

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

## Prophet Micah and Forefeast of the Dormition

14 / 27 August



**Resurrection Tropar, Tone 3:** Let the heavens rejoice / let the earth be glad / for the Lord has shown strength with His arm! / He has trampled down death by death! / He has become the first-born of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell / and has granted the world great mercy.

**Troparion of the Forefeast tone 4:** O you people leap for joy and clap your hands,/ and lovingly cry out with radiant gladness./ For the Ever-Virgin Mary/ is about to rise gloriously from earth to heaven./ Let us ever glorify her as the Mother of God.

**Troparion of the Prophet Micah tone 4:** In the Spirit thou didst foresee the Church of Christ/ as a lofty mountain, O inspired Prophet Micah./ As thou hast foretold, those who have found salvation therein/ are walking in the paths of the Lord,/ ever praising thy glorious memory.

**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.

**Kontakion of the Forefeast tone 4:** In thy memory the world is spiritually adorned with the immaterial Spirit/ and is gladly shouting to thee:/ Rejoice, O Virgin, boast of Christians.

**Kontakion of the Prophet Micah tone 4:** Illumined by the light of the Holy Spirit, thou didst foretell Christ's condescension/ whereby we who honour thee are redeemed from corruption,/ O God-inspired Prophet Micah.

### Matins Gospel I

#### Epistle: Corinthians 15: 1-11

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, By which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, And that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

#### HE WAS SEEN BY CEPHAS, THEN BY THE TWELVE. AFTER THAT...

#### BY MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED BRETHREN AT ONCE... LAST OF ALL HE WAS SEEN BY ME ALSO

Having finished the discourse on spiritual gifts, he passes on to the most necessary of all: the subject of the resurrection. For in this, too, they were very unsound. And as in men's bodies when the fever lays actual hold on their solid parts - I mean the nerves and the veins and the primary elements - the mischief becomes incurable unless it receives much attention, at that time something very similar was likely to happen. The mischief was proceeding to the very elements of godliness. This is why Paul also uses great earnestness. For his discourse was not of morals ...but about the very sum of all good things. They were at variance touching the resurrection itself. The devil was taking a vehement stand against the resurrection because this was our great hope ...Paul, writing to Timothy, called it gangrene ...saying, 'Of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some' (II Tim. 2:17,18). At one time then they spoke this way, but at another time they said that the body does not rise again but the resurrection is the purification of the soul. But these things that wicked demon persuaded them to say ...to show that all the things done for our sakes are a fable. For if they were persuaded that there is no resurrection of bodies, he would have gradually persuaded them that neither was Christ raised ...Paul puts this before us with much exactness, going over all of it...

## **Gospel Matthew 19: 16-26**

Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'" The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

### **THE RICH YOUNG MAN**

See in the Epistle above what kind of reading from the Apostle Paul the Holy Church has selected for us today, in order to strengthen us in a definite state of mind. Along with the Sunday Gospel reading, which serves as a support, it strengthens in us the understanding that we live here temporarily. However, we fight against such an understanding; we don't even want to think about it. But it's a fact. Yes, our life is seventy years, and if by reason of strength, eighty years; but beyond this is hardship and disease. And how many tragic cases there are when God cuts off our earthly life in the years of youth, and even in childhood.

What have the Sunday Gospel readings been saying to us during the last few weeks? They have been saying that we must be perfect, that we must be Christians, because at any time the moment may come when Christ will call us and say: "Follow Me!" (Mt. 19:21). But how are we going to follow Him if we are spiritually paralysed, if we are spiritually blind and do not see His abodes on high?

Christ saves us from these dispositions. He gives us His Church. And the Orthodox Church is always reminding us of what the Bible says: how the world of God was created, how the first people lived, how the Fall occurred. Adam did not want to go from strength to strength, from grace to grace in communion with God, but wanted to have this strength within himself. And he went away, went away into the byways of human life, and therefore lost the Tree of Life. But God the Merciful One, God the Father gives us His Son Who was incarnate of the Most Holy Virgin, Who lived the Good News of the Gospel and showed us how to fulfill the commandment: Love for God and neighbour.

