

15th Sunday After Pentecost

Heiromartyr Babylas &

Prophet Moses

4 / 17 September



Resurrection Tropar, Tone 6: The angelic powers were at Thy tomb; / the guards became as dead men. / Mary stood by Thy grave, / seeking Thy most pure Body. / Thou didst capture hell, not being tempted by it. / Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life. / O Lord who didst rise from the Dead, / Glory to Thee!

Troparion of the Prophet Moses tone 2: Thou didst ascend to the summit of virtues, O holy Prophet Moses. / Thou wast granted to see the glory of God, / to receive the tablets of the Law, / and to bear grace within thee. / Thou wast the joy of the Prophets / and a guide to piety.

Troparion of Hieromartyr Babylas tone 4: O Babylas husbandman of righteousness, / thou didst cut down the thorns of error. / With the radiance of thy priesthood and reddened by the streams of thy blood / thou wast presented to Christ crying out: / Here am I and Thy children, O Jesus: graciously receive us.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 6: When Christ God the Giver of Life, / raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His Mighty Hand, / He bestowed resurrection on the human race. / He is the Saviour of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of All.

Kontakion of the Prophet Moses tone 2: The company of the Prophets rejoices with Moses and Sharon: / their prophecy is fulfilled / as the Cross whereby Thou hast saved us shines forth. / Save our souls by their prayers, O Christ our God.

Kontakion of Hieromartyr Babylas tone 4: Thou didst treasure in thine heart the mysteries of the faith / without fearing the tyrant. / O Hieromartyr Babylas, servant of Christ, preserve us.

Matins Gospel IV

Epistle: II Corinthians 4: 6-15

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed-- Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, Knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

WE HAVE THE SAME SPIRIT OF FAITH...KNOWING THAT HE WHO RAISED UP

THE LORD JESUS WILL ALSO RAISE US UP

And where did He command light to shine out of darkness? In the beginning and in prelude to the Creation ...Now He said nothing, but Himself became Light for us ...We do not see sensible objects by the shining of this Light, but God Himself through Christ. Do you see the invariableness in the Trinity?...

And what is the 'dying of the Lord Jesus,' which they bore about? Their daily deaths by which also the resurrection was shown ...Do you see how he has discovered yet another reason for the trials?... That His life may also be manifested in our body ...We bear about His dying so the power of His life may be made manifest, who did not permit mortal flesh - even undergoing such great suffering - to be overcome by the blizzard of these calamities ...And he says in another place, 'If we die with Him, we will also live with Him' (II Tim. 2:11). For as we endure His dying now, and choose while living to die for His sake: so also He will choose, when we are dead, to beget us then into life. For if we come from life into death, He will also lead us by the hand from death into life.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily VIII, 3, & IX, 1, on II Corinthians IV. B#56, pp. 319, 321-322

for the Martyr: Heb. 11:33-12:2

Gospel for Sunday: Matthew 22: 35-46

Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David." He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool?" "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?" And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT IN THE LAW

"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" (Mt. 22:35).

If you were attentive to how the Holy Church, revealing to us the mystery of our salvation, gradually shows us in the Sunday Gospel readings the way of resurrection for the human soul, then you also noticed that starting from Easter until today there were several cycles. One of these cycles convinced us that the Lord is our Saviour, our Saviour from sin, and that He is All-powerful. And further we were shown the dispositions, the states of mind which should be in the soul of every Christian, in order to perceive that power which the Lord has given to us, establishing our salvation in the plan of eternal life. These Gospel readings opened to us the feeling of humility and devotion to God, in understanding the Word of God as acting in our life. And then these cycles changed into others, and we came to a cycle which revealed that all this which God gives us can be accomplished, but only within the limits of the Church. Like the boat in which the Apostles were sailing, it preserved the Apostles. And this boat was like the laws in which lived and lives the Church, which protects those who are in the boat from all the troubles that occur outside of it.

But this is possible only if, on our part, we are obedient to the Lord. And such obedience is connected with certain experiences, in the same way the Apostles experienced them: storm and fear. But if we presume upon the power of God, then we lose obedience and, instead of obedience, we receive boldness. And the same could happen to us which happened to the Apostle Peter, who in a transport of delight and daring, asked Christ for permission to walk to Him on the waves. And Christ in a way answered him: walk, if you want to. This was no longer obedience; this was not the will of Christ, but the will of Peter. And then Peter found himself alone in the water; the waves were so high that Christ was not even visible. Here Peter came to his senses: the law of nature took hold of him; he became frightened and started to drown. And only a strong faith in the Lord and the constant trust in the Almighty saved him (Mt. 14:24-31).

