



23rd Sunday After Pentecost

Venerable Abramius the recluse and Blessed Maria of Mesopotamia

29 October / 11 November 2012

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 St Abramius and his Niece Mary tone 1: Thou didst abandon all earthly comforts, / O Father Abramius, / thou didst live righteously in hope of things to come / and receive a sacred anointing. / Initiated into divine mysteries / thou dost enlighten those who cry: / Glory to Him Who has strengthened thee; glory to Him Who has crowned thee; / glory to Him Who through thee works healings for all.

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 St Abramius and his Niece Mary tone 3: Thou didst live on earth as an angel in the flesh / and flourish as a well planted tree, / watered by abstinence and tears, / O Abramius, vessel of the Holy Spirit

Matins Gospel I

EPISTLE: Ephesians 2: 4-10

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), And raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

EVEN WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN TRESPASSES ...GOD MADE US ALIVE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST ...FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED

Again Christ is introduced, and it is a matter well worthy of our belief, because if the firstfruits live, so do we also. He has quickened both Him and us. Do you see that all this is said of Christ incarnate? ...Those who were dead. those who were children of wrath, those He has quickened. Do you behold 'the hope of His calling?' ...Do you behold the glory of His inheritance? ...As yet not one is actually raised, excepting that inasmuch as the Head has risen, we also are raised ...Truly there is need of the Spirit and of revelation, in order to understand the depth of these mysteries. And then so you may have no distrust about the matter, observe what he adds further ...Was faith then, you will say, enough to save us? No, but God, he says, has required this, lest He should save us, barren and without work at all. His expression is that faith saves, but it is because God so wills it that faith saves ...'We are His workmanship.' He here alludes to the regeneration which is in reality a second creation. We have been brought from non-existence into being. As to what we were before, that is, the old man, we are dead. *St. John Chrysostom. Homily IV on Ephesians II. B#57, pp. 66- 68.*

Second Epistle: Galatians 5:22 – 6:2

THE GOSPEL: LUKE 8: 26-39

Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!" For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, saying, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," because many demons had entered him. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned. When those who fed them saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the

country. Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. They also who had seen it told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned. Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

JESUS ASKED..."WHAT IS YOUR NAME?"AND HE SAID,"LEGION," BECAUSE MANY DEMONS HAD ENTERED HIM

So, brothers and sisters, ends today's Gospel reading where, as you heard, the Lord tells the healed man to reveal the mystery of his healing before all the Gadarene people. And this is what he did. The Gospel does not tell us how he related what had happened to him; but according to the meaning of the Gospel narrative, we can fully imagine what he must have said and what he most likely did say. Here is what he must have said:

"You Gadarenes have known me from my childhood. I was born among you and grew up among you, in your Gadarene land, a land of transgression. You have seen what happened. You lived not according to the Law which God revealed to you, but according to your lawlessness. In your desire for riches and comfort you engaged in a sinful trade, a trade which was not blessed by God. You raised pigs. You had whole herds of them, and yet according to the Law, they are unclean animals. God punished you and gave you over to the power of the devil.

And by the incomprehensible Providence of God, all this demonic power lodged in me alone—I bore your punishment. I was changed from a human being into a beast. I couldn't live in houses—I lived in a desert place, in a cave where the dead were buried. You bound me with chains, and I broke them. There wasn't just one devil within me but a whole legion of devils; as you saw in reality when He Who healed me permitted the demons to enter your herd of pigs, which threw itself from the precipice into the lake and drowned. Yes, now you can truly imagine why I caused so much evil and trouble. There was a terrible power in me. The devils took possession of all my human passions and brought them to a monstrous state. That is why I hated you so savagely, why I wanted to torment you, destroy you.

And now this force has left me. I am asking you to forgive me. I love you now as a brother—I want to become your fellow citizen. And how grateful I am to Him Who freed me - He is my Saviour—He is my God! And I am calling all of you to Him. Everything you are looking for: peace, happiness, joy—everything you will find in Him. All of you who weep, go to Him. He will wipe away your tears. He will give you what no earthly riches can give."

