

# Sunday of the Paralytic

## Fourth Sunday of Pascha

27 April / 10 May



**Resurrection Tone 3:** Let the heavens be glad; let earthly things rejoice; \* for the Lord hath wrought might with His arm. \* He hath trampled down death by death; \* the first-born of the dead hath He become. \* From the belly of Hades hath He delivered us \* and Hath granted to the world great mercy.

**Resurrection Kondak, Tone 3:** On this day thou didst rise from the tomb, O Merciful One, / leading us from the gates of death / On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices. / With the prophets and the patriarchs they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Thy power.

**Kondak of the Sunday of the Paralytic, Tone 3:** As of old Thou didst raise the paralytic, O Lord, by Thy Divine presence, raise my soul which is paralysed grievously by all manner of sins and unseemly deeds, that being saved I may cry out: O compassionate Christ, glory be to Thy power.

**Kondak of Pascha, Tone 8:** Though Thou didst descend into the grave, O Immortal One, yet didst Thou destroy the power of Hades, and didst arise as victor, O Christ God, calling to the myrrh-bearing women, Rejoice, and giving peace unto Thine Apostles, O Thou Who dost grant resurrection to the fallen.

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**Vespers: Lord I have Cried, Tone 3, on 10: Resurrection 7; Paralytic 3 (O compassionate Christ); G: Paralytic (Jesus went up to Jerusalem to the Sheep's Pool); N: Sunday Dogmatic (How can we not marvel). Aposticha: The sticheron of the Resurrection 1 (O Christ, Who by Thy Passion); The Paschal Stichera, with their verses; G: Pentecostarion (In Solomon's Porch); N: Pascha (It is the day of resurrection) and Christ is risen from the dead x1.**

### Matins Gospel IV

#### Epistle: The Acts of the Apostles 9: 32 - 42

Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralysed. And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.

#### PETER RAISES TABITHA FROM DEATH

He sends them all out, imitating his master in this also (Ref. Mk.5:40). For where tears are - or rather, where miracles are, there tears have no place. Certainly not in the celebration of such a mystery. Listen, I beseech you: although something of a similar kind is not happening now, yet in the case of our dead, a great mystery is celebrating likewise ...Angels are present, commissioned from heaven ...sent

from the King Himself to call their fellow servant, and I ask you, Do you weep? Do you not know what a mystery it is that is taking place, how awful, how dread, and worthy indeed of hymns and lauds? ...For it is a very great mystery of the Wisdom of God. As if leaving the dwelling, the soul goes forth, speeding on her way to her own Lord, and do you mourn? Why then you should do this on the birth of a child: for this in fact is also a birth, and better than that... For as the sun arises, clear and bright, so the soul leaving the body with a clear conscience, shines joyously ...Think what the soul must then be! in what amazement, what wonder, what delight!

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXI on Acts IX. B#55, pp. 138, 139.*

### **Gospel: John 5: 1-15**

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralysed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed." He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.'" Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?" But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

### **JESUS HEALS THE PARALYTIC BY THE POOL**

Great is the profit of divine Scriptures, and all sufficient is the aid which comes from them ...for the divine oracles are a treasury of all manner of medicines. Whether it be needful to quench pride, to lull passion to sleep, to tread under foot the love of money, to despise pain, to inspire confidence, to gain patience - in the Scriptures we may find abundant resource. For what man of those who struggle with long poverty or who are nailed by a grievous disease will not, when he reads the passage before us, receive much comfort? Since this man had been a paralytic for thirty eight years, and he saw others delivered each year, and himself bound by his disease, not even so did he fall back and despair, though in truth not merely despondency for the past, but also hopelessness for the future was sufficient to overstrain him ...Yes, Lord, he says, but I have no man ...to put me in the pool. What can be more pitiable than these words? ...Do you see a heart crushed through long sickness? Do you see all violence subdued? ...He did not curse his day ...but replied gently ...Yes, Lord; yet he did not know who it was who asked him.

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXXVII on John V, 1. B#58, p. 128.*

### **Christ is Risen!**

Today's Gospel reading confirms us more and more strongly in the divinity of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The Gospels for the last two Sundays told us about the appearances of the Risen One. They were as if filled with the light of Christ's Resurrection: the wonderful appearances to the disciples, to Thomas, to the myrrh-bearers. But today's Gospel starts with a dismal, horrible picture: there is no brightness, no light. At the Sheep Gate there was a pool which had five porches. "In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered.... For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years" (Jn. 5:2-5).

Just picture this: thirty-eight years in such a terrible condition, in pain and suffering, without a doctor, without care, without medicine, and maybe even often without food. And this unfortunate man bore all this because he wanted to be well. He tried to enter the water after it was troubled, but he had no one to

help him, was late, and did not receive healing. And so passed thirty-eight years. Why this is a human lifetime!

Suddenly everything changed. Jesus came up to him and said: "Rise, take up thy bed and walk. . ." and he walked (Jn. 5:8,9).

What happened? What took place? What happened is that the reason for his sickness was removed. Christ revealed this reason when He met this man in the temple and said to him: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (Jn. 5:14). Here is the reason—sin. Sin is the reason for all evil, for all our sufferings, for all our sicknesses. Yes, sin. . .sin alone. And Christ is the only one who can destroy it, who can forgive. But this is under one condition: "Sin no more."