And further: in the Gospel about the filling of five thousand people with five loaves of bread, again the Lord seemed to be talking in a mysterious way about the Church. "Give ye them to eat!" He said to the Apostles, declining their attempt to let the people go into the neighbouring villages to buy food (Mt. 14:16). Does this not mean that He entrusted them, the Apostles and their successors, with feeding people the true food, His Body and Blood, in the Sacrament of the Divine Eucharist? And when He ordered the people to sit in groups, does it not symbolise the organisation of the Church?

The Sunday Gospel readings were convincing us more and more that Christian life is possible only within the Church, under the definite laws of the Church, along with the Divine Eucharist, which is the Tree of Life of the New Testament. So after having brought us to this understanding, the Church begins to show us, explains to us what the life is which surrounds us.

If you will remember, the Gospel before last told us about a certain young man who approached Christ (Mt. 19:16-23). And this young man asked Christ: what shall I do to receive the Kingdom of Heaven? He was like a materialist. He fulfilled accurately everything prescribed by the Law. He himself said, I have fulfilled the commandments. But he fulfilled them as a tradition, as an obligation. And the Lord saw this and said: Then reject everything that you have. In other words, reject the hope you have put in your riches. The young man froze. He could not understand how it is possible to reject this power, the power of the world. Why, through riches we can have everything we want. In such a way the enemy of the human race tempted man and perverted our understanding.

Following that, the last Gospel reading spoke about the workers in the vineyard (Mt. 21:33-42). This vineyard represents in a parable our whole world. The Lord owns this vineyard. And the workers in the vineyard are only servants, who receive everything necessary for their maintenance. And in the end, everything which the vineyard produces must be given back to their Lord. But the vineyard workers saw the beauty of the vineyard, the comfort of life, and decided that in this consists the whole meaning of life, is life itself. They would live. And therefore, when the Heir came, they killed Him. They said to themselves: What do we need Him for? The vineyard is ours. This is ours.

This is exactly what we are doing now. We say of the world and worldly goods: This is ours. And we cannot conceive leaving here. How are we going to part with all our comforts of life? How are we going to reject all our houses, our airplanes, all the inventions which seek to know the world and its mysteries, technology, everything that we are using? How are we going to leave?

And now today the Holy Church points out: we have to fulfil the commandments, and we have to participate in the life around us. Why? Well, because God has sent us here so that through these circumstances, as a means, we would obtain that which is needed. But what is needed? At the creation of man, God gave him the commandments: love for God and neighbour.

And these commandments we must fulfil. The Lord, Who came on earth, came to save man. But how? By fulfilling the commandments of love for God and neighbour, and by giving strength to fulfil these commandments. And in fulfilling these commandments, we receive blessedness.

During His whole evangelistic life Christ was tempted by Satan. In the beginning it was in the wilderness: the temptation was by bread, by miracle, and by kingdom. Rejecting all these temptations, Christ fulfilled the commandment of love for God. After that, the enemy did not approach Christ openly, but only through the hearts of men, hoping to stir up in Christ hatred towards neighbour. But Christ never became angry at a man, but only at the power of the enemy, by saying: "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Mk. 8 :33). In such a way the Lord Himself fulfilled this great commandment, and in His Sacraments gives even to us the forces to fulfil it.

So let us fulfil it! "Which is the great commandment?" asked the lawyer. And the Lord answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Mt. 22:36-40).

