



16th Sunday After Pentecost

Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos & St Theodora of Alexandria

11 / 24 September

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 7: By Thy Cross, Thou didst destroy death / to the Thief, Thou didst open Paradise / for the myrrh-bearers, Thou didst change weeping into joy! / and Thou didst command Thy disciples, O Christ God / to proclaim that Thou art risen / granting the world great mercy.

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.

Troparion of St Theodora tone 3: Thou didst offer thy life as a holy gift, / O righteous Theodora: / for radiant with the light of repentance thou didst illumine mankind. / Pray to Christ Who has glorified thee / to grant us His great mercy.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 7: The dominion of death can no longer hold men captive, / for Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers. / Hell is bound, while the prophets rejoice and cry: / The Saviour has come to those in faith, / enter, you faithful to the Resurrection.

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

Kontakion of St Theodora tone 2: Thou didst spend thy life in fasting and prayer / and entreat forgiveness of thy sin: / and thou didst receive it and show us the way of repentance, / O righteous Mother Theodora.

Matins Gospel V

Epistle for the Sunday before the Exaltation: Gal. 6:11-18

Epistle: II Corinthians 6:1-10

We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. We give no offence in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in sleeplessness, in fastings; By purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

What is the 'acceptable time'?

The 'acceptable time', what is this? That of the Gift, that of the Grace, when it is appointed not that an account should be required of our sins, nor penalty exacted, but besides being delivered, that we should also enjoy ten thousand good things, righteousness, sanctification, and all the rest. For how much toil would it have behoved us to undergo in order to obtain this 'time!' But, behold, without our toiling at all it has come, bringing remission of all that was before. He also calls it 'acceptable,' because He accepted those who had transgressed in ten thousand things, and not merely accepted, but advanced them to the highest honour ...Let us, too, therefore strive for the mastery in the time of this gift. It is a day of grace, of grace divine; wherefore even we will obtain the crown with ease. For if, when laden with such great evils, He both received and delivered us, after being delivered from all and actually contributing our part, will He not accept us even more?...

He shows that afflictions are weapons which not only do not strike down, but do even fortify and make stronger ...And let us therefore, when we suffer anything for Christ's sake, not merely bear it nobly, but also rejoice. If we fast, let us leap for joy as if enjoying luxury; if we are insulted, let us dance as if praised; if we spend, let us feel as if gaining; if we bestow on the poor, let us count ourselves to receive: for he who does not give this way will not give readily. When therefore you have a mind to scatter abroad, do not look only at what you spend, but at the fact that you gain more. And not only in almsgiving, but also in every kind of virtue, compute not just the severity of the toils, but also the sweetness of the prizes, and before all the subject of this struggle: our Lord Jesus. And if you will readily enter upon the contest, you will love the whole time with pleasure.

For nothing is so apt to cause pleasure as a good conscience. Therefore Paul, though wounded every day, rejoiced indeed and exulted. But the men of this day, although they do not endure a shadow even of what he did, grieve and make lamentations from no other cause than that they do not have a mind full of heavenly philosophy.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XII on II Corinthians VI, 1, 3, 5. B#56, pp. 336-338, 340.

for the Saint: Gal. 3:23-29

Gospel: for the Sunday before the Exaltation: John 3:13-17

GOSPEL: ST. MATTHEW 25:14-30

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man travelling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

The reading of the Gospel, dearly beloved, would have us consider that those of us who receive more gifts than others in this world will be judged more strictly by its Creator. For according as the gifts increase, the account demanded will be more exacting; therefore a man should be more humble and use his gift more diligently in God's service ...Who is this man who sets out on a journey, but our Redeemer, who ascended into heaven in that same flesh which He had assumed? The earth is the proper home of the flesh, but it travels, as it were, to foreign lands, when our Redeemer ascends with it to heaven ...He left spiritual gifts to the faithful who believed in Him ...There are five senses of the body ...so the five talents represent the gift of the five senses: that is to say, external knowledge.

The gifts of understanding and action are signified by the two talents, and the single talent represents the understanding alone. But he who received the five talents gained another five, for there are some people who, although they cannot understand interior and mystical things, nevertheless, by their desire for their heavenly home, teach sound doctrine to all whom they meet, doctrine concerning those exterior matters which they can understand ...Likewise, there are some who ...have a good grasp of what refers to intellect and action: they understand the subtleties of the interior life ...When they teach others by their learning and example they derive, as it were, a double profit from their trading...

