart and uplift the soul to God. When a persecution on the part of the wicked Emperor Leo the Isaurian broke out over icons, Procopius stood up and defended icons, showing that their veneration is not idolatry, for Christians know that to prostrate themselves before icons is not to prostrate before dead matter but before the living saints depicted on the icons. Procopius was bestially tortured, imprisoned, beaten and flogged with iron flails. When the wicked Emperor was murdered, being already a lost soul, the icons were returned to the churches and Procopius returned to his monastery, where he spent his remaining days in peace. In old age, he entered into God's Kingdom, where he beheld with joy the living angels and saints whose images were on the honoured icons on earth. He departed this life peacefully in the 9th century.

The Venerable Thalelaeus - Thalelaeus was a Syrian ascetic. At first he resided in the Monastery of St. Sabas the Sanctified near Jerusalem but later he settled in a pagan cemetery known for the apparitions of evil spirits and frightening things. In order to conquer fear within himself through faith in God, Thalelaeus settled in this cemetery where he lived for many years enduring many assaults from evil spirits both day and night. Because of his great faith and love for God, God endowed him with the gift of working miracles by which he did much good for the sick and suffering people. He died about the year 460 A.D.

Venerable Titus of the Kiev Caves - Titus was a presbyter and had a sincere Christian love for Deacon Evgarius as a brother for a brother. As much as their love in the beginning was true, later it became a mutual blood-feud and hatred sown by the devil. They hated each other so much that when one was censuring in the church, the other turned around and walked out of the church. Titus attempted many times to reconcile with his opponent but in vain. Titus became ill and everyone thought that he was going to die. He begged them to bring Evgarius to him in order to forgive him. Forcefully, they dragged Evgarius to the bedside of Titus, but Evgarius broke free and fled saying that he will not forgive Titus either in this world or the other world. As soon as he said this, he fell to the ground and died. Titus arose from his bed healthy and related how the demons were hovering around him until he forgave Evgarius and when he forgave him, the demons fled and attached Evgarius and angels of God surrounded Titus. He died in the year 1190 A.D.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Julian, Eunus (Kronion) his servant, Beza (Bisos) the soldier and Mekaros at Alexandria; Martyr Gelasius the Actor of Heliopolis; St. Macarius, bishop of Jerusalem; Venerable Asclepius and Jacob of Syria (5 th C); Venerable Stephen of Constantinople; New Martyr Elias of Trebizond; New Hieromartyr priest Sergei Uvitsky; New Hieromartyr priest Peter Uspensky, and Martyr Michael Markov.

28 February / 13 March — The Hieromartyr Proterius - This saint was a priest in Alexandria at the time that the Patriarch there was the heretic Dioscorus, one of the founders of the Monophysite heresy which holds that in Christ there are not two natures but one. At that time, Marcian and Pulcheria were on the imperial throne. Proterius, a holy and devout man, stood up against Dioscorus, as a result of which he endured much misery. Then the 4th Ecumenical Council was summoned at Chalcedon, at which the Monophysite heresy was condemned. Dioscorus was cast down from the patriarchal throne and sent into exile, and in his place the orthodox Proterius was chosen. He governed the Church with zeal and love, a true follower of Christ. But the followers of Dioscorus did not stop creating confusion in Alexandria. In the face of such bloody chaos, Proterius left the town with the intention of going away for a time, but the Prophet Isaiah appeared to him on the road and said: 'Return to the town; I am waiting to take you.' Proterius returned and went into the church. Hearing of this, the insolent heretics rushed into the church, seized the Patriarch and stabbed him. About six of the faithful perished along with Proterius. Thus this wonderful pastor of Christ's flock received the crown of martyrdom for the truth of Orthodoxy, in 457.

Blessed Nicholas of Pskov, fool-for-Christ - Blessed Nikolai of Pskov for more than three decades assumed the exploit of holy fool. And quite a long while before death he acquired the gifts of grace of the Holy Spirit and was granted the gift of wonderworking and of prophecy. The Pskov people of his time called him Mikula (Mikola, Nikola) Sallos, which in translation from the Greek means "blessed, fool", and even during his lifetime they revered him as a saint, even calling him Mikula the Holy.