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei.

for the Martyr: Luke 12:32-40

Saints of the week

4 / 17 September - The Hieromartyr Babylas - This 'great and wonderful man, if one can call him a man', as St John Chrysostom expresses it, was archbishop in Antioch in the time of the wicked Emperor Numerian. This Numerian made a peace-treaty with some barbarian king, who was of better character and a greater lover of peace than himself. As a sign of his sincere desire for a lasting peace, the king gave his little son to be brought up at Numerian's court. One day, Numerian butchered the boy and offered him as a sacrifice to the idols. Still hot from his wicked shedding of innocent blood, this evildoer went to a Christian church to see what was happening there. Holy Babylas was at prayer with the people. He heard that the Emperor was coming with his retinue and intended to enter the church. Babylas stopped the service, went out in front of the church and told the Emperor that, as an idolater, he was not permitted entry to the holy church where the one, true God was worshipped. Speaking of Babylas, Chrysostom says: 'Who else in the world would he fear, having with such authority withstood the Emperor? By this he taught kings not to spread their power further than the measure given them by God, and also showed the clergy how to use their authority.' The shamed Emperor turned back, but planned revenge. The following day, the Emperor summoned Babylas, and began to berate him and bid him offer sacrifice to idols, which the saint, naturally, steadfastly refused to do. The Emperor then bound him with chains and threw him into prison. He also tortured three children: Urban, aged twelve, Prilidian, aged nine and Hippolinus, aged seven. Babylas was their spiritual father and teacher, and they had stayed near him out of love for him. They were the sons of a Christian woman, Christodoula, who herself suffered for Christ. The Emperor first ordered that each child be beaten with the number of blows that totalled his age, and then had them thrown into prison. Babylas, in bonds, was present at the beheading of the children, giving them courage, and then laid his honoured head under the sword. He was buried by Christians in the chains in which he was bound at his death, in one grave with the three children. Their holy souls flew off to the company of heaven, and their wonderworking relics remained to be of support to the faithful, along with the enduring witness of their heroism in the Faith. They suffered in about 283. The Holy Prophet Moses; The Holy Martyrs Marcellus and Cassian; Translation of the relics of Ss. Cuthbert & Birinus, bb, to Durham, England

Icon of the Unburnt Bush - This beautiful Icon calls to mind the burning Bush which Moses saw, but which was not consumed by the flames. The Prophet Moses is also commemorated on this day. On the Icon is a representation of the Mother of God with Her Child. She holds a ladder on which is sometimes represented St John of the Ladder, the ascetic who wrote a great spiritual treatise called "The Ladder." This richly meaningful Icon depicts the Mother of God Who contained within Her Womb the Eternal God Who is Fire, and yet was unconsumed, like the Unburnt Bush. She is a true Ladder by which we ascend to Heaven, as the Son of God took His Body from Her. The Prophet David is also depicted in the Icon, as the Ancestor of the Most Holy Theotokos and of Christ. He foretold the coming of the Messiah, especially through his Psalms. Many Icons of the Feasts of the Orthodox Church have depictions of David for the fact that his Psalms are used throughout to celebrate the events of our salvation. This icon has been known for its miracles of preservation from fires in Churches and homes.

5/ 18 September - The Holy Prophet Zacharias - He was the father of St. John the Forerunner. Zacharias was the son of Barachias, from the lineage of Abia, of the sons of Aaron. Zacharias was a high priest who held the eighth degree of service in the Temple at Jerusalem. His wife Elizabeth was the daughter of Sophia and sister of St. Anna, who was the mother of the Holy Theotokos. During the reign of King Herod the child-slayer, Zacharias was serving one day at the Temple of Jerusalem according to his turn. An angel of God appeared to him in the sanctuary, and Zacharias had great fear. The angel said to him: Fear not, Zacharias (Luke 1:13), and announced that Elizabeth would bear a son, in answer to their prayers. But both Zacharias and Elizabeth were old. When Zacharias doubted the words of the heavenly herald, the angel said: I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God (Luke 1:19). Zacharias was struck dumb from that hour, and could not speak until his son was born and he had written on a tablet: His name is John (Luke 1:63). Then his speech returned, and he magnified God. Some time later, when the Lord Jesus had been born and Herod began to slaughter the children of Bethlehem, he sent men to find and kill the son of Zacharias-for Herod had heard all that had happened to Zacharias, and how John had been born. Upon seeing the soldiers coming, Elizabeth took John into her arms-he was a year and a half old at that time-fled from the house with him, and ran to a rocky and desolate place. When she saw the soldiers following her, she cried out to the mountain: "O mountain of

