

29th Sunday After Pentecost

Prophet Zephaniah

3 / 16 December



Resurrection Tropar, Tone 4: When the women disciples of the Lord / learned from the Angel the joyous message of Thy Resurrection / they cast away the ancestral curse / and elatedly told the Apostles / death is overcome / Christ God is risen / granting the world great mercy.

Troparion of the Prophet Zephaniah tone 7: Thou didst comprehend from of old the things that would come to pass, / thou didst clearly foretell our eternal redemption and proclaim Christ as the King of Sion. / O Prophet Zephaniah, having been delivered from the curse by Him we cry out to thee: / Glory to Him Who has glorified thee; / glory to Him Who has crowned thee; / glory to Him Who through thee grants forgiveness to all.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 4: My Saviour and Redeemer / as God rose from the tomb and delivered the earth-born from their chains / He has shattered the gates of hell, / and as Master, / He has risen on the third day.

Kontakion of the Prophet Zephaniah tone 3: Vessel of prophetic wisdom, / from of old thou didst proclaim God's self-emptying / and didst cry: Be glad, O Sion blessed city / as thou didst greet Christ as a King upon a colt. / Beseech Him, O Zephaniah, for those who with faith call thee blessed.

Matins Gospel VII

Epistle: I Timothy 1:15 - 17

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.

"Of whom I am chief (1:15). As Blessed Theodoret writes in his commentary, "For the Only-begotten became man for the sinners' sake and He Himself has taught in the sacred Gospels: 'For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance' (Matt 9:13). But [the apostle], calling himself the first of all sinners, goes beyond the limits of humility."

St Theophan the Recluse adds: "In this, the apostle reveals a true model for all who repent." This is why these words were incorporated into the prayer before Holy Communion recited during the Divine Liturgy. Such a humble acknowledgment of one's extreme sinfulness is a distinctive quality of every true Christian. In conclusion, St Paul, having rendered praise to God (1:17), exhorts Timothy not to be indifferent to questions of faith, but to be zealous and to fight the good fight, a warrior armed against enemies of the faith, inspired by his own faith and pure conscience. "The most important thing in both the pastor and the sheep is faith and a good conscience," says St Theophan the Recluse.

The Epistles and the Apocalypse

Archbishop Averky (Taushev)

GOSPEL: ST. LUKE 18: 18-27

Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' "And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?" But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

WHY DO YOU CALL ME GOOD?

Now he, who is here called a Ruler, and who fancied himself to be learned in the law, and supposed that he had been accurately taught therein, imagined that he could convict Christ of dishonoring the commandment spoken by the most wise Moses, and of introducing laws of His own. For it was the object of the Jews to prove that Christ opposed and resisted the former commandments, to establish, as I said, new laws, of His own authority, in opposition to those previously existing, so that their wicked conduct towards Him might have a specious pretext. He draws near, therefore, and makes pretense of speaking kindly; for he calls Him Teacher, and styles Him Good, and professes himself desirous of being a disciple...

And what does the Omniscient reply, 'Who, as it is written, takes the wise in their craftiness?' (Job 5:13) Why do you call Me good? None is good but one, God. You see how He proved at once that he was neither wise nor learned, though the ruler of a synagogue of the Jews. For if, He I says, you did not believe that I am God, and the clothing of the flesh has led you astray, why did you apply to Me epithets suitable to the supreme nature alone, while still you suppose Me to be a mere man like yourself, and not superior to the limits of human nature? In the nature that transcends all, only in God, is found the attribute of being by nature, and un-changeable good; but the angels, and we on earth, are good by resembling Him, or rather by participation in Him.

But those whose minds are perverted by sharing in the wickedness of Arius will probably not assent to the correctness of this explanation. For, they make the Son inferior to the supremacy and glory of God the Father... For they assert, as though they had obtained a reason for their blasphemy from the passage now before us, Behold, He has clearly and expressly denied that He is good, and set it apart as something appropriate only to God the Father; but verily, had He been equal to Him in substance, and sprung from Him by nature, how would He not also be good, being God? Let this, then, be our reply to our opponents. Since all correct and exact reasoning acknowledges a son to be consubstantial with the father, how is He not good, as being God? For He cannot but be God, if He is consubstantial with Him Who is by nature God ...We have the Savior's own testimony, Who says this: A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruits' (Matt. 7:18). How from a good root has there shot forth an evil sprout? Or how from a sweet fountain can there flow a bitter river? Was there ever a time when there was no Father, seeing that He is the Father eternally? ...We conclude, therefore, that the fruit of the good God is the good Son.

St. Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St Luke, Homily 122. B#42, pp. 486-488.

Saints of the week

3 / 16 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Prophet Zephaniah (Sophonias) - Born on the mountain of Savarat and of the tribe of Simeon, he lived and prophesied in the seventh century before Christ, in the time of Josiah the pious King of Judah, and was a contemporary of the Prophet Jeremiah. With his great humility, pure mind and constant striving after God, he was found worthy of seeing into the future. He foretold the day of the wrath of God and the punishment of Gaza, Ashkalon, Ashdod, Ekron, Nineveh, Jerusalem and Egypt. He looked upon Jerusalem as 'a filthy, polluted and oppressing city ... her princes within her are like roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves ... her prophets are light and treacherous persons; her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the Law (Zeph. 3:1-4).Foreseeing the coming of the Messiah, he cried out with rapture: 'Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!' (3:14). This seer of secrets and mysteries went to his rest in the place where he was born, there to await the general Resurrection and his reward from God. St John the Silent (the Hesychast); The Hieromartyr Theodore, Archbishop of Alexandria; Our Holy Father Theodulus; Our Holy Father Sava of Storozhev;

St. Lucius -in the days of Good King Lucius came a revival. Llewrug Mawr, Llewrug the Great (grandson of Saint Cyllinus and great-grandson of Caractacus), nicknamed Llever Mawr or the great luminary (hence his latinised name of Lux or Lucius), was king in Britain in the middle and towards the end of the 2nd century. He increased the Light that the first missionaries, the disciples of Christ, had brought, by sending emissaries to Eleutherius, Bishop of Rome, requesting him to send missionaries to Britain. The Welsh Triads tell us that Eleutherius, in response, sent Dyfan and Fagan, Medwy and Elfan, all of them British names, in AD 167. These missionaries journeyed through Britain and came to Glastonbury. There, God leading them (wrote William of Malmesbury), they found an old church built, as 'twas said, by the hands of Christ's disciples, and prepared by God Himself for the salvation of souls, which Church the Heavenly Builder Himself showed to be consecrated by many miraculous deeds, and many Mysteries of healing.... And they afterwards pondered the Heavenly message that the Lord had specially chosen this spot before all the rest of Britain as the place where His Mother's name might be invoked. They also found the whole story in ancient writings, how the Holy Apostles, having been scattered throughout the world, St. Philip coming into France with a host of disciples sent twelve of them into Britain to preach, and that there, taught by revelation they constructed the said chapel which the Son of God afterwards dedicated to the honour of His Mother; and, that to these same twelve, three kings, pagan though they were, gave twelve portions of land for their sustenance. Moreover, they found a written record of their doings, and on that account they loved this spot above all others, and they also, in memory of the first twelve, chose twelve of their own, and made them live on the island with the approval of King Lucius. These twelve thereafter abode there in divers spots as anchorites - in the same spots, indeed, which the first twelve inhabited (traditionally in huts round the wonderful Chalice Well at the foot of St. Michael's Tor). Yet they used to meet together continuously in the Old Church in order to celebrate Divine worship more devoutly; just as the three pagan kings had long ago granted the said island with its surroundings to the twelve former disciples of Christ, so the said Phagan and Deruvian (Dyfan) obtained it from King Lucius for these their twelve companions and for others to follow thereafter. And thus, many succeeding these, but always twelve in number, abode in the said island during many years up to the coming of St. Patrick, the apostle of the Irish.

St. Birinus, (600-50) - Ordained in Rome. Bishop in Genoa, Italy. Sent by Pope Honorius I as a missionary to Britain in 634. Preached with the pagan West Saxons where he had great success, converting King Cynegils and many of his subjects. Bishop of Dorchester, England. Founded many churches in the region. Known for a great devotion to the Eucharist.

