

32nd Sunday After Pentecost

Sunday After Theophany,

Holy Martyr Polyectus

9 / 22 January 2012



Troparion of the Sunday, Tone VII — By Thy Cross, Thou didst destroy death! / To the thief, Thou didst open Paradise! / For the myrrhbearers, Thou didst change weeping into joy! / And Thou didst command Thy disciples, O Christ God, / to proclaim that Thou art risen, / granting the world great mercy!

Holy Martyr Polyectus of Melitene in Armenia, Troparion, Tone IV — In his suffering, O Lord,/ Thy martyr Polyectus received an imperishable crown from Thee our God;/ for, possessed of Thy might,/ he set at nought the tormentors and crushed the feeble audacity of the demons.// By his supplications save Thou our souls.

Theophany of our Lord, Troparion, Tone I — When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan,/ the worship of the Trinity was made manifest;/ for, the voice of the Father bare witness unto Thee,/ calling Thee His beloved Son;/ and the Spirit in the form of a dove/ confirmed the certainty of His word./ O Christ our God, Who hast appeared and enlightened the worlds,// glory be to Thee!

Kontakion of the Sunday, Tone VII — The dominion of death / can no longer hold men captive, / for Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers! / Hell is bound, while the prophets rejoice and cry: / "The Savior has come to those in faith! / Enter, you faithful, into the Resurrection!

Kontakion of the Martyr, Tone I, "Thou hast appeared today" — When the Savior bowed His head in the Jordan, the head of the serpent was crushed; and the decapitated head of Polyectus hath put the deceiver to shame.

Kontakion of the Feast, Tone IV — Thou hast appeared today to the whole world,/ and Thy light, O Lord, hath been signed upon us/ who hymn Thee with understanding./ Thou hast come, Thou hast appeared,/ the Light unapproachable.

Matins Gospel X

Epistle : Ephesians 4: 7-13

7: But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 8: Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9: (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10: He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11: And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12: For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

THE MEASURE OF CHRIST'S GIFT

But what does He say? 'According to the measure of Christ's gift' ...If then this or that man possesses any superiority in any spiritual gift, do not grieve at it, since his labour also is greater. He who had received five talents, had five required of him, whilst he who had received the two, brought only two, and yet received no less reward than the other. And therefore the Apostle here also encourages the hearer on the same ground, showing that gifts are bestowed not for the honour of one above another, but for the work of the Church, 'for the perfecting of the saints for the work of ministering to the building up of the body of Christ' ...By this He shows that it is not of his own intrinsic merit that one has received more and another less, but that it is for the sake of others, as God Himself has measured it.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XI on Ephesians IV,B#5,p. 103.

Second Epistle – Hebrews 13: 17-21

Gospel St. Matthew 4: 12-17

12: Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; 13: And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthali: 14: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 15: The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthali, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; 16: The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. 17: From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

UPON THOSE WHO SAT IN THE REGION AND SHADOW OF DEATH LIGHT HAS DAWNED

Why does He depart? Again instructing us not to go to meet temptations but to give place and withdraw ourselves ...He retires to Capernaum; at once fulfilling the prophesy (Isa. 9:1-2) ...by plotting against His forerunner and casting him into prison, they thrust out Christ into Galilee of the Gentiles ...Then, implying that they did not of themselves seek and find, but that God showed Himself to them from above, He says to them, 'Light has dawned,' that is the light of itself sprang up and shone forth: it was not that they first ran to the light ...For as persons not even knowing where to put a step forward, so they sat, overtaken by the darkness ...When He began preaching, He Himself also taught this same doctrine, which the other used to preach; and no word as yet concerning Himself. Because it was for the time a great thing even for this to be received, forasmuch as they had not as yet the proper opinion about Him.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XIV on Matthew IV, 1, 2. B#54, pp.86-87

