



Second Sunday After Pentecost Nativity of St John the Baptist 24 June / 7 July

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 the Forerunner tone 4: O Prophet and Forerunner of the coming of Christ, / we honour thee lovingly but cannot extol thee worthily; / for by thy birth thy mother's barrenness / and thy father's dumbness were unloosed; / and the Incarnation of the Son of God is proclaimed to the world.

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 John the Baptist tone 3: The formerly barren one today gives birth to the Forerunner of Christ / Who is the fulfilment of prophecy. / For the Prophet, Herald and forerunner of the Word / submitted to Him Whom the prophets foretold / by laying his hand on him in the Jordan.

Vespers: Gen. 17:15-17, 19; 18:11-14; 21:1-8; Judg. 13:2-8, 13-14, 17-18, 21; Isa. 40:1-3, 9; 41:17-18; 45:8; 48:20-21; 54:1

Lord I have Cried - Tone 1, on 10: Octoechos 4; Forerunner 6 (When John was born); G: Forerunner (Today the lamp of the Light); N: Sunday Dogmatic Tone 1
Aposticha: Octoechos; G: Forerunner (Today is fulfilled); N: Theotokion (Behold Elizabeth).

Troparia: O Theotokos and Virgin x2; Forerunner (O prophet and Forerunner) x1.

Matins Gospel II

Epistle: St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans 2:10-16

But glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God. For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

BUT THE DOERS OF THE LAW WILL BE JUSTIFIED

He makes inquisition, not into the quality of persons, but into the difference of actions. By so saying, he shows that it was not in actions, but in persons only, that the Jew differed from the Gentile ...For it is not because one is a Jew and the other a Gentile, that one is honored and the other disgraced, but it is from the works that either treatment comes ...He shows not only the equality of the Jew and the Gentile, but that the Jew was even much burdened by the gift of the Law. For the Gentile is judged without law. But this 'without law' here expresses not the worse plight, but the easier, that is, he does not have the Law to accuse him; ...he is condemned solely from the reasoning of nature, but the Jew ...the greater the attention he enjoyed, the greater the punishment he will suffer ...For in that they said they did not need grace, being justified by the Law, he shows that they need it more than the Gentiles, considering they are liable to be punished more.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily V on Romans I. B#55, p. 364.

Second Reading: Romans 13:12 - 14:4

Gospel: St. Matthew 4:18-23

And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." They immediately left their nets and followed Him. Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, And immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

HE SAID TO PETER AND ANDREW, FOLLOW ME, AND I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN

Yet John says that they were called in another manner. Therefore it is evident that this was a second call. One may perceive this from many things. For there it is said that they came to Him when 'John was not yet cast into prison,' but here, after he was in confinement. And there Andrew calls Peter, but here Jesus calls both. And John says, Jesus seeing Simon coming, says, 'You are Simon, the Son of Jonah, you shall be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone' (John 1:42). But Matthew says that he was already called by that name ...And from the place whence they were called, and from many other things, one may perceive this: such as their ready obedience and abandonment of all. For now they were well instructed beforehand ..But mark both their faith and their obedience. For though they were in the midst of their work ...'They forsook all and followed.' Such is the obedience which Christ seeks of us... We can see this, too, when some other had come to Him and was asking leave to bury his own father: He permitted not even this (Matt.8:21,22).

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XIV on Matthew IV, 3. B#54, pp. 87- 88.

The Nativity of St. John the Baptist (Jul 7).

Among the Church's feasts, there are three in honor of God's saint which in their significance stand out from the others devoted to the saints and are numbered among the great feasts of the Church of Christ. These feasts glorify the economy of God for our salvation. These three feasts are the Nativity of St. John the Forerunner, his Beheading, and the feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

The apparition of the holy Archangel Gabriel to the priest Zacharias in the Temple, with the announcement of the birth to him and the righteous Elizabeth, of a son who would prepare the way for the Lord, the Savior of the world, and the subsequent fulfillment of this promise, are the first of the events related by the Evangelists.

The announcement of the holy Archangel Gabriel to Zacharias in the Temple begins the New Testament Gospel. The announcement of the same Archangel Gabriel six months later in Nazareth to the Virgin Mary concerning the birth from Her of the Son of God, Who was to become incarnate, is a continuation of the revelation of the Pre-eternal Counsel concerning the salvation of the human race.