We have lived through the Passion days, we have lived through the very death of Christ, the death of the Lamb of God, Who takes upon Himself the sin of the world. This means our sin, too. He, the Only Sinless One, has become the sacrifice for us before our Heavenly Father. And now we are walking in the Easter joy of the Risen Christ. And so week after week. But still we stumble, fall, sin. But let us not despond; let us turn to Him.

The pool at the Sheep Gate was only a shadow of what Christ performed and is performing. He alone is the source of healing and forgiveness. He alone, as God, can forgive sins. Let us turn to Him, and He will say to us the same words He said to the paralytic: "Rise, take up thy bed and walk."

And we will rise and walk again in the light of His Resurrection. But let us remember His words to the paralytic, "Sin no more. " And let us not sin, because Christ is Risen!

*The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei*

Over the next 3 Sundays we will hear in the Gospel of events that occurred during the life of Christ, but which occurred in the time between the Jewish Passover (when our Lord was crucified and rose again) and the Jewish feast of Pentecost (when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles). The first of these events is the healing of the paralytic at the "Sheep's Pool". This pool was built by Solomon and was covered by a dome supported by 5 sets of pillars - thereby producing 5 separate "porches" around the pool. It was in this pool that the sacrificial lambs were washed before they were offered at the temple. We are also told in the Gospel that an angel of the Lord came down to the pool at a certain time and stirred the water, and the first person who entered the pool at this time was healed of whatever disease he had. As one might expect the 5 porches were filled with the sick and lame waiting for the stirring of the water in the hope that they might be healed. This particular miracle was set forth by God as a foreshadowing of the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Just as those who entered the pool after it had been blessed by an angel were healed of their physical ailments, so also those who enter the "pool" of the baptismal font after the water has been blessed by the priest are healed of their spiritual ailment - that is of the ailment of death and corruption which is brought about by our sinful state.

In addition to this overall parallel between the miracle of the sheep's pool and baptism, there are other parallels that reinforce their connection. The water is "stirred" by an angel endowing the water with the grace of God for healing. The water in the baptismal font during the service is "stirred" by the priest with his hand in the form of the cross as he invokes the Holy Spirit to "come now and sanctify this water". The one who enters the water of the pool is immersed in it just as the one who enters the baptismal font is likewise immersed and when each leaves the pool, his infirmity (physical or spiritual) is healed and left behind. It is not the water of the pool, nor is it simply the water of the baptismal font that of its own nature is healing - rather it is given this power by the grace of the Holy Spirit which is communicated by the blessing of the angel or the priest. Given that this miracle is manifested by God to lead His people towards the sacrament of baptism that would appear with the coming of the Messiah, let us consider this sacrament and its place in our lives.

It is necessary to point out here that the sacraments are not magic spells - they are prayers asking God to bestow upon us His sanctifying grace. We must cooperate with Him and work with the grace that He pours out upon us. If we neglect or misuse this grace then it has no beneficial effect on us and in fact when called to show the result of the grace in our lives by the Master at the Great Judgment, then we will face the fate of the slothful servant who hid his talent in the ground and even that which we think we have will be taken from us.

Grace is the power of God given to us for a holy life: as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "The Lord said, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." There are two aspects to the operation of this grace in us. "Both the spiritual birth and further spiritual growth of a man occur through the mutual action of two principles. One of these is the grace of the Holy Spirit; the other, man's opening of his heart for the reception of it, a thirst for it, the desire to receive it, as the thirsty, dry earth receives the moisture of rain - in other words, personal effort for the reception, preservation and activity in the soul of the Divine gifts." (Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*) Thus it is evident that grace is not some magic substance that instantly transforms us - rather it is a powerful spiritual tool which is entrusted to us by God so that by using it, we each might work out our own salvation. Grace does not interfere with the freedom of man; it does not act upon him irresistibly. Often people, making use of the Mysteries, do not receive from them that which they could give; for their hearts are not open to receive grace, or else they have not preserved the gifts of God which they have received.

"In the Mysteries, prayers are joined with blessings in one form or another, and with special acts. The words of blessing accompanied by outward sacred acts are, as it were, spiritual vessels by which the grace of the Holy Spirit is scooped up and given to the members of the Church who are sincere believers. Thus a mystery (sacrament) is a sacred act which, under a visible aspect, communicates to the soul of a believer the invisible grace of God." (Pomazansky)

Now let us return to the sacrament of baptism. First when a person comes to be baptized they (or their sponsor on their behalf in the case of an infant) must first break with the life of world. They must place a decisive boundary between themselves and "the world" and for this they must openly and straightforwardly renounce the devil; for one cannot serve two masters. From antiquity, this renunciation of the devil and "all his works and all his service and all his pride" has been a part of the baptismal formula. This renunciation gives way to the opening of an entrance in to the Kingdom of grace, a birth into a new life "by water and the Spirit" and the beginning of the life in Christ.

Baptism stands first in the series of Mysteries - it is the door to the Church and to all the other Mysteries of grace bestowed therein. Baptism bestows on the believer a new life - he is "born again" and now is alive not with the life of this world, but with the life of Christ. The act of immersion which constitutes the Sacrament of Baptism recalls that we "die with Christ" and are buried with Him as we

enter the water and we “rise with Christ” as we emerge from it. So in this sacrament, we “die” to the world and are “born” to the eternal life of Christ.