Second Gospel - John 10:9-16

Saints of the week

9 / 22 January — Afterfeast of Theophany — The Holy Martyr Polyeuctus - The Armenian town of Melitene was soaked in Christian blood, as was all the land of Armenia. The first blood shed for Christ in that town was that of St Polyeuctus, spilled in about the year 259, during the reign of Valerian. There were in the town two friends who were officers: Nearchus and Polyeuctus, the former baptised and the latter unbaptised. When a decree went out from the Emperor that all Christians were to be killed, Nearchus prepared himself for death, though with great sorrow at not having brought his friend Polyeuctus to the true Faith. When Polyeuctus became aware of Nearchus' sorrow, he promised to become a believer. On the following day, he related to Nearchus a dream that he had: the Lord Himself had appeared to him in light, stripped his old clothing from him, clothed him in new and shining raiment and set him upon the saddle of a winged horse. After relating this dream, Polyeuctus went off to the town, tore up the royal decree on the persecution of Christians and smashed many statues of idols. He was tortured and condemned to death. On the way to the place of execution, he caught sight of Nearchus in the crowd and called joyfully to him: 'Save your soul, my dear soul-friend! Remember the vow of love confirmed between us!' And St Nearchus later ended a martyr for Christ in the fire. His feast is on April 22nd. Our Holy Father Eustratius; St Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow; **St. Adrian of Canterbury (710)** - When Archbishop Deusdedit of Canterbury died in the year 664 the Pope decided that the best man to succeed him was an African named Adrian who was already abbot of a monastery in Italy, near Naples. But Adrian did not want this high office. Bede tells us that when the Pope summoned Adrian and instructed him to go to Canterbury as archbishop, the abbot excused himself, saying that he was not fitted for such a great dignity, but that he would find someone else more suited for the task.' The first substitute was too ill to become archbishop. Again the pope urged the post on Adrian. Again Adrian begged permission to find someone else. At that time a monk from Tarsus named Theodore was in Rome. Adrian nominated Theodore to the Pope. Theodore was willing to become Archbishop of Canterbury, but only if Adrian agreed to come to England and help him. So on 26 March 668 Theodore was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury, and two months later he and Adrian set sail for England. They were a perfect team. Theodore appointed Adrian abbot of the monastery of St Peter and St Paul at Canterbury. Here the saint's learning and great virtues were employed to their best. Scholars came to the monastery from far away and Adrian taught there for thirty-nine years. His pupils could often speak Latin and Greek as well as they could speak their own languages, if not better. He knew an astonishing amount - teaching poetry, astronomy and maths (to calculate the church's calendar) as well as the Bible. Into the minds of his students Adrian 'poured the waters of wholesome knowledge day by day,' Bede records. The saint could convey happiness. 'Never,' asserts Bede, 'had there been such happy times as these since the English settled in Britain.' Adrian died in 710.

10 / 23 January — Afterfeast of Theophany - Fast Day — St Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa - The brother of St Basil the Great, he was at first a married priest, but when his wife, the blessed Theosevia, died, he was chosen and consecrated as Bishop of Nyssa. He was distinguished by great secular learning and spiritual experience, and was a great preacher, a translator of the Scriptures and a theologian. As a result of his opposition to the Arians, they did everything in their power to crush him, regarding him as their chief enemy. They were so successful in this that, in the reign of the Emperor Valens, their confederate, they managed to depose him from his episcopal seat and drive him into exile. This was in 376. The holy Father spent several years in patient exile, enduring poverty and humiliation. In 381, he took part in the Second Ecumenical Council, and it is thought that he formulated the final part of the Creed concerning the Holy Spirit. Finally, finishing his life at a great age in about the year 395, he entered into the Kingdom of God and has been commemorated through all succeeding ages as a great light in the Church. Our Holy Father Ammon of Egypt.