In today's Epistle the Apostle Paul shows us the true Risen Christ, Who brings us to Eternal Life. Paul himself, while still Saul, was also wandering in search of truth. He too in the beginning was searching for the earthly Christ who would free the Jews from the power of Rome. But when he was on the way to persecute the Church of God, he met Christ Himself, already after the Ascension; and here Saul became Paul. And as we heard in today's reading, he became the preacher of the Risen Christ. He became a New Testament man, who (if one can say so) brought about a great revolution in the world and transformed the whole world into the search for Christ and the striving for Life in Christ. With the name of the Apostle Paul is connected all the preaching of Christ in the entire world.

So when the Holy Church has strengthened us in the understanding that we are going toward Eternal Existence through our earthly wandering to Christ, then the Holy Church addresses us and points out: do not be mistaken. A certain lawyer came to Christ and asked:

What shall I do in order to inherit the Kingdom of God? (Today's Gospel). And Christ said, Fulfill the commandments. And when this lawyer said, From my childhood I have fulfilled the commandments, Christ saw his lack of understanding of the truth and said: Then give away everything that you have and follow Me (Mt. 19:16-21). But this man had much and trusted in this "much." Everything around him was real to him, and this reality gave him security in life. And this, what Christ was saying about future life, was not real to him. Therefore, when Christ said to him, Follow me and give away everything; he thought: how do I give it away? What will I have then? And what did he want to have? Power, strength, to be a possessor of earthly things.

The Apostle says today: what is earth? Christ leads us into Eternal Life. He saves us in an earthly way. God gives people abilities and knowledge; these are the various ways in which people pass their earthly life. But laid before them as a foundation are the Beatitudes: blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who weep, blessed are the meek, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, blessed are the peacemakers, those who are persecuted (Mt. 5:3-11). See, these are all the heavenly ways. This is what the Holy Church sets before us. Speaking to us about life beyond the grave, about resurrection (not as an idea, but as real life), about the Apostle Paul and all our saints, she shows us the truth and shows us that mirage which appears to be real. But if we start to live for this reality in order to acquire earthly goods, we will find ourselves in an abyss, and everything we possess will remain here. There will be nothing that belongs to Christ.

So let us arise, brothers, answering the calls of the Holy Church today: do not abandon prayer, do not abandon fasting which gives us concentration and attention, do not neglect also your good heart which will obtain for you a revelation from God and the joy of spiritual spring which will strengthen you in Eternal Life.

*The One Thing Needful – Archbishop Andrei*

## Saints of the Week

**14 / 27 August - Forefeast of the Dormition – Dormition Fast - The Holy Prophet Micah II** - of the tribe of Judah and from the village of Morasth, from which he took the name 'the Morasthite', he was a contemporary of the prophets Isaiah, Amos and Hosea, and the Judean kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. He denounced the vices of his people and denounced also the prophets who prophesied 'of wine and strong drink'. He foretold the fall of Samaria, which would come about because the city's elders take a bribe and the priests teach for hire, and prophets divine for money. 'Therefore shall Sion for your sake be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps'. But, of all his prophecies, the most important are those of the Messiah, and especially of the place of His birth. He named Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah, 'whose goings-forth have been from of old, from everlasting' (5:2). It is not known certainly whether this prophet was killed by the Jews or died peacefully (see Jeremiah 26:18-19), but it is known that he was buried in his village, and that his relics were found, together with the relics of the Prophet Habakkuk, in the time of the Emperor Theodosius the Great, by some mysterious revelation received by the Bishop of Eleutheropolis.; The Hieromartyr Marcellus, Bishop of Apamea; St. Fachnan, abbot of Ross Carberry, Cork, Ireland (c. 600)