Orthodox Baptism is marked by triple immersion – that is the person is immersed in the water three times. This triple immersion signifies first the life of the Trinity – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It also represents the three day burial of our Lord and like Him we too are “buried” in the waters of baptism for three “days” after which we are raised with Him and enter into a new life. In Hebrew tradition there was a similar rite – a rite of washing from ritual impurity – that involved immersion in water. This was the baptism that the Forerunner offered to those who came in repentance. They were ritually “washed” from the uncleanness of their sins in the waters of the Jordan. But the baptism of John was itself only a foreshadowing of the Baptism of Christ, the sacrament that He bestowed upon His Church. In the Acts of the Apostles we see that Paul comes upon believers who were only baptized with the baptism of John and did not know the regenerating life of the Holy Spirit. He caused them to be baptized anew with the Baptism of Christ and then the Apostles were called to lay hands upon them that they might also receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 19). (This bestowal of the Holy Spirit is preserved in the life of the Church and is given to us in the sacrament of Chrismation – but that is a topic for another day.) From this we see that the baptism of John and the baptism of Christ (that is the sacrament of Baptism) are two distinct things – the baptism of John foreshadows the baptism of Christ which encompasses it and fulfills it.

The sacrament of Baptism is indispensable for the Christian, for in Baptism a man receives in the place of the old existence he had, a new existence and life, and becomes a child of God, a member of the Body of Christ (that is the Church), and an inheritor of eternal life. It is therefore evident that Baptism is indispensable for all, so that growing in body and spirit we might grow in Christ. Having received this new life, we must cooperate with its action in our lives, we must work to incorporate it in our lives and to live in accordance with the Godly life that it instills in us.

Today we are told not only of the miracle of our Lord in the healing of the paralytic at the Sheep’s Pool, but we also are shown how our Lord prepared the world for the Mystery of Baptism. If we wish to enter into the Kingdom of God (that is, heaven) and if we wish to share in the eternal life of union and communion with the God/man Jesus Christ, then we must begin by embracing this sacrament of Baptism for it is the door into the Church, the door into the Kingdom of Heaven and the door leading to eternal life.

*Archpriest David Moser*  
<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/propoved/info>

### **Saints of the Week**

**28 April / 11 May — The Holy Apostles Jason and Sosipater, and the Virgin, Cercyra** - The first two were among the Seventy Apostles, and the last was the daughter of the king of the island of Corfu. The Apostle Paul mentions Jason and Sosipater (Rom. 16:21), and calls them his kinsmen. Jason was born in Tarsus, as was the Apostle Paul himself, and Sosipater in Achaea. The first was nominated by the apostles as Bishop of Tarsus and the second as Bishop of Iconium. Travelling and preaching the Gospel, these two apostles came to the island of Corfu, where they succeeded in building a church dedicated to St Stephen the Protomartyr and in bringing some unbelievers to the Church. The king of the island threw them into prison, where there were seven robbers already imprisoned: Satorninus, Jakischolus, Faustian, Januarius, Marsalus, Euphrasius and Mamminus. The apostles brought all seven of them to the Christian faith, making wolves into lambs. The king commanded that these seven be put to death in boiling pitch, and they thus received the wreath of martyrdom. When, after this, the king was in process of questioning the apostles, his daughter Cercyra, looking through a window, saw the torture of these men of God and, discovering the reason for it, proclaimed herself a Christian and gave all her jewels away to the poor. The king was filled with wrath against his daughter and shut her up in a separate prison, then, failing to turn her from Christ, ordered that the prison be burned down. The prison burned to the ground, but the maiden remained alive. Seeing this wonder, many of the people were baptised. The furious king ordered that his daughter be bound to a tree and killed with arrows. Those who had come to believe in Christ fled from the terrible king to a nearby island and hid themselves. The king set off in a boat to arrest them, but his boat overturned in the sea and thus the unrighteous perished, as Pharaoh aforesaid. The new king accepted the Christian faith and was baptised, receiving the name Sebastian. Jason and Sosipater freely preached the Gospel and strengthened the Church of God in Corfu to great old age, and there finished their earthly course and went to the courts of the Lord.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Martyr Tibald of Pannonia; Venerable Crónán of Roscrea, Ireland; St. Cyril, bishop of Turov; Venerable Cyriacus, abbot of Kargopol (Vologda); Venerable Cyril of Syrinsk Monastery; New Martyr Anna Shashkina; finding of the relics of Venerable Sophia (Grineva) of Kiev,



confessor. Movable feasts on the Sunday of the Paralytic: Righteous Tabitha, the widow resurrected by St. Peter (1 st C); Martyr Abraham the Bulgar, Wonderworker of Vladimir.