To hide one's talent in the earth is to occupy the intelligence God gives us in purely earthly matters, not to seek spiritual profit, never to lift our heart above worldly considerations. For there are some who received the gift of understanding, but who, nevertheless, understand only the flesh. Of these the prophet says, "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" (Jer.4:22)...

Paltry are the goods of this world, however great they may seem in comparison with that reward of eternal life. But the faithful servant ...is taken to that everlasting dwelling, to mingle with the assembly of the angels and to relish that joy in such a way that he can never more suffer the external pains of temporal distress ...The worthless servant ...is a figure of many in the church, who are afraid to lead a better life, but not afraid to continue in the quagmire of their inertia; because they consider themselves to be sinners, they tremble to approach the way of sanctity, but they are not afraid to persist in their vices ...

It will be given to him who already has and he shall abound, for everyone who has the gift of charity receives other gifts besides. But he who has not the gift of charity will lose even those gifts which he seemed to have. So it is necessary, brethren, that charity should be the motive of all your actions ...No idler is completely deprived of talent...One receives the gift of intelligence ...Another receives worldly wealth ...another ...the craft with which he learns his livelihood ...a fourth the friendship of a rich man.

St. Gregory the Great. Parables of the Gospel, IX. B#48, pp. 59-65.

for the Saint: John 8:3-11

Saints of the week

11 / 24 September - Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos — Canonisation of St. Xenia of St. Petersburg (1978) - Prayer to the Holy Blessed Xenia of Petersburg: O most simple in thy way of life, homeless on earth but an inheritor of the Heavenly Father, blessed wanderer Xenia! Just as earlier those who fell down before the inscription over thy grave, so now we also, hastening to thee, entreat thee to pray that our steps might be directed, according to the word of the Lord, in the doing of His commandments, and that the soul-corrupting lawlessness sowed by the godless might not prevail over our people, but that we all might yet behold the deliverance of thy city and thy beloved Russian land from the present cruel affliction. O thou who didst hide thyself from the wise of this world, but wast known to God, entreat for us humility, a pledge of meekness and love in our hearts, in prayer faith, in repentance hope, in labours firmness, in afflictions the mercy of healing, and the renewal of our whole life, at least from this time forth; so that glorifying thee, with contrition we may confess the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Trinity One in essence and undivided, unto the ages of ages. Amen. Our Holy Mother Theodora; St Paphnutius the Confessor; Our Holy Father Ephrosynus the Cook; The Holy Martyr Ia; The Holy Martyrs Diodore, Didymus and Diomedes;

St. Deinol (Daniel), first bishop of Bangor, Wales (584) - Dismissal Hymn (Tone 4): By thy teaching and pious life thou didst shine forth in the age of Saints, O Hierarch Deinol, and becoming Bangor's first bishop thou wast an instrument of God's grace, leading many to salvation. Pray, O Saint, that we may be led into the Way of Truth that our souls may be saved

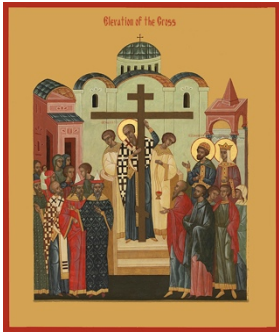
12 / 25 September- Apodosis of the Nativity of the Theotokos - The Hieromartyr Autonomus - A bishop, he left Italy for Bithynia in Asia during Diocletian's persecution, going to a place called Soreoi, where he brought many to the Christian faith and built them a church dedicated to the Archangel Michael. He stayed in the house of a devout Christian, Cornelius, whom Autonomus ordained priest and then consecrated bishop. Not far from the town of Soreoi was a place called Limnae, entirely inhabited by pagans. St Autonomus went to this place and quickly brought many to the light by the Gospel of Christ. This roused the pagans, and they hurried one day to the church of the Archangel Michael in Soreoi and, during divine service, slew Autonomus in the altar, killing also many other Christians in the church. In the time of the Emperor Constantine, a noble courtier, Severian, built a church over St Autonomus's grave. Two hundred years after his death, St Autonomus appeared to a soldier called John. This soldier dug up the saint's relics and found them to be completely uncorrupt, and many of the sick received healing from them. Thus God glorified him who glorified Him while in the body. The Hieromartyr Cornutus, Bishop of Iconium; The Holy Martyr Julian with his 40 Companions; Our Holy Father Daniel of Thasos; The Holy Martyrs Macedonius, Tatianus and Theodulus.