Three months after, the Annunciation, St. John the Forerunner was born "in a city of Judah," and six months after him Christ Himself was born in Bethlehem.

These events are closely bound together. "The glorious conception of the Forerunner proclaimeth beforehand the King Who is to be born of a Virgin" (Exapostilarion, Sept. 23, Feast of the Conception of John the Baptist). The announcement of the Archangel Gabriel in the Temple, announced later to all living nearby by Zacharias, in the magnificent hymn, which he sang after the birth of the child, John and the restoration to him of the gift of speech (Luke 1:67-79), is the forerunner of the angelic hymn: "Glory to God in the highest;" which was sung in Bethlehem by the angels when they announced to the shepherds the Nativity of Christ.

The Nativity of John the Baptist is the first joy sent down by God to the human race, the beginning of its deliverance from the power of the devil, sin and eternal death.

It is true that even before the Forerunner, the Most Holy Virgin Mary was born, and angels announced Her birth to Her parents. However, at that time, only Her parents knew of the exalted lot that was prepared for the Virgin Who was born, and they themselves were not fully aware of what had been announced to them beforehand. Therefore, it was only they, who celebrated at the birth of their Daughter, while the rest of the world only later understood the joy that had been announced (to it), by this birth.

For this reason, the feasts of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos and Her Entrance into the Temple were established in the Church and began to be solemnly celebrated significantly later than the other great feasts, whereas the Nativity of John the Forerunner is one of the most ancient and most venerated of Christian feasts. Sermons on this feast have been preserved from the first centuries.

From the day of the Nativity of John the Forerunner, the preparation of the human race begins for meeting the Son of God on earth. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people . . . And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways (Luke 1:68, 76). These God-inspired words of the priest Zacharias, after he had regained the gift of speech, were made known in all the land of Judea, causing disturbance to all living there, who asked each other in astonishment: What manner of child shall this be? (Luke 1:66).

Involuntarily the thought arose: Is this not the Messiah Himself? Judea was in an especially tense state of expectation of the Savior. Thus, the child John prepared the way for the Lord by his very birth; and even while he was still in the womb of His mother, by his leaping (Luke 1:41) he announced the coming birth of the Child Jesus, as if crying out: "Christ is born,

give ye glory. Christ comes from heaven, meet ye Him" (Irmos, Canticle One of the Canon, Feast of the Nativity of Christ).

Being born exactly half a year before Christ, John the Forerunner by the exact time of his birth depicted his mission of preparing the way for the Lord. He was born at the time of the year (June 24) when the day begins to grow shorter after the summer solstice, whereas the Nativity of Christ occurs (December 25) when the day begins to grow longer after the winter solstice. These facts are an embodiment of the words spoken later, by the Forerunner, after the beginning of Christ's preaching: He must increase, but I must decrease (John 3:30).

"The herald of the Sun, the Forerunner" was John the Baptist, who was like the morning star that announces the rising of the Sun of Righteousness in the East.

Just as the very event of the Nativity of John the Baptist was the antechamber of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, so also the feast of the Nativity of John the Forerunner is also the antechamber of the feast of the Nativity of Christ. "The star of stars, the Forerunner, is born on earth today, from a barren womb, John the beloved of God, and manifests the dawning of Christ, the Orient from on high" (Glory at Lauds, of the Feast, June 24). "The whole creation rejoiceth at thy divine nativity: for thou wast shown forth as an earthly angel, O Forerunner and a heavenly man, proclaiming to us, the God of heaven incarnate" (Canticle Five of the Canon). "O Prophet and Forerunner of the coming of Christ, we who venerate thee with love, are in perplexity how worthily to praise thee; for the barrenness of her who bore thee and the dumbness of thy father are loosed by thy glorious and precious nativity, and the incarnation of the Son of God is preached to the world" (Troparion of the Feast).