4 / 17 December — Nativity Fast -The Holy and Great Martyr Barbara - This famous follower of Christ was betrothed to Him from her early years. Her father, Dioscorus, was a pagan in the city of Heliopolis in Egypt, and was famed for his wealth and standing. Dioscorus shut up his only daughter, who was both intelligent and beautiful, in a high tower, surrounded her with all possible comforts, gave her a host of attendants, set up idols for worship and built her a bathroom with two windows. As she gazed through the windows of the tower upon the earth below and the starry sky above, Barbara's mind was opened by the grace of God, and she came to know Him as the one, true God and Creator, although she had no human teacher to bring her to the knowledge of Him. Once, when her father was away from the city, she came out of the tower and, by God's providence, met some Christians who told her about the true Christian faith. Barbara's heart was set on fire with love for Christ. She had a third window cut in the bathroom as a symbol of the Holy Trinity, and traced a Cross with her finger on one wall of it, which etched itself deep in the stone as if cut by a chisel. A spring of water gushed forth from the bathroom floor from her footprint, and it later gave healing from sickness to many. When Dioscorus found out about his daughter's faith, he beat her harshly and drove her from the tower, chasing after her to kill her, but a cliff opened and hid Barbara from her irate father. When she appeared again, Dioscorus took her to Marcian, the governor of the city, who handed her over for torture. The innocent Barbara was stripped and beaten until her entire body was covered in bloody wounds, but the Lord Himself appeared to her in the prison with many angels, and healed her. A certain woman, Juliana, beheld this and conceived a desire for martyrdom herself. Both of them were fearfully tortured and taken around the city to be mocked, then their breasts were cut off and much blood flowed from them. They were finally led out to the place of execution, and Juliana was slain by soldiers while Barbara was killed by her own father. On the same day, lightning struck Dioscorus's house, killing both him and Marcian. St Barbara suffered in 306, and her wonderworking relics are preserved in Kiev. Greatly glorified in the Kingdom of Christ, she has appeared many times down to our own days, sometimes alone and sometimes in the company of the most holy Mother of God..

St John Damascene - he was first a minister of Caliph Abdul-Malek, and then became a monk in the monastery of St Sava the Sanctified. For his ardent advocacy of the veneration of icons while still a courtier during the reign of the iconoclast Emperor Leo the Isaurian, he was slandered by the Emperor to the Caliph, who had his right hand cut off. John fell down in prayer before the icon of the most holy Mother of God, and his hand was re-joined to his arm and miraculously healed. When he beheld this wonder, the Caliph repented, but John no longer desired to remain at court as a nobleman, but to withdraw to a monastery. There, he was from the beginning a model of humility and obedience, and of all the works of asceticism prescribed for monks. He wrote the hymns for the Parting of the Soul from the Body, put together the Octoechos, the Irmologion, the Menologion and the Easter Canon, and wrote many theological works of an inspired profundity. A great monk, hymnographer and theologian, and a great warrior for the truth of Christ, Damascene is counted among the great Fathers of the Church. He entered peacefully into rest in about 749, being seventy-five years old; St Gennadius, Archbishop of Novgorod.

5 / 18 December — Nativity Fast - Fish, Wine & Oil allowed — Our Holy Father Sabbas the Sanctified - The unknown village of Mutalaska, in the province of Cappadocia, became famous through this great light of the Orthodox Church, for St Sabbas was born there. He left the home of his parents, John and Sophia, at the age of eight and became a monk in a nearby monastery called 'Flavian's'. After ten years, he moved to the monasteries of Palestine, staying longest in the monastery of St Euthymius the Great (Jan. 20th) and Theoctistus. Euthymius, who had the gift of discernment, foretold that he would be a famous monk and leader of monks, and that he would found a monastery that would be greater than any other of that day. After St Euthymius's death, Sabbas went into the desert, where he lived for five years as a hermit in a cave which an angel of God showed him. After that, when he had become a perfected monk, he began by divine providence to gather round him many desirous of the spiritual life. They very quickly grew in number, so that Sabbas had to build both a church and many cells. Some Armenians also came to him, and he set aside a cave for them, and they celebrated the services there in their own language. When his father died, his aged mother Sophia came to him and he made her a nun and gave her a cell away from the monastery, where she lived in asceticism till her death. This holy father endured many attacks from those close to him, from heretics and from demons. But he overcame them all in these ways: those close to him he won over by his goodness and forbearance, the heretics by an unshakeable confession of the Orthodox faith, and the demons with the sign of the Cross and the invocation of God's aid. He had a particularly severe battle with the demons on the mountain of Castellium, where he founded the second of his seven monasteries. He and his neighbour, Theodosius the Great, are considered to be the greatest lights and pillars of Orthodoxy in the East. Kings and Patriarchs were brought to the right Faith by them, and these holy and wonderful men, strong in the power of God, served each and every man as an example of humility. St Sabbas entered into rest in 532 at the age of ninety-four, after a life of great labour and great reward. Our Holy Fathers, the Martyrs of Karyes; Our Holy Father Nectarius of Bitola; Our Holy Fathers Karion and Zachariah;