God, receive a mother with her child!" and the rock opened and hid the mother and child. Then Herod, enraged that the child John had not been slain, ordered that Zacharias be slain before the altar. The blood of Zacharias was spilled on the marble and dried solid as stone, and remained as a witness to Herod's evil deed. In the place where Elizabeth hid with John a cave opened, water flowed out of it, and a fruit-bearing palm grew, all by the power of God. Forty days after the death of Zacharias, the blessed Elizabeth died. The child John remained in the wilderness, fed by an angel and protected by God's providence, until the day he appeared at the Jordan; The Holy Martyrs Juventius and Maximinus; Seventy Holy Martyrs; Venerable Athanasius

6 / 19 September - Commemoration of the Miracles of the Holy Archangel Michael - There was in Phrygia a place called Chonae (plunging), not far from Hierapolis, and in that place there was a miraculous spring of water. When the Apostle John the Theologian, together with Philip, was preaching the Gospel in Hierapolis, he looked at this place and foretold that a spring would gush forth in it, a spring of healing water from which many would be restored to health, and that the place would be visited by Michael, the great archangel of God. This prophecy was very soon fulfilled: a spring of water appeared, which became known far and wide for its miraculous power. A pagan in Laodicea had a dumb daughter, which caused him great grief, but the Archangel Michael appeared to him in a dream and urged him to take his daughter to this spring, that she might be restored to health. The father immediately obeyed, took his daughter and there encountered many people who had come to seek deliverance from various ills. They were all Christians. The man asked how he should seek healing, and the Christians told him: 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, you must beg the Archangel Michael.' The father made his petition accordingly and dipped his daughter in the water, and the girl began to speak. Then this pagan was baptised along with his daughter and his whole household, and built a church to the Archangel Michael over the spring. Later, a young man called Archippus settled there. Pagans did him much malicious harm, for they did not want such power to be felt from a Christian holy place and many people be drawn to it. In their wickedness, they altered the course of a nearby river, so that it inundated the church and the spring. But, at the prayers of Archippus, the Archangel Michael appeared and opened a fissure in the rock at the end of the church, through which the flooding river plunged. So the place was saved, and became known as Chonae — plunging — from the river's plunge through the opened fissure. St Archippus lived there in asceticism till the age of seventy, and entered peacefully into rest in the Lord. The Holy Martyr Romulus and the 11,000 soldiers; St Eudoxius; Our Holy Father David;

St. Bega, virgin, first abbess of Copeland in Cumbria – of Irish royalty. Her family arranged her marriage to the Prince of Norway. Bega wanted to devote her life and virginity to the Lord, refused the arrangement, and fled. It is said that she was carried across the sea to the coast of Cumberland by riding on a clod of earth. She lived as an anchoress in Cumberland for many years, being fed by the birds in the woods. Saint Oswald of Northumbria, on a raid to dispel some highwaymen, convinced her to enter a convent for her own safety. She agreed, and took the veil from Saint Aidan of Lindisfarne and founded a monastery which later was named after her. As Abbess she was known for her generosity to the poor and oppressed who came to the abbey for assistance.

7 / 20 September - Fast Day - Forefeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos - The Holy Martyr Sozon - Born in Lycaonia, Sozon was a shepherd and lived by the Law of God, teaching his brothers and sisters, and his friends, his devout faith. He learned in a vision that he would suffer martyrdom for Christ. At that time, there was a great persecution of Christians near the city of Pompeiopolis on the part of Maximian, the governor of Silicia. In the city, there was a golden idol which was worshipped by the pagans. Sozon left his sheep, went to the city, entered the pagan temple and knocked an arm off the golden idol, melting it down and giving the gold to the poor. There was a great outcry in the city because of this, and the pagans began to search for the guilty man. That no-one else should suffer for his action, Sozon went to the governor and declared himself to be a Christian and the performer of that act. The torturers first beat him, then chained him to a tree and flogged him with iron flails. When he was at his last breath, they cast him into the flames, where holy Sozon gave his soul to God. He suffered in about 304. His relics were found to be wonderworking, and a church dedicated to him was built over them. The Holy Apostles Euodus and Onesiphorus; The Holy Martyr Euppsychius; St John, Archbishop of Novgorod; One of the feasts of St. Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury.