St. John Maximovitch

Second Reading: Luke 1:1-25, 57-68, 76, 80

Saints of the Week

Apostles Fast Continues

24 June / 7 July — Apostles Fast - The Nativity of St John the Forerunner - six months before his appearing to the most holy Virgin Mary in Nazareth, the great Gabriel, archangel of the Lord, appeared to Zacharias the High Priest in the Temple in Jerusalem. Before he revealed the miraculous conception by a virgin who had not known a man, the archangel revealed the wondrous conceiving by an old and barren woman. Zacharias was unable at once to believe the words of God's herald, and for this his tongue was bound in dumbness and remained thus until the eighth day after John's birth. The kinsfolk of Zacharias and Elisabeth gathered together on that day for the infant's circumcision and naming. When they enquired of the father how he wished the child to be called, he, being still dumb, wrote on a slate: 'John'. At that moment his tongue was loosed and he began to speak. Zacharias's house was on the heights between Bethlehem and Hebron. The news of the angel's appearing to Zacharias, of his dumbness and of the loosening of his tongue at the exact moment that he wrote 'John', was carried throughout all Israel, coming to Herod's ears. So, when he sent men to kill all the infants around Bethlehem, he sent men off to Zacharias's family house in the hills, to slay John also. But Elisabeth hid the child in good time. The king was enraged at this, and sent an executioner to the Temple to kill Zacharias (for it was then his turn to serve in the Temple again). Zacharias was killed between the court and the Temple, and his blood clotted and solidified on the paving slabs, and remained as an enduring witness against Herod. Elisabeth hid herself and the child in a cave, where she soon died. The young John remained in the wilderness alone, in the care of God and His angels.

The Holy Martyrs Orentius, Pharnacius, Eros, Firmus, Ferminus, Cyriacus and Longinus - During the reign of Maximian (284-305) the Scythians attacked the Greeks. St Orentius was ordered to fight against the Scythian champion Marothom, who was distinguished for his special

strength of body. He was also a strong and brave warrior. Orentius was a Christian, as were his six brothers, who were also serving in the imperial army. Calling on the Lord for help, St Orentius defeated Marothom and so stopped the invasion of the Scythians. The emperor intended to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods for this victory and he invited the victor, St Orentius, to participate. The saint refused, explaining that he was a Christian, and said that he vanquished the enemy by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither the promise of honors and riches, nor threats of punishment could induce the saint to renounce Christ. The fierce and ungrateful emperor gave orders to banish both the saint and his six brothers to the Caucasus. During the journey all seven brothers died from hunger or torture. The first to die was St Eros on June 22 at Parembol; after him St Orentius suffered martyrdom. They tied a stone around his neck and cast him into the sea. The Archangel Raphael took him from the water to dry land at Riza, on the south shore of the Black Sea, where the holy martyr surrendered his soul to God. St Pharnacius went to the Lord on July 3 at Kordila. Sts Firmus and Firminus died on July 7 at Aspara, on the eastern shore of the Black Sea. St Cyriacus departed this transitory life at Ziganeia on July 14, and St Longinus died on the ship on July 28. Battered by a storm, the ship went aground at Pitindeia (Pitsunda), where the body of the holy martyr was buried.

Also commemorated on this day: Korobeinikov-Kazan Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos (movable holiday on the Saturday after to June 18th). All venerable and holy Fathers of the Holy Mount Athos (movable holiday on the 2nd Sunday of Pentecost). All venerable and holy Fathers of Bulgaria (movable holiday on the 2nd Sunday of Pentecost). "Kaluga" Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos (movable holiday on the first Sunday of the Apostles' Fast). Venerable Anthony, abbot of Dymsk. Righteous Youths John and James of Meniugi. St. Nicetas, bishop of Remesiana. Venerable John, monk, of Yaransk. St. Michael, great prince of Tver. New Martyr Panagiotes of Caesarea in Cappadocia. Translation of the relics of Martyr John the New to Suceava, Romania. Synaxis of the Righteous Zacharias and Elizabeth. St. John the Hermit of Bohemia. St. Athanasius of Paros. St. Gerasim (Dobroserdov), bishop of Astrakhan and Enotaeva.