**29 April / 12 May — St Basil of Ostrog** - born in Popovo Selo in Herzegovina, of simple and devout parents. From his youth he was filled with love for the Church of God, and when he grew up he went to the monastery of the Dormition of the Mother of God at Trebinje, and became a monk. As such, he quickly became known for his serious and rare ascetic life, for he loaded himself with ascetic practices, each harder than the last. He was later chosen and consecrated as Bishop of Zahum and Skenderia, much against his will. As a bishop, he first lived in the monastery at TvrDOS, whence, as a good pastor, he confirmed his flock in the Orthodox faith, keeping it from the cruelty of the Turks and the guile of the Latins. But when he was too pressed-upon by his enemies, and when TvrDOS was destroyed by the Turks, Basil moved to Ostrog, where he lived in strict asceticism, protecting his flock by his unceasing and loving prayers. (A new church, on the ruins of the old TvrDOS, has been built in our day by Nikolai Runjevac, from the village of Poljica near Trebinje—a wonderful foundation in the sight of God and His people) He went peacefully to the Lord in the 16th century, leaving his whole and healing body, uncorrupt and wonderworking, to the present day. The miracles at the grave of St Basil are without number. Both Christians and Moslems hasten to his relics and find healing of the gravest sicknesses and sufferings. A great national gathering takes place there every year at Pentecost.

**The Nine Holy Martyrs of Cyzicus** - These nine brave martyrs, enflamed with love for Christ, refused to offer sacrifices to the idols or to deny Christ the Lord, for which they were brutally tortured and finally beheaded. During the reign of Emperor Constantine, a church was built in Cyzicus in honor of these martyrs where their incorruptible relics were placed. Countless healings have taken place over their relics. Their names were: THEOGONIUS, RUFUS, ANTIPATER, THEOCTIST, ARTEMAS, MAGNUS, THEODOTUS, THAUMASILUS AND PHILEMON. All of them despised everything temporal for the eternal, the corruptible for the incorruptible. That is why the Lord led them to His eternal home and crowned them with unfading wreaths of glory. They suffered honorably and were glorified in the eighth century.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Venerable Memnon the Wonderworker; Martyrs Diodorus and Rhodopianus, deacon; Venerable Nicetas, abbot of Synnada; St. John (Kaloktenes), bishop of Thebes; St. Arsenius, archbishop of Suzdal; 300 Martyrs who suffered in the mountains of Dudikvati and Papat; Martyr Stanko the Shepherd; Venerable Nektary of Optina; Venerable Amphilochius of Pochaev.

**30 April / 13 May — The Holy Apostle James** - the son of Zebedee and brother of St. John the Theologian, he was one of the Twelve. At the call of the Lord Jesus, he left his fishing nets and his father and, together with John, immediately followed Christ. He was one of the three apostles to whom the Lord revealed the greatest mysteries: before whom He was transfigured on Tabor and before whom He was in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane before His Passion. After receiving the Holy Spirit, he preached the Gospel in various places, going as far as Spain. On his return from Spain, a violent quarrel broke out between the Jews and himself on the Holy Scriptures, and, being unable to withstand him, they hired a magician, Hermogenes. But Hermogenes and Philip his pupil were overcome by the power and truth that James preached, and were baptised. Then the Jews denounced him to Herod, and persuaded one Josias to slander the Apostle. This Josias, seeing James's manly bearing and hearing his clear preaching of the truth, repented and came to faith in Christ. When James was condemned to death, this Josias was also condemned. Mounting the scaffold, Josias begged James's forgiveness for the sin of slander, and James embraced him, kissing him and saying: 'Peace be to thee, and forgiveness.' And they both laid their heads under the sword and were beheaded for the sake of the Lord whom they had loved and served. St James suffered in Jerusalem in the year 45. His body was taken to Spain, where to this day miracles of healing are performed at his tomb.

**St Donatus** - bishop of Evira in Albania. He was endowed by God with the great blessing of miracle-working, by which he performed many miracles for the benefit of the people. Donatus changed bitter water into sweet water; brought down rain during a drought; healed the king's daughter of insanity; and resurrected a man from the dead. This deceased man had repaid his debt to a certain creditor. This unscrupulous creditor wanted the debt to be repaid a second time and, wanting to benefit from the death of his debtor, he came to his widow and demanded that the debt be repaid immediately. The widow wept and complained to the bishop. St. Donatus warned the creditor to wait, at least, until the man was buried and then the debt would be discussed. The creditor angrily insisted his own. Then Donatus approached the dead man, touched him and cried out: "Arise brother and see what you have with your creditor!." The dead man rose and with a frightening glance looked at his lender and related to him the time, when and where he had repaid the debt. He also sought from the lender his written receipt. The frightened lender then placed a document into his hands and the enlivened deceased tore it up and again lay down and died. St. Donatus died peacefully in very old age and took up habitation with the Lord in the year 387 A.D. His relics repose in Evira, Albania and, even today, benefit the faithful.