8 / 21 September - The Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God - *Epistle: Phil. 2:5-11 & Epistle: St. Luke: 10:28-42 & 11:27-28)* The Holy Virgin Mary was born of her aged parents, Joachim and Anna. Her father was of the tribe of David and her mother of the tribe of Aaron, and so she was of royal blood from her father and priestly blood from her mother. By this, she foreshadowed Him who would be born of her as King and High Priest. Her parents were already old and had no children, and, because of this, were ashamed before men and humble before God. In their humility, they prayed with tears that God would bring joy to their old age with the gift of a child, as He had once given joy to the aged Abraham and Sarah, giving them their son Isaac. God, almighty and all-seeing, gave them a joy far exceeding all their expectations and their wildest dreams, for He gave them not just a daughter, but the Mother of God; He illumined them not only with temporal joy but with eternal. God gave them just one daughter, who later gave them just one grandson—but what a daughter and what a grandson! Mary full of grace, blessed among women, the temple of the Holy Spirit, altar of the living God, table of living bread, ark of God's holy things, tree of the most delicious fruits, glory of the human race, praise of

womanhood, fount of virginity and purity—this was the daughter given by God to Joachim and Anna. Born in Nazareth, she was after three years taken to the Temple in Jerusalem, whence she returned again to Nazareth and shortly afterwards heard the tidings of the holy Archangel Gabriel concerning the birth of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, from her most pure and virginal body. The Feast of the Kalishto Icon of the Mother of God; The Feast of the Pochaev Icon of the Mother of God;

Troparion of the Mother of God tone 4: Thy birth, O Mother of God,/ has brought joy to all the world;/ for from thee arose the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God,/ Who, having dissolved the curse, has given His blessing,/ and having abolished death, has granted us life eternal.

Kontakion of the Mother of God tone 4: Joachim and Anna were freed from the reproach of childlessness/ and Adam and Eve from the corruption of death, O Immaculate One, by thy holy nativity./ And thy people, redeemed from the guilt of sin,/ celebrate thy birth by crying to thee:/ The barren woman gives birth to the Mother of God and the nurse of our life.

Ss. Ina, king of Wessex, restorer of Glastonbury, & his queen Ethelburga. (8th c.) - He was a son of the underking Cenred and ascended the West-Saxon throne in 688, a year before the death of his predecessor Caedwalla. For thirty-seven years he ruled over a turbulent and war-like people, and by virtue of a varied genius was equally successful as a warrior and legislator. His first efforts were directed towards establishing internal peace, and in the fifth year of his reign he drew up a set of laws which regulated the administration of justice and fixed the legal status of the various elapses of his subjects. With the exception of the Kentish laws this code is the earliest extant specimen of Anglo-Saxon legislation, and for that reason is of particular interest. When matters in his own realm had been adjusted, Ina turned his attention to Withred, King of Kent, and at the head of a formidable army demanded weregild (compensation) for the death of Mul (for Mollo), brother of Caedwalla. Withred paid the full compensation—thirty thousand pounds of silver—and admitted the supremacy of the West-Saxon over all the country held by the English south of the Thames. By successive conquests, Ina added several districts to the western provinces of his domain, and after a bitter war conquered Geraint, King of Cornwall, and built a fortress on the Tone, at the site of the present Taunton. Throughout his entire reign was particularly solicitous for the welfare of religion and religious establishment, founding many monasteries and endowing those already in existence. The Abbey of Glastonbury was erected by him, with the funds, it is thought, which came from the weregild collected from Withred. Other monastic establishments which were recipients of his bounty were those at Malmesbury, Wimborne, Nursling, Tisbury, Waltham, and Sherborne. Worn out by his long rule, Ina determined to abdicate in favour of Æthelheard and Oswald, and to make his peace with God. In pursuance of this project, he convened the Witenagemot and formally announced his abdication. With his wife he proceeded to Rome, to watch and pray at the tomb of the Apostles in the guise of a poor and pious pilgrim. While there he founded a hospice or home for English pilgrims, in the district known as Burges Saxonum, the modern Borgo. Some historians trace the foundation of the English College at Rome back to this hospice. The memory of the hospice still lives in the Church of San Spirito in Sassia, formerly S. Maria in Saxia; it is thought that King Ina and his Queen Ethelburga, lie buried in this church or in the atrium of St. Peter's. They died blessing God that they had been allowed to lay their dust in the consecrated soil of Rome.