25 June / 8 July — Apostles' Fast - Our Holy Mother, the Martyr Fevronia - the daughter of Prosporus, a Roman senator. In order to escape marriage with a mortal man, she betrothed herself to Christ and became a nun in the East, in Assyria, in a monastery where her aunt, Bryaena, was abbess. Lysimachus, a nobleman's son, was desirous of entering into marriage with Fevronia, but the Emperor Diocletian, suspecting him of being a secret Christian, sent him to the East with his uncle, Silenus, to seize and kill the Christians. Silenus was as ferocious as a wild beast and mercilessly exterminated the Christians wherever he could. Lysimachus, on the contrary, protected the Christians whenever possible and hid them from his bestial uncle. Having emptied Palmyra of Christians, Silenus came to the city of Nisibis, close to which there was the monastery of fifty ascetic virgins in which Fevronia was a nun. Although she was barely twenty years old, Fevronia was held in respect both in the monastery and in the city for her meekness, wisdom and restraint. The monastery followed the rule of a former abbess, Blessed Platonida, and every Friday the nuns would spend their time in prayer and reading sacred books, with no other work. Bryaena had appointed Fevronia to read to the other sisters while standing behind a curtain, so that no-one would be distracted or captivated by the beauty of her face. When Silenus heard about Fevronia, he ordered that she be brought before him. When the holy maiden refused to renounce Christ and enter into marriage with a mortal man, he ordered them to whip her and then cut off her hands, breasts and feet and finally to slay her with the sword. But a fearful divine punishment came upon her tormentor that very day. A demon entered into him, and a fearful terror took hold of him. In his terror, he struck his head on a marble pillar and fell down dead. Lysimachus ordered that Fevronia's body be gathered together and brought to the monastery for solemn burial, and he, together with many of the soldiers, was baptised. Many healings were wrought through Fevronia's holy relics, and she herself appeared on the day of her Feast, standing in her usual place among the sisters. They beheld her with both fear and joy. St Fevronia suffered and went to eternal blessedness in the year 310, and her relics were translated to Constantinople in 363.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerable Nikon the Confessor of Optina. New Hieromartyrs Nicholas and Basil priests. New Hieromartyr Basil priest. Prince Peter and Princess Fevronia (tonsured David and Euphrosyne), wonderworkers of Murom. Venerable Dalmatus, abbot and

founder of the Dormition Monastery in Siberia. Venerables Leonis, Libye, and Eutropia of Syria. Venerable Symeon of Sinai. Venerables Dionysius and Dometius of the Monastery of the Forerunner (Dionysiou), Mt. Athos. New Martyr Procopius of Varna and Mt. Athos, who suffered at Smyrna. New Martyr George of Attalia. Martyr Gallicianus the Patrician in Egypt. St. Adelbert, archdeacon. St. Theoleptus, metropolitan of Philadelphia. St. Moluac of Lismore.

26 June / 9 July — Apostles' Fast - Our Holy Father David - born in Salonica, where he at first lived the ascetic life in a shelter he had built in an almond tree, he later continued his asceticism in Thessaly. He purified himself so greatly by fasting, prayer and vigils that he was made worthy to receive great grace from God. Once he took a live coal in his hand, placed incense on it and censured the Emperor with no sort of protection for his hand. The Emperor, when he saw this, bowed down to the ground before David, who amazed the people by his countless miracles. He entered peacefully into rest in the blessedness of eternity in 540.

Also commemorated on this day: Appearance of the Tikhvin Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. New Hieromartyr Gregory priest. St. Dionysius, archbishop of Suzdal. Uncovering of the relics of Venerable Tikhon of Lukhov. Translation of the relics of Venerable Nilus of Stolben Island. Venerable John, bishop of the Goths in Crimea. Kazan "Of the Seven Lakes", "Nemetsk" and "Lidda" or Roman Icons of the Most Holy Theotokos. The Holy Martyred Brothers John and Paul, and Gallicanus Venerable Serapion of Kozha Lake. Translation of the relics of St. Brannock (Brynach) of Braunton, England. New Martyr David of St. Anne's Skete, martyred in Thessalonica. Anthion, monk.