11 / 24 January — Afterfeast of Theophany — Our Holy Father Theodosius the Great - The first founder and organiser of cenobitic monasticism, he was born of devout parents in Cappadocia, in the village of Mogarisses. As a young man, he visited Simeon Stylites, who blessed him and predicted for him great spiritual glory. Theodosius set out in search of a place in which to found a monastery. He took with him a censer containing cold charcoal and incense. At the place where the charcoal suddenly ignited of itself, he stopped, settled down and began to lead a life of asceticism. There very quickly gathered round him many monks of different nationalities and with different languages. He therefore built a church for each language-group, so that services were conducted and God praised at the same moment in Greek, Armenian, Georgian and so forth. But on a day when they were to receive Communion, all the brethren gathered in the great church, where the service was conducted in Greek. The refectory was common to all; they held all possessions in common, laboured in common, endured in common and often hungered in common. Theodosius was a sublime example to all the monks; an example in work, in prayer, in fasting, in vigils and in all the Christian virtues. And God endowed him with the gifts of wonder-working, to heal the sick, to be present and help from a distance, to tame wild beasts, to predict the future and to increase bread and wheat. Prayer was on his lips day and night. He entered peacefully into rest in the Lord in the year 529, at the age of 105. Blessed Michael of Klops; Hieromartyr Hyginus, pope of Rome (142).

12 / 25 January — Fast Day — Afterfeast of Theophany — The Holy Martyr Tatiana of Rome - She was a Christian, of an eminent family, a deaconess in the Church. After the death of the Emperor Heliogabalus, the Emperor Alexander came to the throne in Rome. His mother, Julia Mamaea, was a Christian, but the Emperor himself was unsure and hesitant about his faith; an uncertainty that was clearly expressed by his keeping statues of both Christ and Apollo, of both Abraham and Orpheus, in his palace. His chief advisors took it into their own hands to persecute the Christians without his orders. When the virgin Tatiana was led to martyrdom, she prayed for her executioners. And lo, their eyes were opened and they saw four angels around the martyr. Seeing this, eight of them were converted to Christ, for which they were tortured and killed. St Tatiana's martyrdom was long-drawn-out: she was flogged, parts of her flesh were cut off, she was sawn with an iron saw, and then, all disfigured and bleeding, was flung that evening into prison to be brought out on the following day for further torture. But God sent His angel to the prison, to give her courage and heal her wounds. Tatiana, therefore, appeared before her torturers each morning in perfect health. She was thrown to a lion, but the lion became tame before her and did her no harm. Her hair was shorn, from an idea that occurred to their godless minds that some sorcery might be hidden in it, some magical strength. Finally she was led out, together with her father, and the two were beheaded. In such manner this heroic maiden finished her earthly life in about the year 225, and was crowned with an immortal crown of glory. She had the weak body of a woman, but a manly and valiant spirit.

The Holy Martyr Peter Apseamus - A native of Eleutheropolis in Palestine, he suffered as a youth for the Christian faith in the year 311, under the Emperor Maximian. After terrible tortures, he was condemned to death. Hearing the sentence pronounced, he cried out with great joy: 'My one desire is to die for my God!' He was crucified, like his Lord, and gave up his spirit on the cross.

The Icon of the Mother of God, "She who gives suck" - This is the name given to the icon of the Mother of God that St Sava of Serbia brought from the monastery of St Sava the Sanctified near Jerusalem and placed in his hermitage at Karyes on the Holy Mountain. In that way a prophecy, made 800 years previously by St Sava the Sanctified, was fulfilled—that one day a Serbian priest called Sava would come and would be given the icon and his staff. When Sava of Serbia visited the community of St Sava the Sanctified, the monks called to mind the prophecy of their founder and gave the icon and the staff to Sava. The icon was placed at the right-hand side of the Royal Doors in the hermitage, and the staff in a cell which received the name 'Pateritsa' (the father's rod), also situated at Karyes.; Our Holy Mother Theodora; St. Benedict Biscop, abbot of Wearmouth (689-90), who introduced glass windows to England and raised St. Bede; in Cornwall, St. Alan, abbot of Erbin, c.