St. Ailbe of Emlý - He was the child of a clandestine union. The father, fearing King Cronan, fled before the child was born. The King ordered that the baby be killed but his servants left him near a rock where, it is said, a wolf nursed him. The child was later found by a passerby - Lochan - who gave him to some Britons in the neighbourhood. A tradition held that he went to Rome and was ordained bishop by the Pope. He preached throughout Ireland, and made people "not only Christians but saints." He founded the monastery of Emlý which became very important in Munster. A ninth century Rule bears his name. And the wolf? Ailbe was able to save the wolf when he was present at a run at which she was to be killed. She ate from his table from then on.

Tropar of St. Ailbe Tone 4: When Ireland's Enlightener returned to his native land,/ he found thee, O holy Ailbe, preaching the Faith at Emlý,/ where at the bidding of an Angel thou hadst built a church./ O wise shepherd of souls and glorious ascetic,/ O friend of animals, and fellow missionary with the illustrious Patrick,/ pray to Christ our God that we might also become bastions of Orthodoxy/ and a shining example to our fellow countrymen,/ drawing them away from ignorance and error/ and into the true Faith that all our souls may be saved.

13 / 26 September - Forefeast of the Exaltation of the Cross - The Consecration of the Church of the Resurrection.

When the holy Empress Helena found the Lord's Cross in Jerusalem, she stayed longer in the city and built churches in Gethsemane, in Bethlehem, on the Mount of Olives and in other places that commemorated the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. On Golgotha, where she found the Precious Cross, she began to build an enormous church, under whose roof would be the places both where the Lord was crucified and where He was buried, the holy Empress wanting to bring under one roof the places of His suffering and His glory. But Helena went to the Lord before this magnificent church was completed. It was finished in the same year in which Constantine completed thirty years on the throne, and so the consecration of the church and the Emperor's Jubilee were fixed for the same day, September 13th, 335. At that time, a local Council of bishops was meeting in Tyre. These bishops, with many others, made their way to Jerusalem, to the solemn consecration of the Church of the Resurrection of the Lord. It was then instituted that this day, as a day of victory and triumph for the Church of Christ, should be celebrated every year. The Hieromartyr Cornelius the Centurion; The Holy Martyrs Macrobius and Gordian; The Holy Martyr Ketevana, Queen of Georgia; Our Holy Father Hierotheos.



14 / 27 September - Fast Day - Wine & Oil allowed - The Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross - Epistle 1 Cor. 1:18-24 & Gospel St. John 19: 6-11, 13-20, 25-28, 30-35 - On this day are commemorated two events connected with the Precious Cross of Christ: the first, the finding of the Cross on Golgotha and the second the returning of the Cross to Jerusalem from Persia. Staying in the Holy Land, the holy Empress Helena decided to look for the Precious Cross of the Lord. An old Jew called Judah was the only person who knew the whereabouts of the Cross, and, under pressure from the Empress, he revealed that the Cross was buried under the Temple of Venus that the Emperor Hadrian had built on Golgotha. The Empress ordered that this idolatrous temple be pulled down, and then, digging deep below it, she found three crosses. While the Empress was in uncertainty about how to recognise which cross was the Lord's, a funeral procession passed by. Then Patriarch Macarius told them to place the crosses one by one on the dead man. When they placed the first and second on him, the dead man remained unchanged, but when they placed the third on him, he was restored to life. By this, they knew that this was the Precious and life-giving Cross of Christ. After that, they placed it on a sick woman, and she recovered. Then the Patriarch raised the Cross aloft for all to see, and the people sang with tears: 'Lord, have mercy!' The Empress Helena had a silver casing made, and placed the precious Cross in it. Later, King Chozroes conquered Jerusalem, took the people into slavery and carried the Lord's Cross off to Persia, where it remained for fourteen years. In 628, the Greek Emperor Heraclius was victorious over Chozroes and brought the Cross back to Jerusalem with great ceremony. Entering the city, Heraclius was carrying the Cross on his back, but suddenly the aged Emperor was unable to take another step. Patriarch Zacharias saw an angel directing the Emperor to take off his imperial robes and walk beneath the Cross along the way that Christ had walked, barefoot and humiliated as He had been. He passed this vision on to the Emperor, who stripped himself of his raiment and, in poor clothing and barefoot, took up the Cross, carried it to Golgotha and placed it in the Church of the Resurrection, to the joy and consolation of the whole Christian world. St Placilla the Empress; Our Holy Father, the Martyr Macarius of Salonica; Our Holy Mother Maria of Tarsus.

