

17th Sunday After Pentecost

Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos & Holy Virgins Menodora, Metodora and Nymphodora

10 / 23 September



Resurrection Tropar, Tone 8: Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One! / Thou didst endure the three-day burial / to free us from our sufferings! / O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee.

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 the Virgin Martyrs tone 1: Let all who rejoice at their triumph honour these three Virgin Martyrs/ who are united to God as sisters and pour forth fair streams of grace:/ Menodora, Metrodora and Nymphodora who were in all things courageous./ They ever pray to the Trinity for us.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 8: By rising from the tomb Thou didst raise the dead and resurrect Adam/ Eve exults in Thy Resurrection, / and the world celebrates Thy rising from the dead, O Greatly Merciful One.

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 the Virgin Martyrs tone 4: You endured suffering for the Trinity/ and as sisters united in spirit you defeated the enemy's guile./ You have entered heaven with the five virgins and with Angels stand before the King.

Matins Gospel VI

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

EPISTLE: II Cor. 6:16-7:1

Brethren you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty." Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

YOU ARE THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD

He uses opposites which themselves cannot admit of their opposites: light and darkness' ...Do you bear God within you and run to them, God, Who has nothing in common with them? And in what way can this deserve forgiveness? Bear in mind Who walks and Who dwells in you ...But what is filthiness of the flesh? Adultery, fornication, lasciviousness of every kind. And what of the soul? Unclean thoughts, as gazing with unchaste eyes, malice, deceits, and whatsoever such things there are ...Do you realize the greatness of the prize? It is both to be delivered from what is evil, and to be made one with God ...What promises? That we should be temples of God, sons and daughters, have Him indwelling, and walking in us, be His people, having Him for our God and Father...

PERFECTING HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF GOD

Yet he is not content with this, but adds, 'Perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' For not to touch unclean things does not thereby make you clean, but something else is needed for becoming holy: earnestness, heedfulness, piety. And he well said, 'In the fear of God.' For it is possible to perfect chasteness, not in the fear of God but for vainglory ...For even if lust makes imperious demands, still if you occupy its territory with the fear of God, you have stayed its frenzy ...Now by holiness here he means not chastity alone, but the freedom from every kind of sin, for he is holy who is pure. Now one will become pure, not if he is free from fornication only, but also from covetousness and envy and pride and vainglory, yes, especially from vainglory, which in everything indeed it behoves us to avoid, but much more in almsgiving, since, with this distemper, it is no longer almsgiving, but display and cruelty. For when you do not do it out of mercy, but from parade, such a deed is not only no alms, but even an insult, for you have put your brother to open shame. Not then the giving money, but the giving it out of mercy, is almsgiving...

Wherefore I exhort and entreat you all, disregard what this man and that man thinks about these things, and inquire all these things from the Scriptures. And having learned what are the true riches, let us pursue them so we may also obtain the eternal good things, which may we all obtain, through the grace and love towards men of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom, to

the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory, might, and honour, now and ever and world without end. Amen.
St. John Chrysostom. Homily XIII on II Corinthians VI 1, 4. B#56.

The Holy Bible & the Holy Fathers for the Orthodox - edit. Johanna Manley

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

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW 15:21-28

Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

THE CANAANITE WOMAN

In today's Gospel the Holy Church shows us the application of this talent in deeds, in life. A talent is given to us to fulfill the commandments, but sin prevents us from fulfilling the commandment. A struggle ensues, in which we acquire the qualities of Christ. Today's Gospel shows us one of these qualities. This is the most profound humility of the Canaanite woman.

A mother was begging for the healing of her daughter. She cried after the Lord: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon" (Mt. 15:22). Now see how the Lord tested her. At first, He did not answer her a word. Even His disciples could not bear it. Approaching Him, they asked Him: "Send her away, for she crieth after us" (Mt. 15:23). But here, the Lord not only continued not to pay any attention to her, but simply pushed her away. "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt. 15:24).

Doesn't the same happen to us? At first, the Lord seems not to hear our prayer, and then through the circumstances of our life, seemingly pushes us away. And how many of us stop our prayer at this point. But not the Canaanite woman. Approaching, she bowed to Him and said: "Lord, help me" (Mt. 15:25). And the Lord? He compared her straight-out with a dog: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs" (Mt. 15:26). It is impossible to put a human being lower. And she agreed. "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (Mt. 15:27).

Here is accomplished the victory of humility; here crumbles the illusory wall between the Lord and the Canaanite woman. "O woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (Mt. 15:28).

"Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." These words of the woman have passed through all the centuries, reaching us this day; and they give hope to all those who are completely without hope. It is up to us to profit from them or neglect them. Can we humble ourselves as that woman humbled herself? The talent is given to us; and if so, that means—yes, we can! The only thing is that we must want to accept such a measure of humility.

Brothers and sisters! Let us accept it! Then we will hear the answer of the Lord: "Be it done unto thee even as thou wilt!"

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei

Saints of the week

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 Worcester and Ethelwold, bishop of Winchester; St. Frithestan, bishop of Winchester.

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;

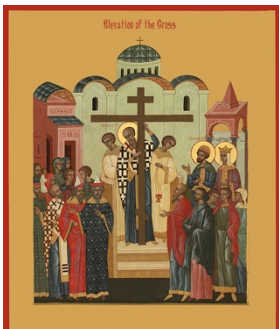
St. Deinol (Daniel), first bishop of Bangor, Wales (584) - Dismissal Hymn (Tone 4): By thy teaching and pious life thou didst shine forth in the age of Saints, O Hierarch Deinol, and becoming Bangor's first bishop thou wast an instrument of God's grace, leading many to salvation. Pray, O Saint, that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