27 June / 10 July — Apostles Fast - St Sampson the Hospitable - born of rich and eminent parents in ancient Rome, where he studied all the secular wisdom of that time, devoting himself in particular to the study of medicine. Sampson was a compassionate and liberal physician, and gave the sick medicine for both soul and body, counselling each man to fulfil the requirements of the Christian faith. He moved to Constantinople, where he lived in a tiny house from which he distributed alms, comfort, advice, hope, medicine and all possible aid to those suffering in spirit and in body. The Patriarch heard of Sampson's great virtue and ordained him priest. At that time the Emperor Justinian the Great became ill with what his doctors believed to be an incurable disease. The Emperor prayed with great fervour, and God revealed to him in his sleep that Sampson would heal him. When the Emperor summoned Sampson to court, the old man had only to put his hand on the diseased place and the Emperor was healed. When Justinian offered him an immense sum of money, Sampson thanked him but would accept nothing, saying to the Emperor: 'O Emperor, I had silver and gold and other riches, but I left it all for the sake of Christ, that I might gain heavenly and eternal wealth.' When the Emperor insisted on doing something for him, Sampson asked him to build a home for the poor. In that home, Sampson cared for the poor as a father cares for his children. His compassion for the poor and weak was second nature to him. This holy man, filled with heavenly power and goodness, entered peacefully into rest on June 27th, 530. He was buried in the Church of the Holy Martyr Mocius, his kinsman. After his death, Sampson appeared many times to those who called upon him for aid.

Also commemorated on this day: St. Joanna the Myrrh-bearer. New Hieromartyr Priest Gregory Nikolsky of Kuban. New Hieromartyrs Alexander and Vladimir priests. New Hieromartyr Peter priest. Uncovering of the holy relics of Optina Elders: Ambrose, Leonid, Macarius, Anatole I, Anatole II, Barsanuphius, Hilarion. Venerable Serapion of Kozha Lake. Venerable Severus, presbyter of Interocrea in Italy. Venerable George of Mt. Athos and Georgia. Venerable Martin of Turov. Commemoration of the victory of the Russian Army of the Battle of Poltava on June 27, 1709. Martyr Anectus of Caesarea in Cappadocia. Hieromartyr Pierius, presbyter of Antioch. St. Luke the hermit. Martyrs Mark and Marcia. Hieromartyr Kirion II, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia. Hieromartyrs Crescens, Maximus, and Theonest, bishops of Mainz.

28 June / 11 July — Apostles Fast - The Holy Martyrs Cyrus and John - these holy martyrs are commemorated on January 31st, and their lives and sufferings are described under that date. Today we commemorate the translation of their relics from Canopus to Menuthis, and the

numerous miracles associated with them. St Cyril, the Patriarch of Alexandria, prayed fervently for the extermination of the abominable idolatrous practices at Menuthis, where there was a temple and where the demonic powers held sway. An angel of God appeared to the Patriarch and told him that Menuthis would be cleansed of its impurity if he brought the relics of Ss Cyrus and John to the town. The Patriarch did this at once. He brought the relics of the holy martyrs to Menuthis and had a church built there in their honour. Ammonius, the son of the governor of Alexandria, Julian, was healed of scrofula through the martyrs' relics, and a certain Theodore was healed of blindness. Isidore of Maium was healed of a wasting disease of the liver, Theodore's wife of the effects of poison, a certain Eugenia of dropsy and a great many others of various diseases and torments. All this took place in the year 412.

Our Holy Father Sennuphius the Standard-Bearer - Sennuphius was a great ascetic and miracle-worker of the Egyptian desert. He was a contemporary of Patriarch Theophilus and Emperor Theodosius the Great. He is called the "Standard-bearer" because by his prayers he once helped Emperor Theodosius to gain a victory over the army of his adversaries. When the emperor summoned Sennuphius to Constantinople, Sennuphius replied that he was unable to do so but sent him his tattered monastic habit and staff. Setting out to battle the emperor donned Sennuphius' monastic habit and carried the staff and returned victorious from battle.

Our Holy Father Paul the Physician - a Corinthian by birth. Completing his schooling, Paul withdrew to a monastery and was tonsured a monk. He had a difficult struggle with the impure spirit of fornication. However, when with the power of the cross he drove the impure spirit of fornication away from himself, that spirit created a malicious falsehood, i.e., [the spirit] gave approval to a depraved woman to say that she had given birth to a child by Paul. The heretics then dragged him from the monastery, placed the child in his arms and forced him to walk throughout the town for the people to spit on him. The baby was only a few days old. St. Paul prayed fervently to God and said to the people: "Behold, let the child himself say who is his father." The child stretched out its hand from the swaddling clothes and pointed to a blacksmith and said: "That man is my father and not Paul the monk!" The adversaries of Paul became ashamed and God granted great healing powers to Paul so that when he placed his hand on the sick, they became whole. Paul reposed peacefully in old age pleasing God by his life on earth. He lived in the seventh century.