This is what the formerly possessed man told the Gadarenes. He could also say the same to us. And we would not be surprised, because the very same thing is going on right now. All our newspapers tell us about such horrors which cannot be explained without the participation of the power of evil. And against the background of this nightmare we seem to hear the voice of this man healed by Christ: "I have peace and quiet in my soul. This was given to me by Christ. He will give it to you, too. Hasten to Him. My heart is filled with sweet compunction." But our sceptical mind will ask: Is this so? And even if it is so, how long will this sweet compunction last? Here we are given an answer in today's reading from the Apostle: "But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the GIFT OF GOD" (Eph. 2:4-5, 8). In these words of the Apostle we have a whole revelation. We have heard about the sufferings of the possessed one and how the Grace of God delivered him from them. This same Grace can do the very same for us. But Grace is given through faith. What is faith? In answer to this question I will tell you one incident from my student life.

I studied at the Polytechnic Institute. At the same time I was a member of a Christian student society. Once, we students decided to invite to our meeting our teacher, Father John Egorov, a famous professor of theology. He would have to travel to Lesnoye, a suburb of St. Petersburg, where our polytechnic institute was located. We asked him to come visit us, but he answered: "I have never been there, and I don't know how to go."

Our friend who had come to invite him said: "Father, it is very simple. First, go to the railroad station, and there you will find the street car. Wait until number 20 comes and take it. Without asking anyone, go to the very end. The conductor will say: 'Polytechnic Institute—last stop.' Walk out, stand with your back to the street car and before you will be a lane. Here, look for number 6 and before you will be a courtyard, and in the courtyard a house. Go up to the second floor, and you will find us there."

Father John said: "A week passed and Sunday came. I took my notebook, looked at what I had written, and knew at once what I had to do. I remembered everything that your friend told me, and accepted it within myself as if I had already done it. I did all this in reality, and here I am with you." This is what faith means: to accept within oneself what was said, and put what was said into action.

Here in the Holy Gospel promises are given to us, and also instructions of what we must do to receive these promises. Let us accept them with faith. Let us perform everything that we are instructed to do in our lives, and we will receive the same Grace, the same peace, the same joy. We will receive everything that was received by the possessed man healed by Christ. Then the words of Christ will also refer to us. "Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee."

Archbishop Andrei, The One Thing Needful

Second Gospel: Matthew 11:27 – 30

Saints of the week

29 October / 11 November – Our Holy Mother, the Martyr Anastasia the Roman - She was born in Rome of well-born parents and left an orphan at the age of three. As an orphan, she was taken into a women's monastery near Rome, where the abbess was one Sophia, a nun of a high level of perfection. After seventeen years, Anastasia was known in the whole neighbourhood, to the Christians as a great ascetic and to the pagans as a rare beauty. The pagan administrator of the city, Probus, heard of her and sent soldiers to bring her to him. The good Abbess Sophia counselled Anastasia for two hours on how to keep the Faith, how to resist flattering delusion and how to endure torture. Anastasia said to her: 'My heart is ready to suffer for Christ; my soul is ready to die for my beloved Jesus.' Brought before the governor, Anastasia openly proclaimed her faith in Christ the Lord and, when the governor tried to dissuade her from the Faith, first with promises and then with threats, the holy maiden said to him: 'I am ready to die for my Lord, not once but—oh, if it were only possible!—a thousand times.' When they stripped her naked, to humiliate her, she cried to the judge: 'Whip me and cut at me and beat me; my naked body will be hidden by wounds, and my shame will be covered by my blood!' She was whipped and beaten and cut about. She twice felt a great thirst and asked for water, and a Christian, Cyril, gave her a drink, for which he was blessed by the martyr and beheaded by the pagans. Then her breasts and tongue were cut off, and an angel of God appeared to her and upheld her. She was finally beheaded with the sword outside the city. Blessed Sophia found her body and buried it, and Anastasia was crowned with the wreath of martyrdom under the Emperor Decius (249-251). Our Holy Father Abraham the Recluse and his niece Maria; Our Holy Father, the Martyr Timothy of Esphigmenou; St. Kea, bishop of Devon & Cornwall, St. Odrada, nun (7th c.)

