



## Sunday of All Saints

### First Sunday After Pentecost

6 / 19 June

**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.

**Tropar Of All Saints, Tone 4:** Adorned in the blood of Thy martyrs throughout all the world, as in purple and fine linen. Thy Church, through them, doth cry unto Thee, O Christ God: Send down Thy compassions upon Thy people; grant peace to Thy flock and to our souls great mercy.

**Kondak Of All Saints, Tone 8:** To Thee, the Planner of creation, the world doth offer the God-bearing martyrs as the first fruits of nature. By their intercessions preserve Thy Church, Thy commonwealth, in profound peace, through the Theotokos, O Greatly merciful One.

God is glorified in the Saints, while the Saints have been given glory by God.

*St. Silouan. Wisdom from Mount Athos. B#73, p. 61.*

#### Matins Gospel I

#### EPISTLE: ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE HEBREWS 11: 33 – 12:2

Brethren, through faith, the saints subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- Of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

#### WE ARE SURROUNDED BY SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

At all times, indeed, but specially when I reflect upon the achievements of the saints, it comes over me to feel despondency concerning my own condition, because we have not even in dreams experienced the things among which those men spent their whole lives: not paying the penalty of sins, always doing rightly and yet always afflicted .. And having spoken of that which befell the apostles (Cf I Cor. 4:11, II Cor 11: 23-28, 12:7, Phil. 1:12, II Tim. 3:11, ... Elijah suffered the same thing with them (II Kings 1:8) and the Son of Man (Matt. 8:20) ...For God has provided some better thing for us. In order that they might not seem to have the advantage from being crowned before us, He appointed one time for crowning for all ...Do you see His tender carefulness?

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXVIII on Hebrews XI, 1, 2. B#58, pp. 491-492.*

#### GOSPEL: ST. MATTHEW 10: 32 - 33, 37 – 38 & 19: 27 - 30

Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

## HE WHO DOES NOT TAKE HIS CROSS AND FOLLOW AFTER ME IS NOT WORTHY OF ME

Brothers and sisters! Last week the Holy Church placed flowers in our hands, as if saying to us: See how soulless nature is obedient to its Creator. Starting with the days of Christmas, the earth has been turning toward the sun, which began to bestow upon the earth its life-giving warmth. And nature does not prove itself ungrateful toward its Creator. In answer to His caress, she has produced this glorious beauty, these flowers, and further on, will produce fruits. And what about us? In answer to the spiritual warmth of God's Grace, so abundantly poured out on us, do we bring to our Creator spiritual beauty, flowers, fruits of virtues? After all, He became Man for our sake, died for us, rose for us, ascended into Heaven in order to send down to us His Holy Spirit. And what about us? Is not this beauty of nature around us a reproach to our conscience? Let us answer honestly. Yes, it is. But more than this, we want to justify our negligence, our ingratitude. The commandments of Christ are wonderful, we say; and if people would begin to fulfill them, then the whole earth would be transformed into a wonderful divine garden. But is this possible for weak human strength? And here this Sunday, the Sunday of All the Saints, answers this question loudly so that the whole world hears: Yes, it is possible.

All the saints being remembered today followed the example of Christ. And all of them in their time, in their circumstances of life, fulfilled God's commandment of love of God and neighbour. Occasionally their times were difficult, maybe more difficult than ours; and not infrequently their circumstances in life were more dangerous in spiritual terms, and often in worldly terms were worse than ours. But they still proceeded, struggled, and reached the abodes on high where they now triumph.

Just look at the murals of our church and you will see them: martyrs, confessors, ascetics, fools for Christ, educated people, simple people, rich, poor, bishops, monastics, lay people. This is the Heavenly Church. She is all-embracing, and she is filled up by the earthly, Militant Church. There is room for each of us there. This is what today's Apostle reading tells us: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb .12:1-2). Just think: all of these saints were live people like us. And like us, all of them were different people; and their paths were different. But all of them, absolutely all, had three qualities which they all possessed identically. These qualities are pointed out to us in today's Gospel. They are obligatory for everyone, and this means for us, too; we cannot escape them. Here they are: "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father, which is in heaven" (Mt. 10:32). This is the first thing. Don't you feel, brothers, how important this is for us modern-day people? Why, the whole world around us as if asks us: "Are you Christian or one of ours?" We cannot leave this question unanswered. In our speech, our actions, our thoughts and feelings (for our feelings are somehow passed on to the others), we must answer loud and firm "Yes, I am a Christian!"