9 / 22 September - Fast Day - Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos — Ss Joachim and Anna - St Joachim was of the tribe of Judah, and a descendant of King David. Anna was the daughter of Matthan the priest, of the tribe of Levi as was Aaron the High Priest. This Matthan had three daughters: Mary, Zoia and Anna. Mary was married in Bethlehem and bore Salome; Zoia was also married in Bethlehem and bore Elisabeth, the mother of St John the Forerunner; and Anna was married in Nazareth to Joachim, and in old age gave birth to Mary, the most holy Mother of God. Joachim and Anna had been married for fifty years, and were barren. They lived devoutly and quietly, using only a third of their income for themselves and giving a third to the poor and a third to the Temple, and they were well provided for. Once, when they were already old and were in Jerusalem to offer sacrifice to God, the High Priest, Issachar, upbraided Joachim: 'You are not worthy to offer sacrifice with those childless hands.' Others who had children jostled Joachim, thrusting him back as unworthy. This caused great grief to the two aged souls, and they went home with very heavy hearts. Then the two of them gave themselves to prayer to God that He would work in them the wonder that He had worked in Abraham and Sarah, and give them a child to comfort their old age. God sent them His angel, who gave them tidings of the birth of 'a daughter most blessed, by whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed, and through whom will come the salvation of the world.' Anna conceived at once, and in the ninth month gave birth to the holy Virgin Mary. St Joachim lived for eighty years and Anna for seventy-nine, and they both entered into the kingdom of God. Commemoration of the Third Ecumenical Council; The Holy Martyr Severian; St Theophanes, Confessor and Fester; St Nicetas the Man of God.;

St. Kieran (Ciaran) of Clonmacnois, Ireland (c.545) - The holy abbot Ciaran was the son of the wagonmaker, Beoit. Beoit was a very good and careful worker, and so he became rich. He and his wife Darerca had five sons and three daughters. Of these sons, four became presbyters and one, a deacon. All three daughters became nuns. This blessed family lived in the province of Meath, but because the local king was greedy and asked for too much tax money, the family moved to Roscommon in the province of Connaught. St Ciaran was born at Roscommon in the year 515. Like other boys his age, the young saint learned to work hard, helping his father, and also working for neighbouring farmers. One of his chores was to herd his family's sheep. Ciaran especially liked this duty, because he could be alone and pray to God in peace. The boy knew many of the psalms by heart, and he loved to chant them as he watched over the flock. The sheep were grazed in a plain called Ai. At that time, the wondrous old man, Saint Diarmat lived on this plain. This holy elder at once saw God's Grace in the young shepherd, and he taught the youth to read the psalms from the book for himself. The two spent many hours together, reading and praying. The elder taught the young saint many things about spiritual struggle, and how to keep himself clean and pure for Christ's sake. When he was old enough, St Ciaran wanted to go to school. In those days, there were no public schools, and the bishops and presbyters taught the students. St Findian had a school at Cluain. Here, he taught the Divine Scripture and the sciences. Saint Ciaran learned quickly, and grew in wisdom and in spirit under his elder. Some of the other students, however, were jealous of the young saint, and they used to torment him and shun him. Ciaran only prayed for them and tried to teach them love and mercy. The students of the school had to take turns working in a flour mill, to help pay for their needs. St Ciaran toiled with meekness and obedience. The saint loved beggars, and from his earliest youth he had sought to help them and give them money, food or clothing whenever possible. He even gave them some of the flour which he ground. As Saint Findian grew older, he called his monks together and announced that when he reposed, Ciaran should take his place as abbot. To this, they

all agreed. Meanwhile, St Ciaran got a blessing from his elder to visit some of the holy places of Ireland. He went to Lake Erne to hear the holy words of St Ninned, and from there, the young man went to the sacred isle of Aran. On Aran Island, the monks lived in great poverty and worked very hard. The holy elder, St Enda, was abbot of Aran in those days, and he accepted St Ciaran with joy. The young saint joined the hard labour and prayers of the monks, and he daily grew in God's Grace. From Aran, the saint made his way to Scatterry Island to learn what he could from Saint Senan. The blessed one journeyed around the whole country, learning much from the holy elders, and working and praying with all the monks. Soon, however, many monks came desiring to have St Ciaran as their elder; The saint built a small monastery on Hare Island (called Inis Aingin in Irish language) which is in Lake Ree. Even though Ciaran was the abbot of this monastery, he served the brothers, and often when a visitor came, Saint Ciaran would wash his feet and serve him like a slave. God worked many miracles and healings through this young saint, and the faithful from all over Ireland began to come to Lake Ree as pilgrims. The saint was sorrowful because of the attention and praises he was receiving, and so after a while, he appointed the holy presbyter Donnan as abbot, and he himself departed to the wilderness of Clonmachnoise. In those days, the elder Diarmat was living in this wilderness in a poor cell. The saint came to this cell and built himself one nearby. He lived here with his old friend and teacher for a long time, and a brotherhood soon grew up around him. St Ciaran became a father of saints, for many of his monks later became wonderworkers. The saint spent many years in struggle and prayer. He travelled throughout Ireland preaching and teaching the rulers and people alike to be merciful and charitable. This holy elder and wonderworker reposed in the Lord on 9 September, in the year of our Lord 550. He was about thirty-five years old; St. Wulfhilda, abbess of Barking, St. Bettelin, hermit of Crowland.