**15 / 28 August – The Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary** - The Lord Who, on Mt. Sinai, commanded by His Fifth Commandment: "Honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12), showed by His own example how one should respect one's parent. Hanging on the Cross in agony, He remembered His mother and indicating to the Apostle John, said to her: "Woman behold your son" (St. John 19:26). After that, He said to John: "Behold your mother" (St. John 19:27). And so providing for His mother, He breathed His last. John had a home on Zion in Jerusalem in which the Theotokos settled and remained there to live out the end of her days on earth. By her prayers, gentle counsels, meekness and patience, she greatly assisted the apostles of her Son. Primarily, she spent her entire time in Jerusalem often visiting those places which reminded her of the great events and of the great works of her Son. She especially visited Golgotha, Bethlehem and the Mount of Olives. Of her distant journeys, her visit to St. Ignatius the Theophorus [God-bearer] in Antioch is mentioned, as well as her visit to Lazarus (whom our Lord resurrected on the fourth day), the Bishop of Cyprus, her visit to the Holy Mountain [Athos] which she blessed and her stay in Ephesus with St. John the Evangelist [The Theologian] during the time of the great persecution of Christians in Jerusalem. In her old age, she often prayed to the Lord and her God on the Mount of Olives, the site of His Ascension, that He take her from this world as soon as possible. On one occasion, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her and revealed to her that within three days she will find repose. The angel gave her a palm-branch to be carried at the time of her funeral procession. She returned to her home with great joy, desiring in her heart once more to see in this life, all of the apostles of Christ. The Lord fulfilled her wish and all of the apostles, borne by angels in the clouds, gathered at the same time at the home of John on Zion. With great rejoicing, she saw the holy apostles, encouraged them, counselled them and comforted them. Following that, she peacefully gave up her soul to God without any pain or physical illness. The apostles took the coffin with her body from which an aromatic fragrance emitted and, in the company of many Christians, bore it to the Garden of Gethsemane to the sepulchre of [her parents], Saints Joachim and Anna. By God's Providence, they were concealed from the evil Jews by a cloud. Anthony, a Jewish priest, grabbed the coffin with his hands with the intention of overturning it but, at that moment, an angel of God severed both his hands. He then cried out to the apostles for help and was healed since declaring his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Thomas was absent, again according to God's Providence, in order that a new and all-glorious mystery of the Holy Theotokos would again be revealed. On the third day, Thomas arrived and desired to venerate [kiss] the body of the Holy All-pure one. But when the apostles opened the sepulchre, they found only the winding sheet and the body was not in the tomb. That evening, the Theotokos appeared to the apostles surrounded by a myriad of angels and said to them: "Rejoice, I will be with you always". It is not exactly known how old the Theotokos was at the time of her Falling Asleep but the overwhelming opinion is that she was over sixty years of age.

**Troparion tone 1:** In giving birth thou didst keep thy virginity,/ and in thy dormition thou didst not forsake the world, O Mother of God./ Thou didst pass on to life, since thou art the Mother of Life,/ and by thine intercessions thou redeemest our souls from death.

**Kontakion tone 2:** The grave and death could not hold the Mother of God,/ who is sleepless in her intercessions and an unchanging hope in her mediations./ For as the Mother of Life she was transferred to life/ by Him Who dwelt in her ever-virgin womb.

**16 / 29 August - Afterfeast of the Dormition – Translation of The Icon of the Lord Jesus Christ Not-Made-With-Hands** - in the time that our Lord was preaching the Gospel and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people, there was in the city of Edessa, on the banks of the Euphrates, a certain Prince Avgar, who was riddled with leprosy. He heard of Christ, the Healer of every pain and sickness, and sent a portrait-painter, Ananias, to Palestine with a letter to Christ, in which he begged the Lord to come to Edessa and heal him of his leprosy. In the event of the Lord's not being able to come, the prince commanded Ananias to paint His likeness and bring it, believing that the portrait would heal him. The Lord replied that he could not come, as the time of His Passion was at hand, and He took a napkin and wiped His face, leaving a perfect reproduction of His most pure face on the napkin. The Lord gave this napkin to Ananias, with a message to say that the prince would be healed by it, but not entirely, and He would therefore send him later an envoy who would rid him of the remainder of the disease. Receiving the napkin, Avgar kissed it and the leprosy fell from his body, with just a little remaining on his face. Later, the Apostle Thaddaeus, preaching the Gospel, came to Avgar, healed him secretly and baptised him. Then the prince smashed the idols that stood at the city's gateway and placed the napkin with the face of Christ above the entrance, stuck onto

wood, surrounded with a gold frame and ornamented with pearls. The prince also wrote above the icon on the gateway: 'O Christ our God, no-one who hopes in Thee will be put to shame'. Later, one of Avgar's great-grandsons restored idolatry, and the Bishop of Edessa came by night and walled-in the icon above the gateway. Centuries passed. In the time of the Emperor Justinian, the Persian King, Chozroes, attacked Edessa, and the city was in great affliction. The Bishop of Edessa, Eulabius, had a vision of the most holy Mother of God, who revealed to him the secret of the icon, walled-in and forgotten. The icon was found, and by its power the Persian army was defeated. The Holy Martyr Diomedes; Our Holy Father Joachim of Osogov; The Holy Martyr Stamatius.