15 / 28 September - Afterfeast of the Exaltation of the Cross – The Holy Martyr Nicetas - Nicetas was a Goth by birth, and a disciple of Bishop Theophilus of the Goths, who took part in the First Ecumenical Council. When Athenarik, Prince of the Goths, began to persecute the Christians, St Nicetas stood before the prince and denounced him for his paganism and inhumanity. Tormented by terrible tortures, Nicetas the more strongly confessed his faith in Christ, and prayed to God with thanksgiving. His mind was unceasingly lifted up to God and immersed in Him, and in his hand beneath his robe he held an icon of the holy Mother of God with the pre-eternal Christ Child standing and holding the Cross in His hands. St Nicetas carried this icon because the holy Mother of God had appeared to him and comforted him. Finally, the torturer threw Christ's martyr into the flames, in which St Nicetas breathed his last; but his body remained untouched by the fire. His friend Marianus took his body from the land of the Goths (Wallachia and Bessarabia) to Cilicia, to the town of Mopsuestia, where he built a church dedicated to St Nicetas and placed the wonderworking relics of the martyr in it. Nicetas suffered and was glorified in 372. Our Holy Father Philotheus; The Holy Martyr Porphyrius; The Holy Martyrs Theodotus, Asclepidote and Maximus; St. Vissarion, Archbishop of Larissa; The Holy New Martyr John of Crete; St. Joseph of Alaverdsk.

16 / 29 September - Fast Day - Afterfeast of the Exaltation of the Cross - The Holy and Great Martyr Euphemia - Born in Chalcedon, her father was the senator Philophronus and her mother's name was Theodorisia, both devout Christians. Euphemia was a girl beautiful in both body and soul. When the Proconsul, Priscus, celebrated a festival of sacrifice to Ares in Chalcedon, forty-nine Christians absented themselves from the festivities and hid themselves. But they were discovered and brought before Priscus, holy Euphemia being among them. When the furious Priscus asked them why they had not carried out the imperial command, they replied: 'Both the Emperor's commands and yours must be obeyed if they are not contrary to the God of heaven. If they are, they must not only not be obeyed; they must be resisted.' Then Priscus put them to various tortures for nineteen days, from day to day. On the twelfth day, he held Euphemia apart from the others and began to flatter her beauty, hoping to bring her thus to idolatry. When all his flattery proved fruitless, he ordered that she be tortured. First, she was put on a wheel, but an angel of God appeared and broke it. Then he had her thrown into a fiery furnace, but she was preserved by God's power. Seeing this, two soldiers, Victor and Sosthenes, came to faith in Christ, for which they were thrown to the wild beasts and thus finished their earthly course with glory. After that, Euphemia was thrown into a pit filled with water and all kinds of poisonous reptiles, but she made the sign of the Cross over the water as she went into the pit, and remained unharmed. She was finally thrown to the wild beasts and, with a prayer of thanksgiving, gave her soul into God's hands. Her parents buried her body. She suffered in the year 303, and entered into eternal joy. (St Euphemia is also commemorated on July 11th.) Our Holy Father Dorotheus; St Cyprian, Metropolitan of Kiev; The Holy Martyr Ludmilla; **St. Ninian, b of Whithorn (apostle of the E. Picts) (Galloway, c.432)** - Ninian's father was a Cumbrian chief. When his son embraced Christianity, he decided to visit Rome, where for many years he advanced in holy virtue and self-discipline. But Ninian never forgot the fellow-Britons who still did not know the Gospel. He decided to return home. In 394 Ninian was consecrated bishop by Pope Siricius. On his way back to Britain Ninian was befriended by Saint Martin of Tours. He founded his see at Whithorn, and there built a stone church which became renowned as the 'White House'. When Ninian heard of Martin's death he dedicated the church to his friend. Almost certainly this White House was the oldest Christian foundation in Scotland. Ninian founded a monastery close by, and from here he and his monks persuaded the southern Picts inhabiting the Grampians to 'abandon the errors of idolatry' (as the Venerable Bede put it 'and accept the true Faith'. Saint Ninian travelled tirelessly. His diocese was huge, stretching from near present-day Glasgow as far as Westmoreland. Although later pagan invaders undid much of his work, his memory lingered; and his success in converting the rulers of Wales was considerable;

St. Edith, abbess of Wilton, England (984) - Daughter of King Edgar and St Wilfrida. She became a nun at Wilton in England at the age of fifteen. She reposed at the age of twenty-two, famous for her generosity to the poor and her familiarity with wild animals.