In February the year 1570, after a devastating campaign with an army of the Oprichniki against Novgorod, tsar Ivan the Terrible moved against Pskov, suspecting treason and preparing it a like fate of Novgorod. As the Pskov chronicler relates, "the tsar was come... with great fierceness, like a roaring lion, as though to tear apart innocent people and to shed much blood". All the city prayed for the averting of the tsar's wrath. Hearing the peal of the bell for matins throughout all of Pskov, the tsar was reading the inscription on the wonderworking Liubyatovsk (at Liubatov stood the tsar's army) Umilenie-Tenderness Icon of the Mother of God (Comm. 19 March). "Be kind of heart, - said he to his soldiers, - lay down the swords upon the stones, and let the killings cease".

All the inhabitants of Pskov came out upon the streets, and each family was on their knees at the gate of their house, bearing bread and salt for the meeting of the tsar. On one of the streets Blessed Nikolai ran out towards the tsar, astride a stick as though galloping an horse, and cried out to the tsar: "Ivanushko, Ivanushko, eat the bread-salt, and not Christian blood". The tsar gave orders to catch the holy fool, but he disappeared.

Having forbidden the killings, Ivan the Terrible still intended to punish the city. The tsar heard the molieben at the Trinity cathedral, he venerated the relics of holy nobleborn Prince Vsevolod-Gabriel (Comm. 11 February), and he desired to receive the blessing of Blessed Nikolai. When the tsar arrived at the cell of the saint, that one said: "Hush, come in, (wouldst thou have nothing, traveller), to have a drink of water from us, there is no reason thou shouldst shun it". The holy fool offered the tsar for a bite a piece of raw meat. "I be a Christian and do not eat meat during Lent", - said Ivan to him. "Thou drinkest human blood", - the saint answered him, instructing the tsar "by many terrible sayings", that he should cease the killings and not plunder the holy churches of God. But Ivan did not heed him and gave orders to take the bell from the Trinity cathedral, and then, in accord with the prophecy of the saint, the finest horse of the tsar collapsed. The prayer and the lecture of the saint awakened the conscience of the tsar. Frightened by the coming to pass of the prophecy and denounced in his wicked deeds, Ivan the Terrible ordered a stop to the plunder and fled from the city. The Oprichniki, witnessing this, wrote: "The mighty tyrant... departed beaten and shamed, driven off as though by an enemy. Thus did a worthless beggar terrify and drive off the tsar with his multitude of a thousand soldiers".

Blessed Nikolai died on 28 February 1576 and was buried in the Trinity cathedral of the city saved by him. Such honours were granted only to the Pskov princes, and later on, archpastors. The local veneration of the saint began all of 5 years after his death. In the year 1581, during a siege of Pskov by the soldiers of the Polish king Stefan Bathory, to the blacksmith Dorofei appeared the Mother of God together with a gathering of Pskov saints praying for the city, among whom also was Blessed Nikolai (the account about the Pskovo-Pokrovsk Icon of the Mother of God is located under 1 October).

And still now also at the Trinity cathedral do they venerate the relics of Blessed Nikolai of Pskov, who "of the flesh of folly wast, ... being manifest a citizen of Mount Jerusalem, ... having transformed the tsar's might and fierce mind to mercy".

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Basil the Confessor, companion of Venerable Procopius at Decapolis; Holy Apostles Nymphas and Eubulus; Hieromartyr Nestor, bishop of Magydos in Pamphylia; Venerable women: Marina, Kyra, and Domnica of Syria; Martyr Kyranna of Thessaloniki; Holy Right-believing Great Prince Yaroslav; Hieromartyr Arsenius, metropolitan of Rostov.