**17 / 30 August -Afterfeast of the Dormition -The Holy Martyr Myron of Cyzicus** - he was a priest in Achaia, of rich and eminent parents, by nature kind and meek, and loving towards God and man. In the time of the Emperor Decius, on the Feast of the Nativity itself, pagans rushed into the church, dragged Myron away from the service and put him to torture. While he was being tortured by fire, an angel appeared to him and strengthened him. They then cut off his skin in strips from head to foot. The martyr took one of these strips and, with it, struck the torturer on the face. The torturer, as though possessed, took a sword and killed himself. Myron was finally taken to the town of Cyzicus and there killed with the sword, in 250.; The Holy Martyr Patroclus; Our Holy Father Elias of Calabria; Our Holy Father Olympius the Iconographer of the Kiev Caves.

**18 / 31 August -Afterfeast of the Dormition - The Venerable John of Rila** - This great ascetic and saint of the Orthodox Church was born near Sophia, Bulgaria in the town of Skrino during the reign of King Boris. He was of poor but honourable parents. After the death of his parents, John was tonsured a monk and withdrew to a mountain wilderness and, began to live a life of strict asceticism in a cave. There, he endured many assaults, both from demons and men, from robbers and his relatives. After this, he moved to the Rila mountain and settled in a hollow tree. He fed only on herbs and broad beans, which, according to God's Providence began to grow in the vicinity. For many years, he did not see a man's face until again, by God's Providence, he was discovered by shepherders who were seeking their lost sheep. Thus, the saint was heard of among the people and they began to come to him seeking help in sickness and in sufferings. The Bulgarian King Peter himself visited John and sought counsel from him. Many who were zealous for the spiritual life settled in the proximity of John. There, a church and monastery was quickly built. St. John rested peacefully in the Lord on August 18, 946 A.D. at the age of seventy. After his death, he appeared to his disciples. At first, his relics were translated to Sophia, then to Hungary, then to Trnovo and finally to the Rila monastery where they repose today. Throughout the centuries, the Rila monastery was a beacon of light, a place of miracle-working power and a spiritual comfort for the Christian people of Bulgaria especially during the difficult times of bondage under the Turks.

**The Holy Martyrs Florus and Laurus** - Florus and Laurus were brothers in the flesh, and in spirit and in vocation. Both were zealous Christians and, by occupation, stonemasons. They lived in Illyria. A pagan prince hired them for the building of a temple to the idols. It happened that during their work, a piece of stone flew and struck the eye of the pagan priest's son who was observing the work of the builders with curiosity. Seeing his son blind and bloody, the pagan priest began to shout at Florus and Laurus and wanted to beat them. Then, the holy brothers said to him that if he would believe in the God in whom they believed, his son would be healed. The pagan priest promised. Florus and Laurus prayed with tears to the one, living, Lord God and traced the sign of the Cross over the child's injured eye. The child was immediately healed and his eye became whole just as it had been. Then the pagan priest Merentius and his son were baptized and, shortly after that, both suffered for Christ by fire. When they completed the temple, Florus and Laurus placed a cross on it, summoned all Christians and consecrated it in the name of the Lord Jesus with an all-night vigil of hymn singing. Hearing of this, the Illyrian deputy burned many of those Christians and threw Florus and Laurus alive in a well and then filled it with dirt. Later, their relics were revealed and translated to Constantinople. These two wonderful brothers suffered and were martyred for Christ and were glorified by Christ in the second century.

**The Priestly Martyr, Emilian of Trevi** - Emilian was born in Armenia. According to his wishes and seeking martyrdom, he traveled to Italy to preach Christ during the reign of Diocletian. He was elected bishop of Trevi. As a result of the many miracles during the time of his torture, approximately one thousand pagans believed in Christ. He was slain by the sword together with Hilarion, his spiritual father and two brothers, Dionysius and Hermippus.