St. Justinian, hermit of Wales (560) - Breton noble. Well educated. Priest. Left his country to become a travelling evangelist. Settled on the Isle of Ramsey near southern Wales, living with a pious layman named on Honorius; he moved in on the condition that all the women of the household were sent away. Hermit on the island. Visited Saint David of Wales, who was so impressed with the man's holiness that he gave him hermitages on the mainland and a nearby island. Justinian is listed on very ancient Welsh calendars of saints and martyrs, and the church at Llanstinan is dedicated to him. Once some sailors landed at the island hermitage. They said that Saint David was very ill, and that they had been sent to bring Justinian to the mainland. En route, Justinian discerned that the sailors were actually devils in disguise. The saint recited Psalm 79; the devils changed to blackbirds and flew, leaving the boat to sail itself safely to shore where Justinian found David in excellent health. Justinian died when he advised his servants that they should apply themselves to their jobs. Goaded by devils, the three of them became enraged, assaulted Justinian, and beheaded him. At the place where the body fell, a spring of healing water emerged from the ground. The killers were struck with leprosy, and lived out their days in the caves and rocks near the hermitage. Justinian had already specified a location for his burial; a church was built over the tomb, and became known as a scene of miracles. Saint David later moved the body to his own church.

St. Cawrdaf (Cwdrey in English): Cawrdaf is recorded as one of the sons of King Caradog Freichfras. Though the kingdom of the latter appears of have been Gwent & Eryng, tradition ascribes that he also held sway over areas to the north, between the Wye and the Severn. When his kingdom was divided, upon his death, this region apparently fell to Cawrdaf. It was called Fferreg, though, in later centuries, it was known by the descriptive name of Rhwng Gwy ag Hafren. He was apparently a wise monarch, one of the 'Three Chief Officers' of Britain and counsellor of King Arthur. Nothing is recorded of his reign, but Cawrdaf was a founder of churches, sometimes described as a saint with his feast day on 5th December. His endowments, at Llangowdra (Ceredigion), Abererch (Llyn) and Llangoed (Mon), were, however, not in Fferreg; and it is possible that, in old age, he abdicated in favour of his son, Caw, in order to follow his religious calling. He was supposedly a disciple of St. Illtud. Cawrdaf had several saintly children and though it is unknown how long his descendants remained Kings of Fferreg, they continued for many centuries as two of the leading patriarchal families of Brycheiniog.

Tropar of St. Cawrdaf, Tone 8: O Father Cawrdaf, spurning the transitory glory of temporal power,/ thou didst flee from the world to serve God in monastic seclusion./ Wherefore, O righteous one, pray that we, following thy example by serving God rather than self,/ may be found worthy of eternal salvation.

6 / 19 December — Nativity Fast — St Nicolas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia -- This saint, famed throughout the entire world today, was the only son of his eminent and wealthy parents, Theophanes and Nona, citizens of Patara in Lycia. They dedicated to God the only son He gave them. St Nicolas was instructed in the spiritual life by his uncle Nicolas, Bishop of Patara, and became a monk at 'New Sion', a monastery founded by his uncle. On the death of his parents, Nicolas distributed all the property he inherited to the poor and kept nothing back for himself. As a priest in Patara, he was known for his charitable works, fulfilling the Lord's words: 'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth' (Matt. 6:3). When he embraced a life of solitude and silence, thinking to live in that way until his death, a voice from on high came to him: 'Nicolas, set about your work among the people if you desire to receive a crown from Me.' Immediately after that, by God's wondrous providence, he was chosen as archbishop of the city of Myra in Lycia. Merciful, wise and fearless, Nicolas was a true shepherd to his flock. He was cast into prison during the persecutions of Diocletian and Maximian, but even there continued to instruct the people in the Law of God. He was present at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325, and, in his zeal, struck Arius with his hand. For this act, he was removed from the Council and from his episcopal duties, until some of the chief hierarchs had a vision of our Lord Christ and His most holy Mother showing their sympathy with Nicolas. This wonderful saint was a defender of the truth of God, and was ever a spirited champion of justice among the people. On two occasions, he saved three men from undeserved sentences of death. Merciful, trustworthy and loving right, he walked among the people like an angel of God. People considered him a saint even during his lifetime, and invoked his aid when in torment or distress. He would appear both in dreams and in reality to those who called upon him for help, responding speedily to them, whether close at hand or far away. His face would shine with light as Moses' did aforetime, and his mere presence among people would bring solace, peace and goodwill. In old age, he sickened of a slight illness, and went to his rest in the Lord after a life full of labour and fruitful toil. He now enjoys eternal happiness in the Kingdom of heaven, continuing to help the faithful on earth by his miracles, and to spread the glory of God. He entered into rest on December 6th, 343. St Nicolas, Bishop of Patara - The uncle of the great St Nicolas, he set his nephew on the spiritual path and ordained him priest; The Holy Martyr Nicolas of Karamanos; St Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch; On icons of St. Nicolas, our Lord and Saviour will often be seen on one side with the Gospels in his hand, and the most holy Mother of God on the other with an episcopa stole in hers. This has a twofold historical significance: it denotes firstly, Nicolas's calling to episcopal office, and secondly his vindication and re-instatement following the punishment for his clash with Arius. That very night, several of the fathers had the selfsame vision: how the Lord stood on one side of Nicolas with the Gospels and the Mother of God on the other with a pallium, offering to the saint those marks of rank that had been stripped from him. Seeing this, the fathers were amazed, and quickly returned to Nicolas that which they had taken from him. They began from that time to respect him as a great man, and to interpret his action against Arius not as some senseless rage but as the expression of great zeal for God's truth. Name Day Tsar Nicholas II (1918).