10 / 23 September – Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos — The Holy Martyrs Menodora, Metrodora and Nymphodora - They were three sisters from some place in Asian Bithynia. Brought up in a Christian spirit, they withdrew from the city into the desert, desiring to lift up their minds to God and free themselves from the illusory world, and thus to live their lives in purity and virginity as true brides of Christ. They gave themselves to fasting, prayer and toil, and God adorned them with the gift of wonderworking. When people began to bring the sick to them for healing, they became known against their will. A certain governor, Fronton, heard of them and brought them to trial. Seeing them, the governor was amazed at their beauty, for, although they were nuns and their bodies were withered, their faces were radiant, illumined by an inner peace and the grace of God. The governor at first flattered them and promised to send them to the Emperor, who would give them in marriage to his nobles, but, when he realised that his flattery and promises were having no effect on these brides of Christ the Lord, he ordered that Menodora be put to torture and her sisters be thrown into prison. After harsh torture, the governor cried to Menodora, all wounded and covered in blood: 'Offer sacrifice to the gods!' To this the holy martyr replied: 'Don't you see that I am doing nothing but offer myself in sacrifice to my God?' When she expired under torture, the governor brought out her two sisters and stood them beside Menodora's dead body, and, pointing to it, urged them to deny Christ. As they remained steadfast, he tortured them to death. At that, a thunderbolt fell from the sky and killed the soul-less Fronton and his servants. Christians buried the bodies of these holy martyrs, who suffered some time between 305 and 311, in the time of Galerius, and entered into rest in the Kingdom of Christ. St Pulcheria the Empress; The Holy Apostles Apollos, Lucius and Clement; The Three Holy Women of Constantinople; St. Salvius, bishop of Albi (Gaul); Translation of the relics of Sts Egwin, bishop of Worchester and Ethelwold, bishop of Winchester; St. Frithestan, bishop of Winchester.

REFLECTION

A saint's power after his death is often many times greater than in life. "That is why God left us the relics of the saints," says St. John Chrysostom in his unsurpassable homily on St. Babylas. St. Babylas was buried in the city of Antioch. At that time, Emperor Gallus—the brother of Julian the Apostate—was reigning together with Constantius, the son of Constantine the Great. Inspired by piety, Gallus translated the relics of St. Babylas to the outskirts of Daphne and built a small church, placing the relics of the martyr in it. There was a famous temple of Apollo in Daphne, built on the spot where, according to a pagan legend, a virgin had turned into a laurel tree in order to be saved from the "god" Apollo, who was pursuing her out of unrestrained fleshly passion for her. There stood the idol of Apollo, which allegedly could foretell anyone's future. But, as the relics of Babylas now rested in the vicinity of the temple, the demon from the idol fell silent and ceased making prophesies. Later, when Emperor Julian the Apostate set out on his catastrophic war with the Persians, he visited the temple of Apollo and consulted the idol about the outcome of his impending war. The idol responded with trepidation that it could not render a clear response "because of the dead" buried in its proximity. Of course, that pertained to Babylas, the presence of whose body had silenced the demon. Julian ordered that the relics of Babylas be transported back to Antioch. However, as soon as the relics of the martyr were removed, fire fell from heaven and consumed the temple of Apollo, destroying it forever. Julian set out against the Persians and his blasphemous life came to a horrible end. Such was the power of Christ's martyr after death: he silenced the demon, brought down fire from heaven, destroyed the idolatrous temple, and punished the apostate emperor with a dishonorable death.