1 / 14 March — Our Holy Mother, the Martyr Eudocia - Living in Heliopolis, a city of Phoenicia, during the reign of Trajan, she was at first a great harlot, then a penitent, a nun and finally a martyr. She gained great wealth from her harlotry. The reversal of her life was brought about, through the providence of God, by an elderly monk, Germanus, and that unintentionally. Coming to Heliopolis in the course of his work, he stayed at the house of a Christian woman whose home abutted onto Eudocia's. When at night he began, as was his monastic custom, to read the Psalter and a book on the Dreadful Judgement, Eudocia heard him and stood listening attentively to his every word until the end. Fear and dread took such hold on her that she remained awake until daybreak. As soon as it was dawn, she sent a servant to beg that monk to come to her. Germanus came, and they began a long conversation on that which the old monk had been reading the previous night, and especially on faith and salvation. The result of these discussions was that Eudocia asked the local bishop to baptise her. After her baptism, she gave all her goods to the church, to be distributed to the poor, dismissed her servants and slaves and retired to a women's monastery. She so devoted herself to the monastic life—to obedience, patience, vigils, prayer and fasting—that after thirteen months she was chosen as abbess. She lived fifty-six years in the monastery and was worthy in the eyes of God to be given the gift of raising the dead. When a persecution of Christians arose under the governor, Vincent, holy Eudocia was beheaded. Here is a wonderful example of how a vessel of uncleanness can be purified, sanctified and filled with a precious, heavenly fragrance by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

St. David of Wales, bishop (542 - 601) - of Welsh royalty. Son of King Sant of South Wales and Saint Non. Grandson of Ceredig, Prince of Cardigan. Uncle of King Arthur. Priest. Studied under Saint Paulinus. Collaborated with Saint Columba, Saint Gildas, and Saint Finnigan. Missionary and founder of monasteries. Following his contribution to the synod of Brevi in Cardiganshire, he was chosen primate of the Cambrian Church. Archbishop of Caerleon on Usk; moved the see to Menevia. Presided at the Synod of Brefi which condemned the Pelagian heresy. Encouraged and founded monasteries. First to build a chancel to Saint Joseph of Arimathea's wattle church at Glastonbury. After a vision in his monastery in the Rhos Valley, he set out next day with two monks to Jerusalem to aid the Patriarch. While there his preaching converted anti-Christians. It is said that once while he was preaching, a dove descended to his shoulder to show he had the blessings of the Spirit, and that the earth rose to lift him high above the people so that he could be heard by them all. Born at Menevia (now Saint David's), Wales. Died 601 at Mynyw, Wales. Name means beloved one.

Also commemorated on this day: Martyrs Nestor, bishop, and Tribimius, deacon; Martyrs Marcellus and Anthony; Martyr Antonina; Venerable Domnina of Syria; Venerable Swithbert of Kaiserswerth; Venerable Agapius of Vatopedi; Venerable Martyrius of Zelenets; Martyr Parascevas of Trebizond; New Hieromartyrs, Basil Nikitsky, Benjamin Famintsev, John Streltsov, Michael Bukrinsky, and Peter Liubimov, priests, Monk-martyr Anthony (Korzh), Nun-martyrs Alexandra (Dyachkova), Anna (Makandina), Olga (Zhiltsova), Martyr Basil Arkhipov, Martyr Nadezhda (Abakumova); Hieromartyr Alexander (Ilyenkov), priest; Hieromartyr Basil Konstantinov-Grishin, priest.

2 / 15 March — The Hieromartyr Theodotus, Bishop of Cyrenia - He was chosen for his wisdom and virtue as bishop, and governed the Church of God with love and zeal. When a persecution of Christians arose in the time of the wicked Emperor Licinius, this man of God was taken before the judge and put to various tortures. When the torturer, Sabinus, urged him to deny Christ and worship pagan idols, Theodotus replied: 'If you knew the goodness of my God, who, it is my hope, will by these brief tortures make me worthy of eternal life, you would wish to suffer for Him as I do!' They hammered nails into his body, and he thanked God; then, believing that the end was near, he counselled and instructed the Christians that were around him. But, by the providence of God, there came at that moment an order from the Emperor Constantine to free all Christians who had been brought to trial for the sake of Christ. Then this saint also was freed, returned thus tortured to his see in Cyrenia and lived for a further two years. He then entered into rest in the Lord whom he had served faithfully and for whom he had suffered greatly. He finished his earthly course in 302, and went to the courts of the Lord.