7 / 20 December — Nativity Fast — St Ambrose, Bishop of Mediolanum (Milan) - This great Father of the Orthodox Church was of eminent parentage. His father was the imperial governor of Gaul and Spain, and a pagan, while his mother was a Christian. While he was still in his cradle, a swarm of bees once settled on him, left some honey on his lips and flew off; and, while still a child, he thrust out his hand and said prophetically: 'Kiss it, for I shall be a bishop!' On the death of his father, the Emperor made him governor of Liguria, of which province Milan was the chief city. When the bishop of Milan died, there was great dissension between the Orthodox Christians and the heretical Arians about the choice of a new bishop. Ambrose went into the church to keep order, this being his responsibility. Thereupon, a child at its mother's breast cried out: 'Ambrose for bishop!' All the people took this to be the voice of God, and unanimously elected Ambrose as their bishop, although it was against his will. Ambrose was baptised, and passed through all the necessary ranks in one week, and was consecrated bishop. In this capacity, he strengthened the faith of the Orthodox, restrained heretics, adorned churches, spread the Faith among the pagans, wrote many instructive books and was an example of a true Christian and a true shepherd. He also composed the Te Deum, the great hymn of thanksgiving. This renowned hierarch, who was visited by people from distant lands for his wisdom and gracious words, was very austere in his personal life, being no stranger to toil and full of good works. He slept little, worked and prayed constantly and fasted every day except Saturday and Sunday. God therefore permitted him to witness many of His wonders, and to perform many himself. He discovered the relics of Ss Protasius, Gervasius, Nazarius and Celsus. Humble before lesser men, he was fearless before the great. He reproached the Empress Justina for heresy, cursed Maximus for tyranny and murder and forbade the Emperor Theodosius to enter a church until he had repented of his sin. He refused to meet the powerful Eugenius, the self-styled Emperor. God granted this man, who was so pleasing to Him, such grace that he could raise the dead, drive demons from men, heal the sick of every ailment and see into the future. He died peacefully at daybreak on Easter Day in the year 397; Our Holy Father Gregory the Hesychast; Our Holy Father Nilus of Stolobnoye.

8 / 21 December — Nativity Fast — Our Holy Father Patapius - born and brought up in the Faith and in the fear of God by pious parents in the Egyptian city of Thebes he early perceived and rejected the empty vanity of the world and went into the Egyptian desert, where he devoted himself to cleansing his heart from every worldly thought and desire for the sake of divine love. When his virtues became known among the people, they began to come to him and seek relief from their troubles. Afraid of human glory, which darkens a man's mind and separates it from God, Patapius fled from the desert to Constantinople, for this wonderful saint thought that he could more easily hide himself from men in the heart of a city than in the desert. He built himself a hut close to the Blachernae church and there, enclosed and unknown, took up again his interrupted life of asceticism. But the light cannot be hidden. A child, blind from birth, was led by divine Providence to St Patapius and begged him to offer a prayer that he might be given his sight and look upon God's creation, and praise God all the more. Patapius had pity on the suffering child and prayed to God, and the child saw. Through this miracle, Patapius's godly life became known throughout the entire capital, and people began to turn to him for healing, comfort and teaching. Patapius healed one eminent man of dropsy after blessing him with a cross and anointing him with oil. Making the sign of the Cross in the air, he freed a youth from an unclean spirit which had cruelly tormented him, and the evil spirit went out of God's creature like smoke, uttering a great cry. He made the sign of the Cross over a woman who had sores on her breasts all filled with worms, and she was healed. St Patapius worked many other miracles, all through prayer in the name of Christ and by the power of the Cross. He entered into rest in great old age, going to the Kingdom of God in the seventh century; The Holy Apostles Sosthenes, Apollos, Tychicus, Epaphroditus, Onesiphorus, Cephas and Caesar; The Holy Martyrs in Africa;