Here is the second: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me" (Mt.10:37). Here and now, the Lord demands from you and me this all-consuming love—to love Him more than everyone and everything. And only through this love for Him will we really be able to love our relatives, strangers, and even our enemies.

Finally the third: "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me" (Mt.10:38). This instance does not even require explanation. Each of us has his own sorrows and difficulties in life; they are personal for each of us. It is difficult, burdensome, but such is our life; and this means, such is the Will of God for us.

Let us thank the Lord even for this cross! Without it we cannot be saved. And the Lord wants all of us to be saved, and to be united into one Triumph with all the Saints, whom we are glorifying today.

*The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei*

### Saints of the Week

*Apostles Fast Begins Monday 20<sup>th</sup> of June through to 12<sup>th</sup> of July*

**6 / 19 June — Our Holy Father Bessarion** born and educated in Egypt, he devoted himself to the spiritual life at an early age, and 'never soiled the spiritual garment in which he was clothed at his baptism'. He visited St Gerasim by the Jordan and learned from St Isidore of Pelusium. He conquered his flesh in strict fasting and vigils, but, as far as possible, hid his asceticism from men. He once spent forty days in prayer, neither eating nor sleeping, and had one single garment that he wore summer and winter. He had a great gift of wonderworking. He had no fixed abode, but lived in the mountains and forests, healing the sick and performing many other miracles to help men and glorify God. He entered peacefully into rest in 466. Our Holy Father Hilarion the New; Our Holy Mothers the Martyrs Archelais, Thecla and Susanna.

**7 / 20 June — The Holy Martyr Theodotus of Ancyra** - was a secret Christian and, as such, used to help the Church and give burial to the bodies of the martyrs. He buried the bodies of seven young maidens who had suffered for Christ. When the pagans discovered this, they attacked him and he was killed (see May 18th for more about him). The Holy Martyrs Kyria, Valeria and Maria; The Hieromartyr Marcellus, Pope of Rome; The Hieromartyr Marcellinus, Pope of Rome; Our Holy Father Daniel of Scetis; St. Colman, bishop of Dromore, Ireland (6th c.).

**8 / 21 June — St Ephraim, Patriarch of Antioch** - during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius, Ephraim was governor of the eastern regions. He was famed for his great piety and compassion, and was much esteemed for these virtues. When the rebuilding of Antioch, which had been destroyed by earthquake and fire, was put in hand, the Emperor ordered Ephraim to oversee the work. Ephraim performed this work with diligence and love. There was among the ordinary workers a certain bishop who had left his see for unknown reasons and was working as a labourer. Not a soul knew that the man was a bishop. One day he lay down to take a rest from the exhausting work with the other labourers, and fell asleep. Ephraim glanced at him, and saw a flaming pillar rising above the man and reaching up to heaven. Amazed and frightened, Ephraim

summoned him and bound him under oath to reveal who he was. The man hesitated a long time, but finally admitted that he was a bishop and foretold that Ephraim would shortly be consecrated Patriarch of Antioch (the patriarchal throne having been empty since the old Patriarch, Euphrasius, perished in the earthquake). Ephraim was indeed elected and consecrated as Patriarch. For his goodness, purity and zeal for Orthodoxy, a great gift of wonderworking was given him by God. Once, in order to convince some heretic that Orthodoxy is the true Faith, he placed his omophor in the flames and prayed to God. The omophor remained unharmed in the fire for three hours. When the heretic saw this, he was afraid and cast his heresy aside. Ephraim entered peacefully into rest in 546. Our Holy Father Zossima of Phoenicia; The Holy and Great Martyr Theodore Stratelates.