St. Arsenius, bishop of Tver - Sainted Arsenii, Bishop of Tver', was born at Tver', and in his early years took monastic vows in the Kievo-Pechersk monastery. Even among the monks of this ancient monastery, distinguished for their piety, Arsenii was noted for his saintly life - a strict keeping of the monastic vows, a knowledge of the Church ustav, the study of Holy Scripture, and a love for work. Under the Kiev metropolitan Kyprian (1380-1382) he served as archdeacon, and during times of the metropolitan's absence he governed the working of the Kiev metropolitanate. On 3 July 1390 he went together with Metropolitan Kyprian to Tver', where at the request of the Tver' prince Mikhail Aleksandrovich there had been convened a Sobor of Russian and Greek hierarchs for judgement upon the Tver' bishop Evphymii. The prince and the bishop were in a lengthy quarrel, and many of the Tver' people had serious accusations against the Tver' bishop. After unsuccessful attempts to restore peace to the Tver' church, Metropolitan Kyprian "removed from the episcopacy" Evphymii and sent him off to Moscow to the Chudov monastery. Saint Arsenii was appointed to the Tver' cathedral. But he, "fearful to accept the authority at Tver', in view of the much enmity and spite there, was both troubled and

terrified". Upon the return of Metropolitan Kyprian and archdeacon Arsenii to Moscow, the Tver' prince sent his boyars with a petition to the metropolitan concerning ordination of Arsenii to the Tver' cathedra. This time also Arsenii was not agreeable. In the words of the chronicle for the year 1390 "hardly even by the metropolitan's entreaty would archdeacon Arsenii be at Tver". Under the threat of cathedral suspension metropolitan and prince finally received his assent to the ordination, which was done 15 August 1390. Among the bishops taking part in the laying on of hands was Sainted Stephen, Bishop of Perm (Comm. 26 April). Having come upon the cathedra, Bishop Arsenii, as a man of great prayer and peace-maker, was able to stop much of the discord in the Tver' principality. During his episcopacy, from 1390 to 1409, there were built and consecrated cathedrals in honour of the Archangel Michael at Staritsa and Mikulina, and the Saviour-Transfiguration cathedral was restored with the putting up of a cathedral bell-tower. The saint founded on the river T'maka near Tver' the Zheltikov monastery, where in similitude to the Kievo-Pechersk monastery was built a church in the names of the Monks Antonii and Theodosii of Pechersk (1394), and a stone Uspenie cathedral.

Desiring that the monks of this new monastery would always take edification from the asceticism of the Pechersk Fathers, Sainted Arsenii gave orders to compile a list from the Kievo-Pechersk Paterikon, offering the most ancient of redactions surviving into the present of this precious memorial of Russian literature, and receiving the name of the Arsen'ev Redaction.

The saint died on 2 March 1409, and was buried in the Zheltikov monastery of the Uspenie / Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God, which he founded. In 1483 his relics were found undecayed and placed in the monastery cathedral. In the same year priest-monk Feodosii wrote the Life and a Kanon of the Sainted-bishop. At a Sobor of 1547 was established the celebration of Sainted Arsenii throughout all the Church.