**St. Erconwald, bishop of London (c.693)** - Born in East Anglia; died at Barking, April 30, c. 686-693; second feast day on May 13. Erconwald is reputed to have been of royal blood, son of Annas or Offa. In 675, Saint Theodore of Canterbury appointed Erconwald bishop of the East Saxons with his see in London and extending over Essex and Middlesex. His episcopate was the most important in that diocese between that of Saint Mellitus and Saint Dunstan. His shrine in Saint Paul's Cathedral was a much visited pilgrimage site during the Middle Ages, where miracles were reported until the 16th century, but little is known of his life except that he founded a monastery at Chertsey in Surrey, which he governed, and a convent at Barking in Essex to which he appointed as abbess his sister, Ethelburga. Erconwald took some part in the reconciliation of Saint Theodore with Saint Wilfrid. In Saint Bede's time, miracles were recorded as a result of touching the couch used by Erconwald in his later years. At his death, Erconwald's relics were claimed by Barking, Chertsey, and London; he was finally buried in Saint Paul's Cathedral in London, which he had enlarged. The relics escaped the fire of 1087 and were placed in the crypt. November 14, 1148, they were translated to a new shrine behind the high altar, from where they were again moved on February 1, 1326. He is portrayed in art as a bishop in a small 'chariot' (the Saxon equivalent of a bath chair) in which he travelled because of his gout. Sometimes there is a woman touching it or he may be shown with Saint Ethelburga of Barking (Roeder). Erconwald is invoked against gout.

**St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, Bishop of the Caucasus and Stavropol** - He was born in 1807 into Russian aristocracy — his father was a wealthy provincial gentleman. From a very early age he felt strongly called to monastic life, but at that time it was almost unheard of for a nobleman to take such a path, and Dimitri (as he was called in baptism) entered the Pioneer Military School in St Petersburg. There he distinguished himself, and even attracted the attention of Grand Duke Nicholas Pavlovich, an event which would profoundly affect his later life.

Despite his excellent record at the academy, young Dimitri still longed only for the things of God. In 1827 he graduated from the school and was commissioned as an officer in the army, but soon fell critically ill, and was granted a discharge. This proved to be providential: when he recovered his health, he immediately became a novice, living at several different monasteries and coming under the spiritual care of Staretz Leonid, one of the celebrated fathers of the Optina monastery. In 1821 he took his monastic vows and received the name Ignatius. Soon afterwards he was ordained to the priesthood.

Soon after the newly-professed Fr Ignatius had entered the seclusion that he sought, Tsar Nicholas I — the former Grand Duke Nicholas — visited the Pioneer Military School and asked what had become of the promising cadet he had met a few years before. When the Tsar learned that the former Dimitri was now a monk, he sought him out, had him elevated to the rank of Archimandrite (at age 26!) and made him Superior of the St Sergius Monastery in St Petersburg. Tsar Nicholas instructed him to make the monastery a model for all Russian religious communities. Though he had desired only a life of solitude and prayer, the new Archimandrite devoted himself conscientiously to fulfilling the Tsar's charge. The monastery did in fact become a kind of standard for Russian monasticism, and its abbot acquired many spiritual children, not only among his monks but among the laity in the capital.

After twenty-four years as superior of the monastery, St Ignatius was elevated to the episcopate in 1857, first as Bishop of Stavropol, then as Bishop of Kavkaz. Only four years later (aged 54) he resigned and spent the rest of his life in reclusion at the Nicolo-Babaevsky Monastery in the diocese of Kostroma. There he continued the large body of spiritual writings for which he is well known. His printed Works fills five volumes; of these, at least two major works have been translated into English: *On the Prayer of Jesus* and *The Arena: an offering to contemporary monasticism*. Both are gems of spiritual writing, profitable to every serious Orthodox Christian.

St Ignatius reposed in peace in 1867. He was glorified in 1988 by the Moscow Patriarchate, during the millennial celebrations in that year. Saints Andrei Rublev, Xenia of Petersburg, Theophan the Recluse and others were glorified in the same observances.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Hieromartyr Eutropius, bishop of Saintes (Gaul) and Martyr Estelle; Martyr Maximus of Ephesus; Finding of the relics of Hieromartyr Basil, bishop of Amasea; Venerable Clement, the Hymnographer; Finding of the relics of St. Nicetas, bishop of Novgorod; New Martyr Argyra at Constantinople; 'Strastnaya' or 'Of the Passion' Icon of the Mother of God.

**1 / 14 May — Fast Day (Mid-Pentecost) -The Holy Prophet Jeremiah** - born 650 years before Christ in the village of Anathoth, not far from Jerusalem, he began to prophesy at an early age, during the reign of King Josiah (Jer. 1:1-19). He preached repentance to the King and nobles and the false prophets and priests, and, in the time of that King Josiah, barely escaped death at the hands of the enraged nobles. He prophesied to King Jehoiakim that his burial would be like that of an ass; that is, he would be cast dead out of Jerusalem and his body would be for a long time dragged around the ground without burial