**19 August / 1 September - Afterfeast of the Dormition - The Holy Martyr Andrew Stratelates** - He was an officer, a tribune, in the Roman army in the time of the Emperor Maximian. A Syrian by birth, he served in his native land. When the Persians attacked the imperial Roman army, this Andrew was entrusted with the command in the battle against the enemy—whence his title: commander, stratelates. A secret Christian, although as yet unbaptised, Andrew commended himself to the living God, and, taking only the cream of the army, went to war. Before the battle, he told his soldiers that, if they all called upon the aid of the one, true God, Christ the Lord, their enemies would become as dust scattered before them. All the soldiers, fired with enthusiasm by Andrew and his faith, invoked Christ's aid and attacked. The Persian army was utterly routed. When the victorious Andrew returned to Antioch, some jealous men denounced him as a Christian and the imperial governor summoned him for trial. Andrew openly proclaimed his steadfast faith in Christ. After harsh torture, the governor threw Andrew into prison and wrote to the Emperor in Rome. Knowing Andrew's popularity among the people and in the army, the Emperor ordered the governor to set Andrew free, but to seek another occasion and another excuse (not his faith) to kill him. By God's revelation, Andrew came to know of this imperial command, and, taking his faithful soldiers (2,593 in all) with him, went off to Tarsus in Cilicia, where they were all baptised by the bishop, Peter. Persecuted here also by imperial might, Andrew and his companions withdrew deep into the Armenian mountain of Tavros. There in a ravine, while they were at prayer, the Roman army came upon them and beheaded them all. Not one of them would recant, all being determined on death by martyrdom for Christ. On the spot where a stream of the martyrs' blood flowed down, a spring of healing water sprang forth, healing from every disease. The bishop, Peter, came secretly with his people and buried the martyrs' bodies in

that same place. They all suffered with honour at the end of the third century and were crowned with wreaths of eternal glory, entering into the Kingdom of Christ our God;

**Our Holy Father Theophanes** - Theophanes was born in Ioannia and, as a young man, left all and went to Mt. Athos where he was tonsured a monk in the community of Dochiariu. He was an example to all the monks in fasting, prayer, all-night vigils and depriving himself of all that was unnecessary. In time, and because of this, he was elected as abbot. Later, because of some misunderstanding with the monks, he left Mt. Athos and, with his nephew, went to Berea [Beroea] in Macedonia where he established a monastery in honor of the All-holy Theotokos. When this monastery blossomed with the spiritual life, Theophanes entrusted his nephew to govern it and he went to Naousa where he established another monastery in honor of the Holy Archangels. Theophanes died peacefully in the fifteenth century. His miracle-working relics, even now, repose in Naousa and manifest the great power of God.; The Holy Martyrs Timothy, Agapius and Thecla.

**20 August / 2 September - Afterfeast of the Dormition – The Holy Prophet Samuel** - The fifteenth and last of the Judges of Israel, he lived eleven hundred years before Christ. He was of the tribe of Levi, born of Elkanah and Hannah in a place called Ramatha or Arimathea, where noble Joseph was later born. The barren Hannah besought Samuel of the Lord with tears, and dedicated him to God when he was three years old. Living in Shiloh near the Ark of the Covenant, Samuel, at the age of twelve, had a true revelation from God of the punishment which would come upon the house of the High Priest, Eli, because of the worthlessness of his sons Hophni and Phineas. This revelation was swiftly fulfilled: the Philistines routed the Israelites, slew both of Eli's sons and captured the Ark of the Covenant. When the messenger brought these bad tidings to Eli, he fell dead on the ground, breathing his last at the age of ninety-eight, and the same thing happened to his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phineas. Israel was under the Philistine yoke after this for twenty years. When this time had elapsed, God sent Samuel to the people to preach repentance to them as the one means of their salvation from their enemies. The people repented and cast out the foreign idols which they had served, accepting Samuel as prophet, priest and judge. Then Samuel set out with the army against the Philistines and, with God's help, put them to confusion and slew them, freeing the land and the people. After that, Samuel judged the people in peace to old age. Seeing him growing old, the people asked him to give them a king in his place. In vain, Samuel urged the people against this, saying that God was their only king, but the people remained adamant in their desire. Although this desire was not pleasing to God, He commanded Samuel to anoint Saul the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, as king. Saul reigned a short time, and God rejected him for impudence and disobedience, and then commanded Samuel to anoint David the son of Jesse as king in Saul's place. At the time of his death, Samuel gathered all the people together and took leave of them, and when he died all Israel wept for him and buried him solemnly in his house at Ramah.; The Hieromartyr Philip, Bishop of Heraklion;