St. Chad of Mercia (672) - Our holy father Chad was tonsured in Ireland while still in his teens. When he came to Great Britain, we do not know, but in about 655, he became abbot of a monastery in Yorkshire where he was known as a great struggler. St Aiden had been his elder, and St Chad followed his example in everything. St Chad became well known throughout Britain for his holiness, meekness and patient love. In 664, the Bishop of York reposed in the Lord, and Saint Chad was chosen as the new bishop. The saint was filled with love for his flock, and he wanted to teach them all about Christ. The holy bishop began to walk through the whole diocese, teaching the Gospel everywhere. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy in every village and town, and preached from the town squares, where he set up crosses. Moreover, St Chad stopped to teach at every cottage, farm, castle and cross-road, and his diocese became one of the most enlightened in Britain. When blessed Theodore of Tarsus, a Greek bishop, was made Archbishop of Britain in 669, he soon heard of St Chad. When the blessed Theodore visited York, he commanded the holy bishop to travel by horse, rather than on foot, for he saw that St Chad was already old and frail. The saint did not want to fulfil this, for he wanted to come to his people as a minister and servant, as Christ had done, and not like a lord on horseback. Nevertheless, the meek saint obeyed. In this same year, 669, St Chad was appointed as bishop of the Kingdom of Mercia. At that time, Mercia was ruled by King Wulfer. Wulfer had been baptised many years before, but later, he supported the worship of demons in his land, and his chief adviser was a cruel pagan. The king's wife, Erminhilda, was a fervent Christian, however, and tried to teach her children about Christ and His Holy church. St Chad began his long, hard work of teaching the people of Mercia the way of salvation. Again, the holy bishop travelled from town to town, preaching, baptising and celebrating the Divine Liturgy. The saint often preached standing near one of the great stone crosses left behind by the Celtic Christians who had long before been driven out of the country by the invading Angles and Saxons. More than anything else, St Chad liked to go alone into the forest, and pray to God for his flock, and for his own soul. He built a small cell and chapel in the woods, and went there to pray and struggle as often as he could. Once, while St Chad was in his cell praying, he heard a loud crashing sound outside. He went out and saw a large stag, collapsed from exhaustion, by the side of the pool, drinking. Making the sign of the Cross, the saint went to the poor animal and stroked it. He knew that hunters must be chasing the stag to kill it, so the saint hid the animal. Soon, the sound of a hunter's horn was heard, and a richly dressed young man on horseback came galloping into the clearing. He reverently greeted the bishop, and asked if he had seen the deer. "I do not tend the deers, nor the beasts of the forest, nor the birds of the air, but this deer, perhaps, has led you to salvation," the bishop replied. The young man was Prince Wulfade, the eldest son of the King. The saint's words opened the heart of the young prince, and he asked the holy bishop to explain the path of salvation to him. St Chad began to tell the prince about how the world was created by Christ our God and how Christ died on the Cross and rose again to save us. He explained about the Church and how everyone who wants to be saved must be born again in Holy Baptism and be united to Christ's Holy Church. The young prince heard all this, and then begged St Chad to baptise him. The saint took Prince Wulfade to the pond, and entering the deep water, baptised him in the name the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He then taught the prince many more things. Later, Prince Wulfade brought his younger brother Rufine to the saint to be taught and baptised. After this time, the young princes came often to the holy bishop to be taught how to struggle and pray. The evil pagan counsellor of the king found out about the new, holy life of the two young princes, and he feared that he might lose his power because of them. For this reason, and because he hated the two princes, he began to slander them to the

king. "Your two sons have disobeyed you. They have become Christians, even though you forbade it. They no longer obey your law, and they are now plotting against you to take over your throne." The evil counsellor convinced the king that he had to kill the two princes before they killed him. One day, the king and the counsellor followed the two princes into the forest, to the cell of St Chad. The holy bishop was away, and the two young men stood alone in prayer. Suddenly, the king burst through the door and cried out: "Why do you disobey my commands and follow this religion of Christ. You know my law, that the old gods must be worshipped by my sons and nobles. I command you to renounce Christ and give honour to the old gods." "We belong to Christ's Holy Church, and we will never turn from Him. But you yourself were once a Christian. We beg you, father, to return to the Holy Church and save your soul." At these words, the king became enraged, and, drawing his sword, furiously cut the two princes to pieces. Thus, the two holy princes received the crown of martyrdom. When the queen learned of this evil deed, she and her daughter immediately went and buried the relics of the two martyrs, and then went to live in the women's monastery at Sheppey. Soon after this, the king's evil counsellor fell ill and died. Suddenly, the king was left all alone: he had killed his two sons; his wife and daughter had fled from him and become nuns, and his counsellor was dead. Now, the king began to feel sorrow for his evil deed. He realised that his sons were innocent, and he remembered his own baptism, and the last words of his sons, begging him to return to Christ's Holy Church. Finally, overcome by sorrow and repentance, the king set out at dawn to the cell of Saint Chad, to ask his help and prayers. As King Wulfer entered the chapel, the holy bishop was celebrating the Divine Liturgy. The king, feeling his guilt, stood at the door and watched. When the bishop reached that part of the Liturgy in which the great mystery takes place, the sanctuary was suddenly filled with a great light. The king was amazed, and fell to the floor in prostration, looking up with fear. He saw that the great light stayed around the Holy Table and filled the sanctuary until the saint had finished communion. The king remained on the floor until the Liturgy ended, and the saint came to him. After this, the king listened to everything Saint Chad taught him, and then he confessed his faith in Christ, and returned to His Holy Orthodox Church. King Wulfer struggled to completely change his life. He helped Saint Chad and his presbyters to lead the people of the kingdom to Christ's Church, and he became merciful and gentle. St Chad chose the town of Lichfield for his cathedral, as in earlier days, St Arnphibale and nearly a thousand other Christians had been martyred there. King Wulfer helped to build the new Church. St Chad continued his life of holy struggle, teaching the Gospel of Christ's Church everywhere in the Kingdom of Mercia. At length, God called the holy bishop to Himself, and Saint Chad gave up his holy soul to the Saviour on 2 March, 672. Through the prayers of our God-bearing father, St Chad, may we find repentance, and save our souls, glorifying the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen!