(22:18). For this, Jeremiah was thrown into prison. Being unable to write there, he sent for Baruch, who stood outside the window of the prison while Jeremiah dictated to him. When the King read this prophecy, he took the paper in fury and threw it into the fire. By the providence of God, Jeremiah was saved from prison, and the words of the prophecy were fulfilled upon Jehoiakim. He prophesied to King Jeconiah that he would be carried off to Babylon with his whole family and that he would die there, all of which quickly came to pass (24:1; 27:20). Under King Zedekiah, he put a yoke on his neck and walked through Jerusalem prophesying the fall of the city and slavery under the yoke of Babylon (27:2). He wrote to the slaves in Babylon, telling them that they would not return to Jerusalem but would remain for seventy years in Babylon, which came to pass (25:11). In the valley of Topnet, near Jerusalem, where the Jews had brought children to the idols for sacrifice, Jeremiah took a whole pot in his hands and smashed it in front of the people, prophesying the imminent crushing of the Jewish Kingdom (19:10-11). The Babylonians soon over-ran Jerusalem, killed King Zedekiah, burned the city down and utterly destroyed it. They slaughtered an enormous number of Jews in the valley of Topnet, in the place where children had died as sacrifices to idols and where the prophet had broken the pot. Jeremiah, with the Levites, took the Ark out of the Temple and bore it off to the mountain of Nebo, where Moses had died, and hid it in a cave. He hid the fire from the altar in a deep well. He was forced by some Jews to go with them to Egypt, where he lived for four years and was then stoned to death by his countrymen. He prophesied to the Egyptians the destruction of their idols and the coming there of a Virgin with a Child. There is a tradition that Alexander the Great himself visited the grave of the Prophet Jeremiah,\* and ordered that his body be moved and buried in Alexandria. \*The Egyptians almost deified St Jeremiah, and they therefore buried him as a king. He was regarded as a wonder-worker after his death. The dust from his tomb was taken as a medicine against snake-bite, and today many Christians invoke his help against it.

**St. Asaph, bishop of Llanelwy, Wales c.550** - Related to Saint Deiniol and Saint Tysilo. Hermit near Tenegal, Wales. Servant to Saint Kentigern. Second bishop of the Welsh see now known as Saint Asaph. At Tengenel, near Holywell, Wales, there are an ash-tree, well, and valley that tradition says belonged to Asaph.

**Venerable Paphnutius, abbot of Borovsk** - The Monk Paphnutii of Borovsk was born in 1394 in the village of Kudinovo, not far from Borovsk, and at Baptism he was named Parphenii. His father Ioann was the son of a baptised Tatar, a "baskak" ("tax-collector") named Martin, and his mother was named Photinia. At 20 years of age Parphenii left his parental home and in the year 1414 accepted monastic tonsure with the name Paphnutii at the Pokrov-Protection Monastery on the Heights, under its head, Markell (i.e. Marcellus). The Monk Paphnutii asceticised for many years at the monastery. When the head of the monastery died, the brethren chose him as hegumen. Sainted Photii, Metropolitan of Kiev, ordained him to the priestly dignity (in about the year 1426). The monk spent thirty years at the Pokrov monastery, wherein he was both the head and the clergy-starets (elder). At 51 years of age he fell grievously ill, gave up being the hegumen and took on the great-schema. After a restoration to health on the day of the holy GreatMartyr George the Victory-Bearer, 23 April 1444, he withdrew from the monastery and settled with one monk on the left bank of the River Protva, at the confluence into it of the River Ister'ma. Soon brethren began to gather to him at this new place. The number of the monks grew quickly. A new stone church was built in place of the former wooden one, in honour of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God. In the icon-frescoes there took part the finest iconographer of those times, - Dionysii and his assistants. The Monk Paphnutii gave example to the brethren, leading a strict life: his cell was the poorest of all, and from food he took the worst. On Mondays and Fridays he did not eat at all, and on Wednesdays he partook only of dry foods. From the overall tasks the monk chose the most difficult: he chopped and carried fire-wood, dug up and cultivated the garden, and at the same time arrived first for church services.

The Monk Paphnutii earned the deep respect and love not only of the brethren of his own monastery, but also of other monasteries. Through the Providence of God there was guided to the monastery to the monk a twenty year old youth, - Ioann Sanin. Having put him to the test, the monk tonsured him into monasticism with the name Joseph. Later on the Monk Joseph of Volotsk firmly defended the purity of the Orthodox faith and entered into struggle against the heresy of the Judaisers, condemned at a Council of 1504. The Monk Paphnutii blessed the young man in his exploits.

A week before his death the monk foretold his end. Having made a final prayer and blessing of the brethren, he expired to God on 1 May 1477. The Monk Paphnutii was a follower of the Monk Sergej, Hegumen of Radonezh.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Monk-martyr Batas the Persian; Monk-martyr Romanus of Raqqa; Venerable Michael of Chalcedon; Right-believing Queen Tamara of Georgia; Hieromartyr Macarius, metropolitan of Kiev; Venerable Gerasimos of Boldino; St. Zosimus, bishop of Kumurdo; St. Panaretus, bishop of Paphos; New Monk-martyrs Acacius, Euthymius, and Ignatius of Mt. Athos; Venerable Nicephorus of Chios; Martyr Maria of Merambelos on Crete; New Martyr Nina Kuznyetsova; 'Byzantine',



'Unexpected Joy', 'Myrrh-bearing', and 'Andronicus' Icons of the Mother of God. Movable feast on Mid-Pentecost: 'Mozdok' Icon of the Mother of God.

**2 / 15 May — The Holy Martyrs Hesperus, Zoe, Cyriac and Theodulus** - in the time of the Emperor Hadrian (117-138), a pagan called Catallus bought Hesperus, his wife Zoe and their sons Cyriac and Theodulus as slaves. Being convinced Christians, they refused to eat anything that had been sacrificed to idols, but threw all that had been thus offered to the dogs, and themselves went hungry. Catallus, discovering this, became very angry and began to torture his slaves cruelly. He first tortured the children, but they remained unfaltering in the Faith and sought yet harsher tortures. At last all four of them were cast into a burning furnace where, after prayers of thanksgiving, they gave their spirits into the Lord's hands. Their bodies remained whole and untouched by the fire.