St. Austol of Cornwall (6th c.) - Tropar of St Austol, Tone 7: Light of Cornwall and pillar of the Faith,/ holy Austol, disciple of Samson:/ thou wast a fellow-labourer with Saint Mewan,/ in such companionship that thou didst die with him and share his grave./ Pray to Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

Also commemorated on this day: Venerables Sergius and Herman abbots of Valaam. New Hieromartyr Basil, deacon. Virgin-martyr Sebastiana. New Hieromartyr Gregory, deacon. Venerable Xenophon, abbot of Robeika. Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos "Of the Three Hands". Venerable Sergius of Crete. Venerable Moses the Anchorite. Hieromartyr Donatus of Libya. Three Martyrs of Galatia. 70 Martyrs of Scythopolis. Martyr Pappias. Martyr Macedonius. Venerable Magnus, monk who reposed while praying to the Lord. Martyrs Serenus, Plutarchus, Heraclides, Heron, Raiso, and others in Alexandria.

29 June / 12 July — The Holy Apostle Peter - the son of Jonah and brother of Andrew the First-Called, of the tribe of Simeon and the town of Bethsaida, he was a fisherman and was at first called Simon, but the Lord was pleased to call him Cephas, or Peter (Jn 1:42). He was the first of the disciples to give clear expression to his faith in the Lord Jesus, saying: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God' (Mt. 16:16). His love for the Lord was very strong, and his faith in Him went from strength to strength. When the Lord was put on trial, Peter denied Him three times, but it needed only one look into the face of the Lord, and Peter's soul was filled with shame and repentance. After the descent of the Holy Spirit, Peter became a fearless and powerful preacher of the Gospel. After his first sermon in Jerusalem, about 3,000 souls were converted to the Faith. He preached the Gospel throughout Palestine and Asia Minor, in Italy and in Illyria. He performed many wonders, healing the sick and raising the dead, and even his shadow had the power of healing the sick. He had a major struggle with Simon the Magician, who declared

himself to be from God but was actually a servant of the devil. He finally put him to shame and overcame him. Peter was condemned to death on the order of the wicked Emperor Nero, a friend of Simon's. After installing Linus as Bishop of Rome and exhorting and encouraging the flock of Christ there, Peter went to his death with joy. When he saw the cross before him, he asked the executioner to crucify him upside-down, because he felt himself to be unworthy to die in the same way as his Lord. And so this great servant of the greatest Master went to his rest and received a crown of eternal glory.

The Holy Apostle Paul - born in Tarsus and of the tribe of Benjamin, he was formerly called Saul and studied under Gamaliel. He was a Pharisee and a persecutor of Christians. He was wondrously converted to the Christian faith by the Lord Himself, who appeared to him on the road to Damascus. He was baptised by the Apostle Ananias, named Paul and enrolled in the work of the Great Apostles. He preached the Gospel everywhere with burning zeal, from the borders of Arabia to the land of Spain, among both the Jews and the heathen, and receiving the title of 'the Apostle to the Gentiles'. His fearful sufferings were matched only by his superhuman endurance. Through all the years of his preaching, he hung from day to day like a thread between life and death. Filling his days and nights with toil and suffering for Christ, organising the Church in many places and reaching a high level of perfection, he was able to say: 'I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me' (Gal. 2:20). He was beheaded in Rome in the reign of Nero, at the same time as St Peter.

Venerable Paisios of Mt. Athos - 'The future Elder Paisios was born in 1924 and baptized by St. Arsenius of Cappadocia. He spent his youth as a carpenter until WW II, during which he repeatedly distinguished himself in the army by his bravery and self-sacrifice. In 1950 he went to Mt. Athos for eight years, where he was tonsured. Then he was asked to spend some time in his home village of Epirus, in order to defend the faithful against Protestant proselytism. He returned to Mt. Athos in 1964 and stayed in several monasteries, eventually settling in the Panagouda hermitage of Koutloumousiou Monastery, where he remained for fifteen years. Here his reputation as a holy elder and guide grew, and he tirelessly received those thirsting for spiritual direction, allowing himself only two or three hours of sleep each day. He reposed in 1994, one of the most well-known and beloved contemporary elders. Many of his counsels and other writings have been published.' Elder Paisios was glorified by the Church in 2015; he is commemorated on the anniversary of his repose.