13 / 26 January — Afterfeast of Theophany - The Holy Martyrs Hermylas and Stratonicus - The Emperor Licinius launched a violent persecution against the Christians. St Hermylas, a Christian and a deacon in one of the churches, was arrested and condemned to death. When he was told that he was being taken out to martyrdom, he rejoiced greatly. The Emperor threatened him in vain; Hermylas openly confessed his faith in Christ and, in reply to the Emperor's threats, said: "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man doeth unto me" (Ps. 117:6). After harsh torture, Hermylas was flung into prison. But the jailer was one Stratonicus, a secret Christian who was filled with whole-hearted compassion for Hermylas's sufferings. When he too appeared before the Emperor as a Christian, Licinius ordered that they both be thrown into the Danube. So Hermylas and Stratonicus were bound together in one net and cast into the river. After three days the river threw their bodies onto the bank, and fellow-Christians took them and buried them a little way outside Belgrade. These glorious martyrs suffered for Christ and entered into glory in the year 315.

St James, Bishop of Nisibis - In summer in an open field and in winter in a cave, St James lived as a hermit. On one occasion he went down into the city of Nisibis in Mesopotamia, to look into the faith and life of the Christians, and was there elected by the people as their bishop. He took part in the First Ecumenical Council in 325 and defended Orthodoxy against the Arians. It happened at one time that the pagan Persian army attacked Nisibis. St James went out onto the ramparts with the banner-icon from the church, himself raising it aloft and walking round the ramparts fearless of the arrows the enemy was aiming at him. Walking thus, the saint prayed to God to save the city and the faithful in it by sending flies and mosquitoes on the Persians, thus driving them away from the city walls. He did not, we see, seek the destruction of the enemy but some sort of catastrophe, no matter what, even some quite small occurrence, that would overcome them and remove them from the vicinity. God heard the prayer of His chosen one and sent a plague of flies and mosquitoes on the Persians, driving them away and saving the city of Nisibis. St James lived long and with honour, and died peacefully in great old age in the year 350.

St Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers - An ardent fighter against Arianism in the West, he suffered greatly for his choice of Orthodoxy. Of his writings on many subjects, the most important are those on the Holy Trinity. He entered into rest in the Lord in the year 367; Our Holy Father Maximus of Kapsokalyvia; in Cornwall, St. Erbin (Hermes), c and St. Elian (Alan), hermit. Australia Day.

St. Kentigern Mungo - Bishop, founder of the See of Glasgow, born about 518; died at Glasgow, 13 January, 603. His mother Thenaw was daughter of a British prince, Lothus (from whom the province of Lothian was called); his father's name is unknown. According to Jocelyn's life of Kentigern, the saint was born at Culross in Fife, and brought up until manhood by St. Serf (or Servanus) at his monastery there; but Skene shows that this connection between the two saints involves an anachronism, as St. Serf really belongs to the following century. At the age of twenty-five we find Kentigern (the name means "head chief", but he was popularly known as Mungo — in Cymric, Mwyn-gu, or "dear one"), beginning his missionary labours at Cathures, on the Clyde, the site of modern Glasgow. The Christian King of Strathclyde, Roderick Hael, welcomed the saint, and procured his consecration as bishop, which took place about 540. For some thirteen years he laboured in the district, living a most austere life in a cell at the confluence of the Clyde and the Molendinar, and making many converts by his holy example and his preaching. A large community grew up around him, became known as "Clasgu" (meaning the "dear family") and ultimately grew into the town and city of Glasgow. About 553 a strong anti-Christian movement in Strathclyde compelled Kentigern to leave the district, and he retired to Wales, staying for a time with St. David at Menevia, and afterwards founding a large monastery at Llanelwy, now St. Asaph's, of which he appointed the holy monk Asaph superior in succession to himself. In 573 the battle of Arthuret secured the triumph of the Christian cause in Cumbria, and Kentigern, at the earnest appeal of King Roderick, returned thither, accompanied by many of his Welsh disciples. For eight years he fixed his see at Hoddam in Dumfriesshire, evangelizing thence the districts of Galloway and Cumberland. About 581 he finally returned to Glasgow, and here, a year or two later, he was visited by St. Columba, who was at that time labouring in Strathgait. The two saints embraced, held long converse, and exchanged their pastoral staves. Kentigern was buried on the spot where now stands the beautiful cathedral dedicated in his honour. His remains are said still to rest in the crypt.