**St. Merdadus** - Bishop of Noyon, b. at Salency (Oise) about 456; d. in his episcopal city 8 June, about 545. His father, Nectardus, was of Frankish origin, while his mother, named Protagia, was Gallo-Roman. It is believed that St. Gildardus, Bishop of Rouen, was his brother. His youth was entirely consecrated to the practise of Christian virtues and to the study of sacred and profane letters. He often accompanied his father on business to Vermand and to Tournai, and frequented the schools, carefully avoiding all worldly dissipation. His exemplary piety and his knowledge, considerable for that time, decided the Bishop of Vermand (d. 530) to confer on him Holy Orders, and caused him to be chosen as his successor. Forced, in spite of his objections, to accept this heavy charge, he devoted himself zealously to his new duties, and to accomplish them in greater security, since Vermand and the northern part of France in general were then generally troubled by wars and exposed to the incursions of the barbarians, he removed his episcopal see in 531 from Vermand, a little city without defence, to Noyon, the strongest place in that region. The year following, St. Eleutherius, Bishop of Tournai, having died, St. Medardus was invited to assume the direction of that diocese also. He refused at first, but being urged by Clotaire himself he at last accepted. This union of the two dioceses lasted until 1146, when they were again separated. Clotaire, who had paid him a last visit at Noyon, had his body transferred to the royal manor of Crouy at the gates of the city of Soissons. Over the tomb of St. Medardus was erected the celebrated Benedictine abbey which bears his name. St. Medardus was one of the most honoured bishops of his time, his memory has always been popularly venerated in the north of France.

**9 / 22 June — St Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria** - He was of noble birth and a close kinsman of Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, after whose death he was chosen as Patriarch. He fought three fierce battles in the course of his life: against the Novatianist heretics, against Nestorius and against the Jews of Alexandria. The Novatianists began in Rome, and were so called after their leader, the heretic priest Novatian. They were filled with pride at their virtues, went about dressed in white, banned second marriages and declared that one must not pray for those who had committed mortal sin nor receive back into the Church those who had once fallen away, however deeply they might repent. Cyril overcame them and drove them out of Alexandria, together with their bishop. The battle with the Jews was harder and bloodier. The Jews had been in the ascendant in Alexandria right from the time that Alexander the Great founded the city. Their hatred towards the Christians was vicious and mindless. They killed Christians by treachery, by poison and by crucifixion. After a long and difficult struggle, Cyril succeeded in inducing the Emperor to drive the Jews out of Alexandria. His battle, however, against Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, was resolved at the Third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus. Cyril himself presided at this Council, and also represented Pope Celestine of Rome at his request, he being prevented by old age from attending the Council. Nestorius was condemned, anathematised and exiled by the Emperor to the eastern borders of the Empire, where he died. After the end of these battles, Cyril lived in peace and guided Christ's flock with zeal. He went to the Lord in the year 444. It is said that he composed the hymn: 'Hail, Mother of God and Virgin.' St Kiril of Byelozersk (White Lake);

**St. Columba of Iona, enlightener of Scotland (597)** - born in County Donegal, Ireland, and spent fifteen years preaching to his native Irish and founding monasteries - the greatest of which were at Derry, Durrow and Kells. In 563 Columba sailed to the Scottish island of Iona, there to found a monastery that for centuries was the most famous in the west. Iona became the heart of Celtic Christianity. Daughter houses sprang up in England and on the Scottish mainland. The next thirty-four years of Columba's life were spent in missionary service. On 8 June 597 Columba was copying out the psalms. At the verse, 'They that love the Lord shall lack no good thing' he stopped, and said that his cousin Baithin must do the rest. He died the next day. 'Alone with none but Thee, my God, I journey on my way; What need I fear when Thou art near, Oh King of night and day? More safe am I within Thy hand. Than if a host did round me stand,' attributed to St. Columba. The Venerable Bede said, 'We know for certain that Columba left successors distinguished for their purity of life, their love of God, and their loyalty to the rules of the monastic life.'