**St Athanasius the Great, Archbishop of Alexandria** - on this day are commemorated the translation of his relics and their miracles.

**The Holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb** - they were sons of the great Prince Vladimir, Baptiser of the Russian people. Until his baptism, Vladimir had many wives, and children by them. Boris and Gleb were brothers of one mother. Before his death in 1015, Vladimir divided the Kingdom among all his sons. But Svyatopolk, his eldest son and Prince of Kiev, desired to take the parts that were set aside for Boris and Gleb, so he sent men to kill Boris in one place and Gleb in another. Both brothers were deeply devout and pleasing to God in all things, and they met death with prayer and the lifting up of their hearts to Him. Their bodies remained uncorrupt and fragrant, and were buried in the town of Vishgorod, where to this day blessed strength flows forth from them to heal men of divers ills and sufferings.

**St Michael (Boris), King of Bulgaria** - born and educated as a pagan and was baptized under the influence of his uncle Bojan and his sister. At baptism, he was given the name Michael. Patriarch Photius sent him priests who gradually baptized all the Bulgarian people. Many Bulgarian noblemen opposed this new Faith but the new Faith conquered and the Cross glistened on many churches built by the devout Tsar Michael. The Faith among the Bulgarians, as among the Serbs, was especially established by the Five Followers, the disciples of St. Cyril and St. Methodius, who preached to the people the knowledge of Christ in the vernacular: the Slavonic language. In his old age Michael retreated to a monastery and was tonsured a monk. When his son Vladimir began to destroy his father's work and to exterminate Christianity, Michael again donned his military uniform, girded himself with a sword, ousted Vladimir from the throne and installed Simeon, his younger son, as Tsar. After that, he again clothed himself in the monastic habit and retreated in silence where, in mortification and prayer, he completed his earthly life "in the good faith; in the correct confession of our Lord Jesus Christ; great, honourable and devout," and took up habitation in the heavenly life on May 2, 906 A.D.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Venerable Athanasius of Svir; St. Athanasius of Lubny, patriarch of Constantinople; Blessed Basil of Ryazan, fool-for-Christ; 'Putivilsk' and 'Butivansk' Icons of the Mother of God.

**3 / 16 May — The Holy Martyrs Timothy the Reader and his wife Maura of Antinoe in Egypt** - Strange was the destiny of these wonderful martyrs, husband and newly-wedded wife. Twenty days after their wedding, they were taken for trial for their Christian faith before Arrianus, governor of the Thebaid, in the time of the Emperor Diocletian. Timothy was a reader in the church where he lived. 'Who are you?', the governor asked him. Timothy replied: 'I am a Christian and a reader in the Church of God.' The governor said to him further: 'You see, don't you, the instruments prepared for torture?' Timothy replied: 'But you don't see the angels of God, which are strengthening me.' Then the governor commanded that he be pierced through the ears with iron rods, so that the pupils of his eyes leapt out with the pain. They then suddenly hanged him by the feet and stuffed his mouth with wood. Maura was at first afraid of torture but, when her husband gave her courage, she also confessed her steadfast faith before the governor. He commanded that, first, her hair be torn out, then all her fingers cut off. After many other tortures, to which they would quickly have succumbed had they not been strengthened by the grace of God, they were both crucified, one in sight of the other. And thus, hanging on their crosses, they remained alive for nine full days, counselling each other and encouraging each other in endurance. On the tenth day they gave their spirits into God's hands, the God for whom they had suffered crucifixion, and thus became worthy of His Kingdom. They suffered with honour for Christ in 286. 'Maura' means 'black', from which it comes that in Macedonia the day of these saints is known as 'Black Day'. On the island of Zakynthos there is a church of Saints Timothy and Maura, in which many miraculous healings have taken place.

**Our Holy Father Theodosius of the Kiev Caves** - From his early youth, Theodosius shunned laughter and rejoicing and dedicated himself to godly-thoughts and prayers. Because of this, he was often abused by his mother, especially one day, when his mother noticed an iron belt around his naked body from

which his shirt was bloodied. Having once read the words of the Savior in the Gospel "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (St. Matthew 10:37), Theodosius left the home of his parents and fled to the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev to see the Venerable Anthony. Anthony received him and, shortly afterwards, tonsured him a monk. When his mother found him and asked him to return home, he counseled his mother and she also entered a convent and was tonsured a nun. Theodosius shortly surpassed all the monks by his mortification, meekness and goodness, and became very dear to Anthony who installed him as abbot of the monastery. During the time that he was abbot, the brotherhood of the monastery greatly increased, churches and cells were built and the Constitution [the Rule] of the Studite Monastery was introduced in its entirety. God endowed Theodosius with abundant grace because of his virginal purity, great labor in prayer, love toward his fellow man and so this man of God possessed great power over unclean spirits, healed diseases and discerned the fate of men. Along with St. Anthony, Theodosius is considered the founder and organizer of monasticism in Russia. He died peacefully in the year 1074 A.D. His healing relics repose next to the relics of Anthony.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Martyr Xenia of Peloponnesus; St. Mamai, catholicos of Georgia; Venerable Michael and Arsenius of Ulumbia, Georgia; St. Peter, bishop of Argos; St. Ecumenius, bishop of Trikala; Translation of the relics of Venerable Luke of Mt. Stirion; Venerable Juliana, abbess, and Eupraxia, of Moscow; St. Theophanes, metropolitan of Peritheorion; Martyr Ahmet the Calligrapher of Constantinople; New Hieromartyr Nicholas Benevolsky, priest; Kiev Caves Monastery Icon of the Dormition, 'Svenskaya', 'Kiev Caves Monastery with Sts. Anthony and Theodosius', 'Yaskinsk', and 'Blachernae' Icons of the Mother of God.