14 / 27 January — Fast Day - St Sava, Archbishop of Serbia - The son of Stefan Nemanja, the great Serbian national leader, he was born in 1169. As a young man he yearned for the spiritual life, which led him to flee to the Holy Mountain, where he became a monk and with rare zeal followed all the ascetic practices. Nemanja followed his son's example and himself went to the Holy Mountain, where he lived and ended his days as the monk Simeon. Sava obtained the independence of the Serbian Church from the Emperor and the Patriarch, and became its first archbishop. He, together, with his father, built the monastery of Hilandar and after that many other monasteries, churches and schools throughout the land of Serbia. He travelled to the Holy Land on two occasions, on pilgrimage to the holy places there. He made peace among his brothers, who were in conflict over their rights, and also between the Serbs and their neighbours. In creating the Serbian Church, he created the Serbian state and Serbian culture along with it. He brought peace to all the Balkan peoples, working for the good of all, for which he was venerated and loved by all on the Balkan peninsular. He gave a Christian soul to the people of Serbia, which survived the fall of the Serbian state. He died in Trnovo in the reign of King Asen, being taken ill after the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of the Theophany in 1236. King Vladislav took his body to Mileseva, whence Sinan Pasha removed it, burning it at Vracar in Belgrade on April 27th, 1595.

St. Nina, enlightener of Georgia - Hearing of the Georgian people, the maiden Nina desired from her early years to travel to Georgia and baptise the Georgians. The Mother of God appeared to her and promised her that she would take her to that land. When the Lord opened the path to her, the young Nina indeed went to Georgia, where she very quickly gained the love of the people. She baptised Mirian, King of Georgia, his wife Nana and their son Bakar, who then zealously aided Nina in her missionary efforts. Nina travelled throughout Georgia in the course of her life, and succeeded in bringing all the people to the Christian faith—and this during a time of fearful persecution of Christians by the Emperor Diocletian. She rested from her many labours and entered into peace in the Lord in the year 335. Her grave is in a church in Samtavro. She performed many miracles both during her lifetime and after her death.

Our Holy Fathers, the Martyrs of Sinai and Raithu - These holy fathers were killed by the Saracens, those of Sinai in the fourth century and the others in the fifth century.

15 / 28 January — Our Holy Father Paul of Thebes - Born of wealthy parents in Lower Thebes in Egypt in the reign of the Emperor Decius, he and a sister of his together inherited all their parents' property. But his brother-in-law, an idol-worshipper, plotted to seize Paul's half of the inheritance. He therefore threatened Paul that he would betray him to the authorities as a Christian if he did not hand over his share of the property. This misfortune, coupled with the examples of self-sacrifice by the Christian martyrs that Paul saw with his own eyes, induced him to give his half of the property to his sister and go of into the desert, where he lived in asceticism until his death. The spiritual heights attained by this giant of a monk are testified to by no less a person than St Antony the Great, who once visited Paul and saw how the wild animals and birds of the air ministered to him. Returning from this visit, Antony said to his monks: 'Woe is me, my children, a sinful and false monk, who am a monk in name only. I have seen Elias, I have seen John in the desert, and I have seen Paul—in Paradise!' St Paul lived 113 years, and entered peacefully into rest in the Lord in the year 342.