Also commemorated on this day: St. Gregory, metropolitan of Iraklia and Redestos. "Kasperovsk" Icon of the Mother of God. Venerable Peter, prince of the Tatar Horde, wonderworker of Rostov. Uncovering of the relics of Venerable Nicander, monk, of Pskov. St. Mary, mother of John-Mark, nephew of Apostle Barnabas, at Jerusalem.

30 June / 13 July — Synaxis of the Holy, Glorious and All-praised Twelve Apostles - although each of the Twelve Apostles has his own Feast Day during the year, the Church has set aside this day for a general Feast of all of them together, including St Paul. The names, their Feast Day(s) and how these most holy and selfless men in the history of the world died and finished their earthly course:

Peter—June 29th and January 16th - crucified upside-down.

Andrew—November 30th - crucified.

James the Son of Zebedee—April 30th - beheaded.

John the Theologian—September 26th and May 8th - died in a wondrous way.

Philip—November 14th - crucified.

Bartholomew—June 11th and August 25th - crucified, then flayed and beheaded.

Thomas—October 6th - pierced with five spears.

Matthew the Evangelist—November 16th - burned by fire.

James the Son of Alphaeus—October 9th - crucified.

Thaddeus (or Jude the brother of James)—June 19th - crucified.

Simon the Zealot—May 10th - crucified.

Matthias—August 9th stoned, then beheaded with an axe when dead.

Paul—June 29th - beheaded.

THE HOLY APOSTLES - As a dry desert, the whole world was; / Across it [the world] the chariot of the Spirit flew / A fiery vision, the Holy Apostles; / The All-holy Spirit, through them, the universe rebuilt. / The rivers of wondrous grace flowed, . The dead desert, to life converted. / Wonderful Apostles, watery clouds, / Simple ones, wise ones, fishermen, heroes! / From the Ganges to the Thames, they carried the torch, / From the Nile to Pontus, holiness they proclaimed, / From variegated Persia to bronze Gaul, / Where the feet walk or the galleys sail / Everywhere, the miracle of the Incarnate God, brought, / Everywhere, the Name of the Resurrected Christ proclaimed, / Without complaint and fear, without any confusion: / Mountains and seas, to them were not obstacles, / The sword did not frighten them, nor persecution prevent them, / Neither all the fires of Hades which, against them, erupted. / Truth guided them and not a false fable: / Our life is Christ, and death a beautiful gain! / Thus, they spoke. To such as these, what could be done? / Crucify their bodies? Scrape their skins? / That, the world did, but what kind of harm did it do them? / To reign eternally! Thus, God judged.

Blessed Peter the Heir - by descent, was a Tartar and the nephew of the Tartar King Berkai. He heard the words of salvation from Bishop Cyril of Rostov and those words adhered to his heart. And yet when he witnessed the miraculous healing of Berkai's son, by the help of Bishop Cyril's prayer, he secretly left the Golden Horde and fled to Rostov where he was baptized and where, with all his soul and mind, dedicated himself to asceticism and the study of the honourable Faith. Once at night, Saints Peter and Paul appeared to him in a dream on the shores of the lake and commanded him to build a church in their name on that same place and along with that, Blessed Peter received from the saints the necessary amount of money for that purpose. Indeed, Blessed Peter built a most beautiful church there in which he in old age, following the death of his wife, was tonsured a monk. Blessed Peter died peacefully in ripe old age on June 29, 1290 A.D. and his church became and remains a monastery called the Petrovski Monastery.

Our Holy Father George the Georgian - George was born in Iberia [Georgia] in 1014 A.D. and was a relative of the Georgian kings. George received a good classical education in his childhood but his heart drew him to the spiritual life. He lived a life of asceticism with the famous spiritual father George in the Black Mountain. He fled to Holy Mount Athos and continued his asceticism in the monastery Iveron. George became the abbot of Iveron. With the help of Emperor Constantine Monomachus he restored Iveron and covered the monastery church with lead. That lead roof remains even today. He translated the Holy Scriptures, the Prologue and books of the Divine Services into the Georgian language. King Bagrat invited him to Georgia to teach the people. George was royally welcomed in his homeland. He travelled everywhere and taught both the clergy and people. In his old age, he desired to die on Mt. Athos where he set out for but death overtook him in Constantinople in the year 1067 A.D. His relics were translated to Iveron. Even though he died on May 24, the monks of Iveron commemorate his memory on June 30 considering him to be as "equal to the apostles."