**St. Oswin, king and martyr (651)** - St. Oswin grew up in the political turmoil of early 7th century Northumbria. In AD 633, his father, Osric, had managed to secure the crown of Deira (modern Yorkshire) after the death of his cousin, King Edwin of Northumbria, at the Battle of Hatfield Chase. Bernicia was taken by his rival, Eanfrith, but, within a year, both men had been massacred by their enemy, the Northern Welsh and Mercians who were sweeping across the Country. The young Oswin fled to safety in Wessex. While Oswin grew into a burly young man, Eanfrith's half-brother, Oswald was accepted by both Bernicia and Deira as King of a united Northumbria and he drove off their south-western invaders. He married the daughter of the King of Wessex in AD 635, but there is no evidence of his making trouble for Oswin. Seven years later, however, Oswald was dead. His brother, Oswiu, became King of Bernicia, but was rejected by the Deirans who recalled Oswin in AD 644. He may have made his peace with the Mercians at this time and used their armies to assert his rights in the north. According to St. Bede, Oswin was "a man of handsome appearance and great stature, pleasant in speech and courteous in manner. He was generous to high and low alike and soon won the affection of all by his kingly qualities of mind and body, so that even men of very high birth came from nearly every province to his service." He was a great friend of St. Aidan and a man of "piety and devotion". Oswin was, however, despised by King Oswiu who greedily coveted the Deiran lands which had once belonged to his brother. In August AD 651, he raised a vast army, which Oswin was obliged to march out to meet, but, finding he was greatly outnumbered, the King of Deira wisely decided to withdraw from the battlefield and avoid unnecessary bloodshed. He took refuge in the house of his friend, Ealdorman Hunwald, at Gilling in North Yorkshire, but was treacherously betrayed by him. Oswiu sent his soldiers to the manor and King Oswin was cut down where he stood. He was the last King of the House of Aelle. Oswiu's wife was Oswin's cousin and she insisted her husband build a monastery at Gilling in expiation for his crime. Oswin was, however, buried at Tynemouth in Northumberland. He was remembered as a Christian martyr because he had died "if not for the faith of Christ, at least for the justice of Christ"; and his shrine became a popular place of pilgrimage.

**Repose of Hieromonk Seraphim (Rose) of Platina (1982)** - born Eugene Rose in 1934 in California in an American Protestant family. As a college graduate, his search for philosophical truth led him initially to Buddhism and other eastern religions. A friend encouraged him to visit the old Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Mother of God, "Joy of All Who Sorrow", in San Francisco. Upon entering the Cathedral, during Vespers of Great Friday, he felt that his search was over and that he had "come home." He began attending the Divine Services regularly and was received into the Church. In 1963, with the blessing of Archbishop John (Maximovitch), he and another young man formed the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood as a missionary endeavour towards the conversion of English-speaking people. They opened a bookstore and began publishing a magazine in English, The Orthodox Word. They laboured tirelessly for the glorification of St. Herman, a missionary and wonderworker whose relics lay on American soil. A gifted intellectual with a promising career before him, Father Seraphim (then Eugene) turned his back on this world. He devoted himself full-time to missionary endeavours and the study of the Holy Fathers. Inspired by the ancient desert-dwellers and ascetics, he and his companion left San Francisco to live as monks in the Northern Californian forest. He was tonsured into the Small Schema in 1969, receiving the name Seraphim after his beloved St. Seraphim of Sarov. He built a small hut on the mountainside where he prayed and prepared many articles for publication. He wrote and translated many soul profiting books, articles, and church services, including the service to St. Herman of Alaska (sung at his glorification in 1970) and an akathist to St. John of Shanghai & San Francisco. He laboured greatly to preserve St.

John's memory and to publish reports of miracles worked through him. He struggled in the face of modernism to preserve a patristic Orthodox understanding of the life of the soul after death. 'spirituality' outside the Church, and the book of Genesis, among other things. His best known works are Orthodoxy & the Religion of the Future and The Soul after Death. Father Seraphim was ordained hierodeacon in January 1977 and was raised to the rank of hieromonk on the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearers in the same year. As a priest, he ministered not only to the brethren and pilgrims at the monastery, but also to a number of small parishes in Northern California and Oregon. His constant counsel was: "Censure yourself. Never excuse yourself. If you must, or think you must give way to a weakness, then be certain that you recognise it as a weakness and a sin. But see your own faults and condemn not your brother!" During the latter portion of his life, Father Seraphim continually emphasised the need for spiritual attentiveness in preparation for struggles to come. He said often: "It is later than you think. Hasten therefore to do the work of God!" Father Seraphim reposed in the Lord in 1982 after an acute illness. He was an inspiration to many and accomplished much for the glory of God and the spread of the true Orthodox Christianity amongst English-speaking people. Forty days after his repose, Bishop Nektary (Kontzevich) of Seattle stated that he was 'a righteous man, possibly a saint'. May God grant him rest with His saints where the light of His countenance shall visit him. An may his memory be eternal!