Our Holy Father John Kalyvites (The Hut-Dweller) - He was born in Constantinople in the early part of the 5th century, of rich and eminent parents whose only child he was. Drawn by inclination to the spiritual life, the young John fled with a monk to a monastery in Asia Minor. He spent six years in this monastery in the greatest restraint, prayer and obedience to the superior. Then the devil attacked him with the temptation to leave the monastery and return to his parents, to live with them as a nobleman. He indeed returned to his parents' home, but dressed as a beggar. He saw his parents, but, not wishing to reveal himself to them as their son, remained as a beggar in their courtyard, living off the crumbs that the servants threw him and enduring much ridicule from all. He lived thus for three years, praying God that He would save the souls of his father and mother. When he fell ill and felt death approaching, he revealed himself to his parents. They recognised him by a precious

Gospel-book which they had given him in childhood and which he had kept with him as his sole possession. And so this young man, albeit so rich, saved his soul and those of his parents, overcame the devil and entered into rest in the Lord in about the year 450. Our Holy Father Gabriel of Lesnov; The Holy Martyr Pansophius; In Ireland at Limerick,

St. Ita, hermitress (570) - called the "Brigid of Munster"; born in the present County of Waterford, about 475; d. 15 January, 570. She became a nun, settling down at Cluain Credhail, a place-name that has ever since been known as Killeedy--that is, "Church of St. Ita"--in County Limerick. Her austerities are told by St. Cuimin of Down, and numerous miracles are recorded of her. She was also endowed with the gift of prophecy and was held in great veneration by a large number of contemporary saints, men as well as women. When she felt her end approaching she sent for her community of nuns, and invoked the blessing of heaven on the clergy and laity of the district around Killeedy. Not alone was St. Ita a saint, but she was the foster-mother of many saints, including St. Brendan the Voyager, St. Pulcherius (Mochoemog), and St. Cummian Fada;

St. Maurus, disciple of St. Benedict (584); in Wales - Deacon, son of Equitius, a nobleman of Rome, died 584. Feast, 15 Jan. He is represented as an abbot with crozier, or with book and censer, or holding the weights and measures of food and drink given him by his holy master. He is the patron of charcoalburners, coppersmiths etc. -- in Belgium of shoemakers -- and is invoked against gout, hoarseness etc. He was a disciple of St. Benedict, and his chief support at Subiaco. He is described as a model of religious virtues, especially of obedience.

HOMILY About the concern for the salvation of our neighbours

"No one should seek his own advantage, but that of his neighbour" (1 Corinthians 10:24).

This is the principle of the saints of God, both now, at one time, always and forever. This is the principle on which society is built. Upon this principle can be established the most perfect, the most God-pleasing and the most prosperous human society. This is the saving principle for every type of difficulty with which contemporary men struggle, struggle without victory and without hope. The holy soul is concerned with where the homeless will spend the night, how the hungry will be fed, how the naked will be clothed. The soul is concerned and prays to God that their neighbours be saved; that their hearts be filled with love toward God; that their minds be directed toward God; that the wicked turn from the path of wickedness; that those wavering in the Faith be strengthened; that those who are strengthened be sustained; that those who have died see the Face of God; that the living be written in the Book of Life in the Kingdom of Light.

Therefore, be careful brethren, how even in like manner, word for word, can sound the destructive and antisocial principle of the devil. This principle of the devil says: no one should look at their own body to preserve it in purity from sin, but rather everyone should look at the bodies of others in order to ruin and to destroy them. That no one should look at his own soul, how to save it, rather everyone should look at the soul of someone else in order to blacken it, to curse it, to impoverish it and to destroy it. Let no one look at his house, in order to build it, and renew it rather let everyone look at the home of another in order to burn it and demolish it. No one should look at his granaries in order to fill them, rather, one should look at the granaries of others in order to steal from them and to empty them. See, brethren, how this principle can be either a principle of good or a principle of evil; a sharp two-edged sword; an angel or Satan. See how this principle in the satanic spirit and form has taken momentum on all sides today!

O Lord, Holy Spirit, Who has released these holy words in the world through the tongue of the apostle of God as bright rays of the sun to illuminate and not to burn us, help us now to fulfil them in the proper heavenly sense to the glory of the Triune God and for the salvation of our souls.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.