St. Budoc, bishop of Plourin - from an early age resolved to embrace the religious life, and was in due course made a monk by the Abbot of Youghal. His mother died, and on the death of the Abbot of Youghal he was elected to rule the monastery. Later, upon the death of the King of Ireland, the natives raised Budoc to the temporal and spiritual thrones making him King of Ireland and Bishop of Armagh. After two years he wished to retire from these honours, but the people were "wild with despair" at the tidings, and surrounded the palace lest he should escape. One night, while praying in his metropolitan church, an angel appeared to him, bidding him betake himself to Brittany. Going down to the seashore, it was indicated to him that he must make the voyage in a stone trough. On entering this it began to move, and he was borne across to Brittany, landing at Porspoder, in the diocese of Léon. The people of that district drew the stone coffer out of the water, and built a hermitage and a chapel for the Saint's convenience. Budoc dwelt for one year at Porspoder, but, "disliking the roar of the waves," he had his stone trough mounted on a cart, and yoking two oxen to it he set forth, resolved to follow them wherever they might go and establish himself at whatever place they might halt. The cart broke down at Plourin, and there Budoc settled for a short time; but trouble with disorderly nobles forced him to depart, and this time he went to Dol, where he was well received by St Malglorious, then its bishop, who soon after resigned his see to Budoc. The Saint ruled at Dol for twenty years, and died early in the seventh century.

9 / 22 December — Nativity Fast — The Conception by St Anna of the Most Holy Mother of God - St Joachim was of the tribe of Judah, and a descendant of King David. Anna was the daughter of Matthan the priest, of the tribe of Levi as was Aaron the High Priest. This Matthan had three daughters: Mary, Zoia and Anna. Mary was married in Bethlehem and bore Salome; Zoia was also married in Bethlehem and bore Elisabeth, the mother of St John the Forerunner; and Anna was married in Nazareth to Joachim, and in old age gave birth to Mary, the most holy Mother of God. Joachim and Anna had been married for fifty years, and were barren. They lived devoutly and quietly, using only a third of their income for themselves and giving a third to the poor and a third to the Temple, and they were well provided for. Once, when they were already old and were in Jerusalem to offer sacrifice to God, the High Priest, Issachar, upbraided Joachim: 'You are not worthy to offer sacrifice with those childless hands.' Others who had children jostled Joachim, thrusting him back as unworthy. This caused great grief to the two aged souls, and they went home with very heavy hearts. Then the two of them gave themselves to prayer to God that He would work in them the wonder that He had worked in Abraham and Sarah, and give them a child to comfort their old age. God sent them His angel, Gabriel, who appeared to each of them separately and told them that God had heard their prayer and that a daughter would be born to them. St. Anna conceived at once, and in the ninth month gave birth to the holy Virgin Mary who was blessed by God and all generations of men.

Tropar of the Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos, Tone 4: Today, the bonds of barrenness are loosed, / for God, hearkening unto Joachim and Anna, / doth manifestly promise them that they will, / beyond all expectation, / give birth to the divine Maiden, / from whom The Infinite One Himself, / becoming man, shall be born. / And He commandeth the angels to cry unto her: / Rejoice thou who art full of grace, // the Lord is with thee!

Kondak of the Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos, Tone 4 (Special Melody): Today the whole world doth celebrate / Anna's conceiving, / which was brought about by God; / for she gave birth unto her // who ineffably gave birth unto The Word.

St Hannah, Mother of the Prophet Samuel; Our Holy Father Stephen the New Light; St Sophronius, Archbishop of Cyprus; St. Diuma, bishop of the Mercians and Middle Angles – an Irishman and companion of St. Cedd