30 October / 12 November - The Hieromartyr Zenobius and his sister Zenobia - From the town of Aegae in Cilicia, they inherited the true Faith and great material wealth from their parents. Inflamed with zeal for the Faith, they, with great love, gave away their riches to the poor. Because they were so open-handed, God shielded these hands from every evil intent by men or demons. The merciful hands of Zenobius, which gave to the poor, were endowed by God with the gift of wonderworking, so that Zenobius was able to heal the sick of every sort of infirmity simply by the touch of his hand, and he was made Bishop of Aegae. At a time of persecution, the judge Licinius seized him and said: 'I offer you the two: life and death—life if you bow down to the gods, and death if you do not.' Holy Zenobius replied: 'Life without Christ is not life, but death; and death for Christ's sake is not death, but life.' When Zenobius was put to harsh torture, his sister presented herself before the judge and said: 'I also want to drink this cup of suffering and be crowned with that wreath.' After torture by fire and in boiling pitch, they were both beheaded with the sword in about 285, and thus brother and sister entered into the immortal Kingdom of Christ the King. The Holy Apostles Cleopas, Tertius, Mark, Justus and Artemas; The Holy King Milutin.

31 October / 13 November - The Holy Apostles Stachys, Amplias, Urban, Narcissus, Apelles and Aristobulus - They were of the Seventy. St Stachys was a helper of St Andrew the First-Called, who made him bishop of Byzantium. He built a church in Argyropolis, and governed his flock with faithfulness and zeal. After sixteen years as bishop, he entered peacefully into rest in the Lord. Amplias and Urban were also fellow-workers with St Andrew, and were made bishop by him, Amplias in Lydda and Urban in Macedonia. They both died as martyrs for Christ the Lord. Narcissus was made Bishop of Athens by the Apostle Philip, and holy Apelles was Bishop of Heraklion in Trachis.

Aristobulus - Born in Cyprus, Aristobulus was the brother of the Apostle Barnabas. He followed the Apostle Paul, who mentions him in his Epistle to the Romans saying, "Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus" ([Romans 16:10](#)). When the great apostle appointed many bishops throughout the various parts of the world, he appointed Aristobulus as bishop for the British, that is, England. In Britain the people were savages, heathen and wicked. Aristobulus endured many indescribable tortures, misfortunes and evil among them. They struck and beat him mercilessly, dragged him about the streets, ridiculed and mocked him. Finally this holy man succeeded by the power of the Grace of God. He enlightened the people, baptized them in the name of Christ the Lord, built churches, ordained priests and deacons and, in the end, died there peacefully and entered into the Kingdom of the Lord, Whom he faithfully served.

The Holy Martyr Epimachus – born in Egypt, he lived there in asceticism, and there finished his earthly course a martyr. In imitation of St John the Baptist, he went off as a young man into the desert. In response to his great love for God, the Spirit of God instructed him in all truth and, with no other teacher, taught him how to live the ascetic life. Epimachus discovered how the pagans were torturing and slaughtering the Christians in Alexandria, so, all afire with zeal for the Faith, he went to the city and knocked down the idol. When the pagans began to torture him for this, he cried out: 'Smite me, spit on me, put a crown of thorns on my head and a reed in my hand; give me gall to drink, crucify me and pierce me with a spear. The Lord endured all that, and I want to endure it!' In the vast crowd that was watching the martyrdom of holy Epimachus, there was one woman with a blind eye. She wept bitterly on witnessing the soul-less torture of the man of God, and, when the torturers flayed his holy body, blood spurted from it and a drop fell on her eye. Suddenly she could see, and her blind eye became as whole as the other. Then the woman cried out: 'Great is the God in whom this sufferer believes!' After that, St Epimachus was beheaded and his soul entered into eternal joy, in about 250. ; The Holy Martyr Nicolas of Chios; Our Holy Fathers Spiridon and Nicodemus;

St. Begu, nun of Harkness - reputed by St. Bede to have seen in a vision the death of St. Hilda, the foundress of both Whitby and Harkness.