Also commemorated on this day: Virgin-martyr Euthalia of Sicily; Martyr Troadius of Neo-Caesarea; Martyr Hesychius of Antioch; Venerable Agatho of Egypt; 440 Martyrs in Sicily; Venerable Sabbas, Barsanuphius, Sabbatius, and Euphrosynus of Tver; Venerable Joachim of Vatopedi; 'Reigning' Icon of the Mother of God.

‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡

Monday - Isaiah 4:2-5:7 (6th Hour); Genesis 3:21-4:7 (Vespers, 1st Reading); Proverbs 3:34-4:22 (Vespers, 2nd Reading)

Tuesday - Isaiah 5:7-16 (6th Hour); Genesis 4:8-15 (Vespers, 1st Reading); Proverbs 5:1-15 (Vespers, 2nd Reading)

Wednesday - Isaiah 5:16-25 (6th Hour); Genesis 4:16-26 (Vespers, 1st Reading); Proverbs 5:15-6:4 (Vespers, 2nd Reading)

Thursday - Isaiah 6:1-12 (6th Hour); Genesis 5:1-24 (Vespers, 1st Reading); Proverbs 6:3-20 (Vespers, 2nd Reading)

Friday - Isaiah 7:1-15 (6th Hour); Genesis 5:32-6:8 (Vespers, 1st Reading); Proverbs 6:20-7:1 (Vespers, 2nd Reading)

Saturday - Hebrews 3:12-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 (Departed); Mark 1:35-44; John 5:24-30 (Departed)

HOMILY

About repentance and the forgiveness of sins

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name"(St. Luke 24:47).

This is the final instruction of the Saviour to the holy apostles. In these words as in the shell of a walnut, is contained the gospel of reconciliation between God and men. What does God seek from men and what does God give them? He seeks repentance and He grants forgiveness of sins. He seeks little but He gives all. Let men only repent for committed sins and let men cease to sin and men will receive all from God; all; not only all that their hearts could desire rather even more, much more. In truth, to the righteous everything is promised. The righteous will be the inheritors of the Kingdom of God, they will be the sons of God, and they will be the children of light, the children of immortality, companions to the angels, brothers of Christ. The righteous will have an abundant life, an abundance of peace, an abundance of wisdom, an abundance of power and an abundance of joy. The righteous will have all, for all has been promised to them.

Let men only repent and they will receive all. Let the beggar only cleanse himself, bathe himself and clothe himself in purity before the doors of the royal court and he will be immediately ushered into the royal court and he will be met and embraced by the king and he will have all. He will live with the king, sit at the royal table; he will have all, all, all!

O my brethren, these are not only words rather this is the living and holy truth. For we know that many penitents, both female and male, received all of this, which was promised.

Many have appeared from the other world and have proved the truth of these words, witnessing how they now live as royal sons and daughters. But they repented promptly; and there remains time for us to repent if we desire to be together with them as the heirs of the kingdom.

O Merciful Lord, help us that we may repent before death in order that we may live eternally.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.