Also commemorated on this day: Synaxis of All Saints of Birobidzhan Diocese. New Hieromartyrs Alexis Vedensky, Timothy Petropavlovsky priests and Martyr Nicander Prusak. New Hieromartyr Theogenes. New Hieromartyr Milan Popovic of Rmanj, Serbia. New Martyr Alexander Schmorell, Germany. Martyr John. Glorification (1918) of St. Sophronius, bishop of Irkutsk. "Balikin" (1711) and "Gorbanevsk" (1786) Icons of the Mother of God. St. Andrew, prince of Bogoliubsk. New Martyr Michael (Paknanas) the Gardener, of Athens. Translation of the relics of the Great-martyr Stephen-Urosh III of Dechani, Serbia. St. Gelasius of Rimef. Martyr Peter of Synope. Martyr Meleton. Martyr Basilides the Soldier at Alexandria. Holy Queen Dinar. St. Stephen of Omsk. St. Martial, bishop of Lomoges.

‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡

Monday - Romans 7:1-13; Matthew 9:36-10:8

Tuesday - Luke 1:39-49, 56 (Matins Gospel); Romans 7:14-8:2; Matthew 10:9-15; Philippians 2:5-11 (Theotokos); Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28 (Theotokos)

Wednesday - Romans 8:2-13; Matthew 10:16-22

Thursday - Luke 1:39-49, 56 (Matins Gospel); Romans 8:22-27; Matthew 10:23-31; Romans 9:6-19; Matthew 10:32-36; 11:1; Philippians 2:5-11 (Theotokos); Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28 (Theotokos); Galatians 5:22-6:2 (Saints); Luke 6:17-23 (Saints)

Friday - John 21:15-25 (Matins Gospel); 2 Corinthians 11:21-12:9 Epistle, Apostles; Matthew 16:13-19 Gospel, Apostles

Saturday - Romans 3:28-4:3; Matthew 7:24-8:4; 1 Corinthians 4:9-16 (Apostles); Mark 3:13-19 (Apostles)

HOMILY

-About apostolic love and discernment-

"Moreover I will endeavor that you may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance" (2 Peter 1:15).

Brethren, let your hearts be opened, to receive and to understand this great mystery. Primarily, the apostle says that he will not be slothful in reminding the faithful of the salvific truths of the Faith; of the divine power which was given to mankind through Christ the Lord and for the preparing of men to receive this divine power "escaping from the corruption that is in the world through lust" (1 Peter 1:4).

Now he goes even further and promises that he will continue this remembrance even after separation, i.e., after my exodus (the word which is used in the Greek text) from this life, when he will "put off this tabernacle, his body" (1 Peter 1:14). O faith divine, O comfort, O sweetness! Even from the other world, the apostle promises to continue his concern for the Church of God on earth, to continue his work once begun to remind the faithful and to continue his love toward those on earth who believe in Christ. O apostolic love, so near to the love of Christ! O apostolic discernment, whose love the Spirit of God does not diminish as long as man is still wrapped in the dark curtain of the flesh!

The Apostle Peter gave this promise to the faithful nearly two thousand years ago. Did he fulfill it? He fulfilled it to the letter, not only as some would like to interpret it, reminding the faithful, not only through his written epistles and through his successors the bishops, but primarily by his constant action within the Church from the other world. The Apostle Peter appeared many times as did the other apostles whenever, according to the Providence of God, there was a need to appear and he reminded the shepherds and the faithful of the Church how they must adhere firmly to the truth and how they should correct the paths of their lives. Even when Peter did not appear to be seen in a dream or openly, he, in a mysterious manner known only to heaven, acted and still acts always, for our salvation.

Life after death to the Holy Apostles was as apparent as is the sun to those who have eyes. Though their prayers may God also open our spiritual eyes, to know where we are going and what awaits us after death.

O Lord Jesus, All-merciful, deliver us from the darkness into the light according to Your mercy and through the prayers of Your Holy Apostles.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.