**10 / 23 June — The Hieromartyr Timothy, Bishop of Brussa** - for his great spiritual purity, God gave him the gift of wonder-working, and he healed all manner of diseases and pains among the people. During the reign of the evil Emperor Julian, who had renounced Christ, holy Timothy was thrown into prison. The faithful visited him there to listen to the wise teaching of their bishop. When this came to his ears, Julian commanded that the executioner behead him in the prison. This was in 362, and his soul entered into Paradise while his relics remained, full of miraculous power, to help the people and declare the power of the Lord. The Holy Martyrs Alexander and Antonina; St Bassian, Bishop of Lodi; Synaxis of All Saints of Siberia: St. John (Maximovitch), metropolitan of Tobolsk; St. Innocent, bishop of Irkutsk; St. Macarius (Glukharev) of Altai; St. Macarius (Nevsky), Metropolitan of Moscow, apostle to Altai (1926) and others.

**11 / 24 June — The Holy Apostle Bartholomew** - one of the Twelve Great Apostles. It is generally agreed that Bartholomew and Nathaniel are one and the same person. He was a companion of the Apostle Philip and his sister, the virgin Mariamna—and for some time of St John the Theologian— preaching the Gospel in Asia, then in India and finally in Armenia, where he died a martyr. In Hierapolis, the holy apostles by their prayers killed a great snake which had been kept in a temple and deified by the pagans. In this same town, they restored the sight of one Stachius, who had been blind for forty years. This roused the mob against them, and Philip and Bartholomew were crucified, Bartholomew upside down. At this there was an earthquake, in which the evil judges and many of the people perished. Seeing this as a punishment from God, many ran to take

the apostles down from their crosses, but Philip was already dead although Bartholomew was still alive. After that, Bartholomew went to India, where he preached and translated the Gospel of Matthew into the Indian language. After that, he moved to Armenia, where he cured the king's daughter of madness. But the king's envious brother, Astyages, took the apostle of God and crucified him, then had him flayed and beheaded in the Armenian town of Ourbanopolis. His body was buried by Christians in a leaden coffin. When many miracles had been wrought over his relics, pagans took the coffin and threw it into the sea. But the sea carried the coffin to the island of Lipara, where the bishop, Agathon, who had been warned by revelation in a dream, was waiting for it and buried it in the church. St Bartholomew appeared to St Joseph the Hymnographer in church one day, robed in white, and blessed him with the Gospels to sing spiritual songs, saying: 'Let streams of heavenly wisdom flow from thy tongue!' He also appeared to the Emperor Anastasius (491-518), and told him that he would protect the newly-built town of Dara. Later, the relics of this apostle were translated to Benevento, and then to Rome. Great and wondrous miracles have been wrought over them

**The Holy Apostle Barnabas** - one of the Seventy, he was born in Cyprus, of wealthy parents of the tribe of Levi, and studied with Gamaliel together with Saul. He was first named Joseph, but the apostles called him Barnabas, Son of Consolation, because he had a rare gift for comforting men's souls. After Saul's conversion, Barnabas was the first to welcome him among the apostles. After that, with Paul and Mark, he preached the Gospel in Antioch and other places. All accounts agree that he was the first to preach in Rome and in Milan. He suffered at the hands of the Jews on the island of Cyprus and was buried by Mark at the western gate of the city of Salamis, holding a copy of the Gospel of Matthew which he had transcribed with his own hand. His grave remained unknown for several centuries, but when many people had been healed of sickness in that place, it became known as 'the place of healing'. In the time of the Emperor Zeno, the Apostle appeared three times, on three successive nights, to Archbishop Anthemius of Cyprus, and revealed the whereabouts of his grave. This revelation by the Apostle took place just at the time when Peter, the power-hungry Patriarch of Antioch, was seeking to bring the Cypriot Church under his jurisdiction. After the revealing and finding of the miraculous relics of the holy Apostle Barnabas, it was established that the Cypriot Church, as an apostolic foundation, should be independent, and thus the autocephaly of the Church of Cyprus was finally confirmed.