1 / 14 November - Fast Day - Ss Cosmas and Damian - Unmercenaries and wonderworkers, they were brothers in the flesh and in the spirit, born somewhere in Asia of a pagan father and a Christian mother. After their father's death, their mother Theodota devoted all her time and energy to the bringing-up of her sons as true Christians. God helped her, and her sons grew as two choice fruits and as two holy lamps. They were skilled in medicine and ministered to the sick without payment, and so fulfilled Christ's command: 'Freely have ye received; freely give' (Matt. 10:8). They were so strict in their unpaid ministry to men that Cosmas became greatly enraged with his brother Damian when he took three eggs from a woman, Palladia, and gave orders that, after his death, he should not be buried with his brother. In fact, holy Damian had not taken those eggs as a reward for healing Palladia's sickness, but because she had sworn by the Most Holy Trinity that he should have them. However, after their death in Fereman, they were buried together in obedience to a revelation from God. These two holy brothers were great wonderworkers both during their lifetime and after their death. A farm labourer, on lying down to sleep at one time, was attacked by a snake, which entwined itself around his mouth and stomach. This poor man would have breathed his last in the greatest torment had he not at the last moment invoked the help of Saints Cosmas and Damian. Thus the Lord glorified forever by miracles those who glorified Him here on earth by their faith, purity and mercy. The Holy Martyr Hermenegild the Heir; Our Holy Father, the Martyr James with his disciples James and Dionysius; St Ethelnoth of Canterbury, Holy First Hierarch of the English Church.

2 / 15 November - The Holy Martyrs Acyndinus, Pegasus, Anempodistus, Aphthonius, Elpidophorus and others with them - They were Persian Christians, and suffered in the time of King Sapor, in 355. The first three were servants at the court of this king, but secretly served Christ their Lord. When they were arrested and brought to trial before the king, he asked them whence they came. To this they replied: 'Our paternity and life is the most holy Trinity, consubstantial and undivided, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God.' The king gave them over to harsh torture, and they endured it all courageously, singing psalms and with prayer on their lips. At the time of their torture and imprisonment, angels of God appeared to them several times, and once the Lord Christ Himself, as a man 'with a face radiant as the sun'. When one of the torturers, Aphthonius, saw with wonder that boiling lead did no harm to the martyrs, he believed in Christ and cried out: 'Great is the Christian God!' He was then immediately beheaded, and many others saw and believed. Then the King commanded that Acyndinus, Pegasus and Anempodistus be sewn into goat-skins and thrown into the sea. Then St Aphthonius appeared from the other world with three shining angels, and they bore the martyrs to dry land and set them free. Elpidophorus was a courtier. When he revealed that he was a Christian, and denounced the king for his slaughter of innocent Christians, the king condemned him to death, and Elpidophorus was beheaded along with about seven thousand other Christians. Then the three first-named martyrs were finally thrown into a burning furnace, along with twenty-eight soldiers and the king's mother, who had also come to faith in Christ. And so, in the flames, they gave their righteous souls into the hands of the Lord. Our Holy Father Marcian of Cyrus; The Hieromartyr Victorinus, Bishop of Patav.

St. Cadfan, abbot of Bardsey Island - Breton in origin he migrated to Wales, gathered numerous disciples and founded the church of Towyn (Gwynedd) and the large famous monastery of Bardsey Island, both of which claimed to be the place of his death.