**St. Edbert** + 768 - The successor of St Ceolwulf on the throne of Northumbria in England. After a prosperous reign of twenty years he resigned and went to the monastery of York, where he spent a further ten years in prayer and seclusion

## HYMN OF PRAISE

### THE MOST-HOLY BIRTH-GIVER OF GOD [THE THEOTOKOS]

Thus spoke the Lord Most High From your heart, Virgin pure, Living water, to flow, That, those who thirst, drink Christ - Life-bearing Source, We are all boastful of you! So that the thirsty, drink Christ: By Him, the bitter to be sweetened, By Him, the blind to be washed And by Him, the sorrowful, to heal their grief Life-bearing Source We are all boastful of you! Beverage, from eternity arrived, The arid time, the brook filled, And again, toward the heavens raised; The world exhausted, became refreshed- Life-bearing source, We are all boastful of you! O All-pure One, glory to You, O Mother of God, glory to You! For us, to the Living Christ, You gave birth The living water of grace - Life-bearing source We are all boastful of you!

## REFLECTION

Each one of the faithful can learn much, indeed very much, from the life of the Virgin Theotokos. However, I would like to mention here only two things. First, she had the habit to frequently on Golgotha, on the Mount of Olives, in the Garden of Gethsemane, to go to Bethlehem and to other places famous because of her Son. At all of these places, especially Golgotha, she prayed on bended knees. By this, she gave the first example and incentive to the faithful to visit the holy places out of love toward Him Who, by His presence and by His passion and glory, made these places holy and significant. Second, we learn how she, in her prayer, prayed for a quick departure from this life that her soul, at the time of her separation from the body, not see the prince of darkness and his horrors, and hidden from the dark regions not encounter the power of Satan. Do you see how terrible it is for the soul to pass through the toll-gates [mitarstva]! When she, who gave birth to the Destroyer of Hades and, who herself has frightening power over demons prayed thusly, what then is left for us? Out of very great humility, she commended herself to God and did not trust in her own deeds. So much less should we trust in our deeds and even more we should commend ourselves into the hands of God, crying out for His mercy, especially for mercy at the time of the departure of the soul from the body.

## HOMILY

### About the most glorious Child

***"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).***

Upon whom of mortal man, in human history could all of these titles, all of this authority, all of this glory apply? There is no one. That is why St. Chrysostom says: "It is impossible to understand this in regard to any other man but only in reference to Christ." The prophet here clearly expresses two natures in the Savior of the world: the Human and the Divine. "A Child is born," this signifies a purely human nature. "Unto us a Son is given," this unites the two natures in one person: the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin in the person of the Incarnate Lord. However, the remaining titles signify the divine nature of the Lord Jesus. His government is "upon His shoulder," i.e., the government is His. His own government and is not borrowed. "Mighty Counsellor," is this not the Holy Trinity? The angel or messenger and herald of this Triune Counsel is the Son of God, the Pre-eternal Word. "Wonderful Counsellor," for all that is wonderful, all that is an amazement, all that is new which came to mankind is from Him and through Him.

"The Mighty God," what would Arius and his modern adherents, who deny the divinity of the Lord Jesus, say to this? "The Prince of Peace," for from Him is lasting peace; outside Him is war, without and within. "The Everlasting Father," [the Father of future times] as He is the Lord of the past, so also is He the Lord of the future. Furthermore, He is also the Father of the Church, the Creator of the new world, the Founder of the Kingdom of God.

Isaiah himself, the son of Amos, saw this wonderful and true vision some seven hundred years before it was revealed to the entire universe.

O Lord Jesus, You are to the prophets the most glorious prophecy and to the faithful, the most glorious revelation. Unlock our mind that the wonderful glory of Your majesty can enter into it and unlock our heart so that it would be filled by Your life-creating love.

**To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.**