**The Feast of the Icon: 'It is meet ...'**, Within discussions of Orthodoxy, the Holy Mountain of Mt. Athos does get mentioned many times. Mt. Athos itself is what we call a "Spiritual Republic". It is an independent state which pledges allegiance only to Almighty God. Mt. Athos which is perched on a peninsula 20 miles long and seven miles wide is off the Macedonian Coast. The monasteries there are among the oldest in Christendom. Monks, hermits and holy men have lived there since the third century. During the Byzantine Era, the total population exceeded 50,000. No women have ever been allowed on Mt. Athos. The Blessed Ever-Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, is the "Patron Saint" of the Spiritual Republic of Mt. Athos. In one of the magnificent monasteries there is a huge icon on the Blessed Virgin Mary which has been titled "Axion Esti", meaning 'it is worthy to bless Thee, the Virgin'. This beautiful icon was painted in the seventh century and has since graced the sacred walls of the Cathedral of Mt. Athos. Today we commemorate the anniversary of the miracle which took place in front of this icon over 1,000 years ago, on June 11. During the celebration of the Divine Liturgy every Sunday, we hear the beautiful, and inspiring hymn called "Axion Esti" which follows the prayer (as we kneel) called the "Epiklesis". This hymn was written originally in the year 720 AD by St. Cosmas, one of the greatest hymnographers of the Christian Church. The hymn, however, began with the words "Thee that art more honourable than the Cherubim (Tin Timioteran)". It was well over one hundred years later that this hymn was added to the Divine Liturgy, but with an added beginning as the result of the following miraculous event: On June 11, 980 AD, as a group of monks were conducting an all-night vigil before the icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary, they suddenly noticed a monk standing on the right of the icon whom they did not recognise at all. He was unknown to the monks, and no one could explain his abrupt presence. This unidentified monk began to chant the beautiful hymn written by St. Cosmas, but rather began with the words "Axion Esti os Alethos Makarizin Se Tin Theotokon", which means "It is very meet to bless Thee, Theotokos the ever blessed and most pure Virgin and Mother of God". The monk then explained to the others that he was the Archangel Gabriel and that these words should be added to the hymn. The Arch-angel then vanished from their sight, leaving the monks amazed at the power of God. Since that day on June 11, 980 AD, the additional words to the hymn of St. Cosmas have been sung by all Orthodox Christians around the world. The icon of the Blessed Mother Axion Esti is still venerated today in the Cathedral of Mt. Athos. "It is meet indeed to bless Thee, the ever-blessed and most pure and Mother of our God. Thee that art more honourable than the Cherubim, and incomparably more glorious than the Seraphim, who without spot of sin didst bear God the Word; Thee, verily the Mother of God, we magnify";

**Hieromartyr Metrophanes, the first Chinese priest, and the Chinese New Martyrs of the Boxer Uprising, at Peking and other places, in 1900** - (unable to find the icon on the internet herewith a verbal description) - The Orthodox Church believes that the icon is a window into heaven. In other words the icon makes visible the very real but invisible reality of Christ and the saints. The Orthodox Church also believes that the icon is the word of God in visual form. In other words this icon is a visual sermon that speaks to us about the heroic faith of the Chinese Martyrs, their willingness to die for Jesus Christ. When I looked at this icon I asked myself: What are they doing? What are they looking at? What are they doing with their hands? What is their body posture like? Are there any writings in the icon? Starting from the bottom of the icon we see a large group of people looking at us. It is a mixed group. It is made up of clergy and laity, men and women, adult and children, boys and girls. All of them are wearing haloes, the haloes signifying their having attained sainthood. (In the Orthodox Church salvation -- that is, life in Jesus Christ -- is available to both adults and children.) The golden haloes represent the "crown of righteousness"<sup>[1]</sup> and the "crown of glory"<sup>[2]</sup> promised to those who keep the faith and who love the appearing of Jesus Christ. Notice that everyone in the icon has a cross. This represents the cross that Christ gives us when we become his followers: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it." Bodily posture is also important. Their standing upright signify the fact that the Chinese martyrs are very much awake and conscious in heaven right now. It also symbolizes the Orthodox Church's belief that when we die we do not experience soul sleep but enter fully conscious into Christ's presence. One thing I like about this icon are the little details that carry much meaning. I see little