3 / 16 November - Fast Day - The Hieromartyr Acephsimas, Bishop of Naeson - The eighty-year-old Acephsimas, filled with every Christian virtue, was sitting one day in his house with his guests when a child, filled with the Spirit of God, ran up to the aged bishop, kissed him on the head, and said: 'Blessed is this head, for it will be martyred for Christ!' This prophecy was soon fulfilled. King Sapor raised a fierce persecution of Christians throughout Persia, and St Acephsimas was seized and taken before a prince who was also a pagan priest. When the bishop had been arrested and bound, he was approached by one of his household, who asked him what he wanted done about his house. The saint replied: 'It's no longer my house; I'm going to a higher home, and shall not return.' After long interrogation, he was thrown into prison, whence, the next day, were brought a seventy-year-old priest called Joseph and a deacon, Aeithalas. After three years' imprisonment and many sufferings, Acephsimas was beheaded, and Joseph and Aeithalas were buried up to the waist in the ground, being stoned by a group of men who were without mercy towards Christians. Joseph's body, by God's providence, disappeared that night, and above Aeithalas's body there grew a tree, which healed all manner of disease and pain. Five years passed, then the wicked and jealous pagans cut down this tree. These soldiers of Christ suffered in Persia in the fourth century, in the time of the pagan King Sapor. The Holy and Great Martyr George; Our Holy Father Elias of Egypt; Elevation of the relics of St. Edith, abbess of Wilton, by St. Dunstan;

St. Winifred of Holywell, abbess of Denbighshire in England, m (630) - Daughter to Trevith, a member of the Welsh landed class and advisor to the king. Spiritual student of her maternal uncle Saint Beuno. Physically beautiful, she made a private vow of chastity, becoming a bride of Christ. Murdered when she rejected the amorous advances of a chieftain named Caradog of Hawarden; she had escaped from him, and was seeking shelter in a church when he caught and killed her. Legend says that where her head fell, a well sprang up which became a place of pilgrimage, and whose waters were reported to heal leprosy, skin diseases, and other ailments. Saint Beuno raised her back to life; he cursed Caradog who was promptly swallowed by the earth. Winifred became a nun, and later abbess at Cwytherin, Denbighshire. Name Meaning - friend of peace (Celtic / Gaelic) . Patronage: incest victims, martyrs.

4 / 17 November - Our Holy Father Joannicius the Great - This great spiritual light was born in the village of Marykata in the province of Bithynia, of his father Myrtrices and his mother Anastasia. He was a shepherd as a youth. Whilst tending his sheep at pasture, he would often retreat into solitude and remain in prayer the whole day, having encircled his flock with the sign of the Cross so that it should not wander off and get lost. After that, he was called into the army, and caused men to marvel at his courage, particularly in the wars against the Bulgarians. After his military service, Joannicius withdrew to Olympus in Asia Minor, where he became a monk and gave himself entirely over to asceticism, persevering in it till his death in great old age. He laboured in the ascetic life for over fifty years in various places, and had from God most abundant gifts of

wonderworking: he healed all sicknesses and pains, drove out demons, tamed wild beasts, possessing a particular power over snakes; he walked dryfoot through water, became invisible to men when he so desired and foretold future events. He was distinguished by an outstanding humility and meekness. In outward appearance, he was like a giant, huge and strong. He took an active part in the destiny of God's Church, for, during the iconoclast period he was at first deluded, but then tore himself away and became an ardent defender of reverence towards the icons. He had a great friendship with Patriarch Methodius of Constantinople. Joannicius lived for ninety-four years, and entered peacefully into rest in the Lord in 846. He was a great wonderworker both during his lifetime and after his death. The Hieromartyrs Nicander, Bishop of Myra, and Hermas the Priest.

St. Clether, hermit of Cornwall - probably of Welsh origin and of the family of St. Brychan. After living in Wales by the river Never, he settled in North Cornwall in later life in the remote and beautiful Inny valley at the place which still bears his name.

St. Birstan, bishop of Winchester (931-4) - known for his personal service to the poor; his devotion to the dead evidenced by his frequent prayers for them in the cemetery (to which the departed souls once answered "Amen").