17 / 30 September - Afterfeast of the Exaltation of the Cross – The Holy Martyrs Vera, Nada and Lubov (Faith, Hope and Love), and their Mother, Sophia - They lived and suffered in Rome in the time of the Emperor Hadrian . The wise Sophia (as her name—Sophia— wisdom, indicates) was left a widow and, as a Christian, steeped herself and her daughters in the Christian faith. At the time that Hadrian's persecuting hand stretched out over the virtuous house of Sophia, Vera was twelve, Nada ten and Lubov nine. The four of them were brought before the Emperor, with their arms entwined 'like a woven wreath', humbly but firmly confessing their faith in Christ the Lord and refusing to offer sacrifice to the goddess Artemis. At the moment of their passion, the mother urged her valiant daughters to endure to the end: 'Your heavenly Lover, Jesus Christ, is eternal health, inexpressible beauty and life eternal. When your bodies are slain by torture, He will clothe you in incorruption and the wounds on your bodies will shine in heaven like the stars.' The torturers inflicted harsh torture on Vera, Nada and Lubov one by one. They beat them, stabbed them and threw them into fire and boiling pitch, and finally beheaded them one after the other. Sophia took the dead bodies of her daughters out of the town and buried them, and stayed by their grave in prayer for three days and nights, then gave her soul to God, hastening to the heavenly company where the blessed souls of her daughters awaited her. The Holy Martyr Agathocleia; The 156 Holy Martyrs of Egypt; The Holy Martyr Theodota.

REFLECTION

Just as a candle is lighted from another candle, so also a good work is born from a good work. A patrician wanted to donate a gold cross to a church. He summoned a young but experienced goldsmith, gave him a great deal of gold that he weighed out, and told him to fashion whatever sort of cross he desired. The poor goldsmith, seeing what a large donation this patrician was making for the sake of his soul, became inflamed with love for God in his own heart, and decided that he would add his own ten pieces of gold to the amount of the patrician's gold. When the cross was completed, the patrician weighed it, and discovered that it was heavier than the gold that he had given to the young man. He immediately began to scold the young man as a thief, suspecting that he had taken some of the gold and replaced it with some other heavy metal. When the young man saw the patrician so angry, he confessed his deed. He said: "I added from my gold, as the widow gave two mites, in order to receive Christ's reward with you." Hearing this, the patrician's heart was touched, and he said to the honorable young man: "From this day, I take you as my son, and the heir of all my goods."

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the transgression of Jeroboam and the punishment of God (1 Kings 12, 13): 1. How Jeroboam cast two golden calves and ordered the people to worship them as gods; 2. How the prophet declared God's displeasure to Jeroboam, and miraculously broke the altar before the idols; 3. How Jeroboam raised his hand against the prophet, but his hand withered, and only after the prayers of the prophet was it made whole again.

HOMILY

on the truthfulness of Christ's witness

Though I bear record of Myself, yet My record is true (John 8:14).

The light witnesses truthfully when it witnesses to the existence of the sun, and it does not lie. In the same way, the Lord Jesus witnesses truthfully to all that He testifies. He descended among men as a heavenly witness, to affirm the existence of the Triune God, the existence of the angelic world and of men's souls, the love of God for men, God's providence toward men, the power of justice over injustice, the might of truth over falsehood, the blessed immortality of the righteous and the eternal torment of the sinners, the resurrection from the dead, the Judgment of God and many other things that men-under the veil of sin-only felt as a faint premonition, but did not know of or strongly believe in. Most of all, He witnessed that He is the Son of the Living God, equal to His Father in Essence, power and love, and equal to the Holy Spirit of God. For the Witness had to witness first to Himself, so that by His witnessing to other mysteries, He could be believed. From the point of view of a pure and immutable truth, every witness of Christ is true; but from the point of view of the darkened Jews, it was not true. For God, and the angels of God, and the righteous ones, and for eternity, and for all time-His witnessing is true, and that is why He also said: *My record is true*. But for the darkened minds of the hardened sinners, this witness is not true. That is why He said to the Jews earlier: *If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true* (John 5:31). In other words; "It is not true for you Jews, but in essence it is true in and of itself."

O Most-blessed Lord Jesus, Son of the Living God and our only Savior, deliver us from the weakness of a sinful mind, and the wickedness of a sinful heart. Illumine us with the light of Thy words, eternally true.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.