details like the Chinese style clothing, the long braided pigtail worn by St. Paul (standing to the right of Fr. Metrophanes'), the distinctive Chinese style kung fu slippers on their feet, the Asian features on their faces. When I looked at the front row I expected to see the priest Fr. Metrophanes Tsi-Chung in the centre, instead I see the priest with his wife St. Tatiana. The fact that Metrophanes is of Chinese ancestry points to Orthodoxy's commitment to an indigenous clergy. Orthodoxy in China was not a foreign religion, but a religion with deep roots in Chinese culture. Also please note that the priest depicted in this icon is a married priest. More than that, he was a married priest with three sons. A family man with three sons! All this points to a powerful affirmation of Chinese family values. But what really impresses me is that here is a family willing to die for Christ. Imagine! A whole family who loved Jesus Christ more than anything else in the world. A careful examination of the front row shows other signs of family affection. In the left corner we see a little boy clinging to his father's robe. In the middle we see a mother putting her hand on her son's shoulder in a gesture of love and protection. In the right corner we see two sisters holding hands together. As I look upwards I see two buildings in the background. On the left a Russian Orthodox Church building with the distinctive onion shaped dome. And on the right a building in the distinctive Chinese architecture. This represents the dignity and wisdom of Chinese culture. The Chinese martyrs standing between the two buildings shows them standing between the two cultures. Looking further up I see the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven extending both hands in the gesture of blessing. Christ's position at the very top of the icon points to Christ's Lordship over all creation, his transcendence over all cultures: East and West. So likewise his extending out both hands in the gesture of blessing points to Christ's extending his grace and mercy to the whole world. This brings to mind the words in John's Gospel: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son...."<sup>1</sup> In closing I would like to bring to your attention that for the Orthodox Christian, the icon is more than just a reminder of the past. This icon is a spiritual bridge linking us Christians living today to the Chinese Martyrs who died a hundred years ago. This leads us to the ancient belief in the communion of the saints. From the beginning Christians have not only remembered the saints and the martyrs, they asked the saints to remember them in their prayers. This is the significance of the eyes. Do you notice that the eyes of the Chinese Martyrs are looking at you? This is an invitation for you to enter into fellowship with them. It is also an invitation for us to ask them to pray to Christ for our salvation and for the salvation of China to the glory of God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Robert A. Arakaki*

**12 / 25 June — Our Holy Father Onuphrius the Great** - this holy ascetic had been living a whole sixty years in the desert when the monk Paphnutius visited him. His hair and beard reached down to the ground, and long hair, as white as snow, had grown all over his body during his years of nakedness. His appearance was cadaverous, unearthly and awe-inspiring. Seeing Paphnutius, he called him by name and then recounted to him his life in the desert. His guardian angel had appeared to him and taken him to that place. He had for a long time only eaten earth, which it was hard to find in the desert, and, after that, when he had survived an intensive struggle with diabolical temptations and when his heart had become utterly established in love for God, an angel had brought him bread to eat. And besides that, through God's gracious providence, a palm tree grew up at one side of his cell, that gave good dates, and a spring of water began to flow there. 'But especially,' said Onuphrius, 'my food and drink are the sweet words of God.' To Paphnutius's question about his receiving of Communion, the hermit answered that the angel of God brought him Communion every Saturday. On the next day, the old man told Paphnutius that it was the day of his departure from this world; then he knelt down, prayed to God and gave his spirit into God's hands. Then Paphnutius saw a heavenly light that illumined the body of the departed saint, and heard a choir of the angelic hosts. He buried Onuphrius's body with honour and returned to his own monastery, there as a living witness to narrate to the brethren, for their edification, the wonderful life of the man of God and the greatness of God's providence towards those who give themselves wholly to His service. Onuphrius died in the year 400. Our Holy Father Peter the Athonite; Our Holy Father Timothy the Hermit, of Egypt; Our Holy Fathers Bassian and Jonah.; Russian New Martyrs Bishop Onuphrius (1938) and his co-sufferers Hieromartyrs Anthony, Barsanuphius and Joseph (1937), Hierarch Alexander of Kharkov.