**4 / 17 May — The Holy Martyr Pelagia of Tarsus** - born in the town of Tarsus of pagan but noble and wealthy parents, she heard about Christ and the salvation of the soul from Christians, became inflamed with love for the Saviour and was a Christian in her soul. There was at that time a terrible persecution of Christians. It happened that the Emperor Diocletian himself stopped in Tarsus and that, during the time of his stay in the town, his son, the heir, fell deeply in love with Pelagia and wanted to make her his wife. Pelagia replied through her mother—a wicked woman—that she was already promised to her betrothed husband, Christ the Lord. Fleeing from the foul heir and her wicked mother, Pelagia sought and found Bishop Linus, a man renowned for his holiness. He instructed her in the Faith and baptised her. Then Pelagia gave away her luxurious clothing and great wealth, returned home and confessed to her mother that she was already baptised. Hearing of this, the Emperor's son, losing all hope of getting this holy maiden as his wife, ran himself through with a sword and died. Then the wicked mother denounced her daughter to the Emperor and she was taken for trial. The Emperor marvelled at the girl's beauty and, forgetting his son, burned with an impure passion for her. But when Pelagia remained unfaltering in her faith, the Emperor condemned her to be burned in a metal ox heated by fire. When they stripped the martyr, she signed herself with the sign of the Cross and, with prayers of thanksgiving to God on her lips, went into the ox, where, in the twinkling of an eye, she melted like wax. She suffered with honour in 287. Bishop Linus hunted for the remains of her bones and buried them on a hill under a stone. In the time of the Emperor Constantine Copronymos (741-775), a beautiful church was built on that site in honour of this holy virgin and martyr Pelagia, who was sacrificed for Christ to reign eternally with Him.

**The Venerable Nicephorus** - At first, Nicephorus was a Catholic and later embraced the Orthodox Faith. He lived the life of an ascetic as a monk on Mt. Athos with the wise Theoliptos. He was a teacher of the glorious Gregory Palamas and wrote a work on mental prayer. He presented himself peacefully to the Lord in the fourteenth century. Nicephorus taught: "Gather your mind and force it to enter into the heart and remain there. When your mind is established in the heart, it should not remain empty, but allow it to continually perform this prayer: O LORD JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY ON ME [THE JESUS PRAYER]! Never allow it to be silent. Because of this, the entire chain of virtues will enter into you: love, joy, peace and all others, because of which your every petition to God will be fulfilled later."

**St. Ethelred, king of Mercia and monk in England (716)** - abdicated to become a monk at Bardney, where he was later elected abbot (Benedictines). Saint Ethelred is depicted as a Benedictine abbot with royal regalia at his feet. He is venerated at Leominster.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Hieromartyr Erasmus, bishop of Formia, and those with him; Martyrs Florian of Lorsch, Austria, and those with him; Hieromartyr Albian (Olbian), bishop of Anaea in Asia Minor, and his disciples; Righteous Monica, mother of Blessed Augustine; Hieromartyr Silvanus, bishop of Gaza, and 40 martyrs with him; Monk-martyrs of Palestine: Aphrodisius, Leontius, Anthony, Valerian, Macrobius, and others; Translation of the relics of the Righteous Lazarus and the Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Mary Magdalene; St. Athanasius, bishop of Corinth; Venerable Nicephorus of Athos; Translation of the relics of the Venerable Alfanov brothers of Novgorod: Nicetas, Cyril, Nicephorus, Clement, and Isaac, of Novgorod; Righteous Jonah Atamansky, wonderworker of Odessa, priest; New Hieromartyr Demetrius, archbishop of Gdov; New Hieromartyr John Vasiliev, priest; New

Hieromartyr Nicholas Tochtuev, deacon; 'Staraia Russa' Icon of the Mother of God; Commemoration of the reestablishment of the fullness of brotherly communion within the local Russian Orthodox Church. Movable feast on the Saturday of the Fourth Week after Pascha: Synaxis of New Martyrs of Butovo.

**‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡**

**Monday** - Acts 10:1-16; John 6:56-69

**Tuesday** - Acts 10:21-33; John 7:1-13

**Wednesday** - Micah 4:2-3, 5, 6:1-5, 8; Isaiah 55:1-13; Proverbs. 9:1-11; Acts 14:6-18 ; John 7:14-30

**Thursday** - Acts 10:34-43; John 8:12-20

**Friday** - Acts 10:44-11:10; John 8:21-30

**Saturday** - Acts 12:1-11; John 8:31-42