



36th Sunday After Pentecost

St Maximus the Confessor & Martyr Neophytus

21 January / 3 February

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 3: Let the heavens rejoice / let the earth be glad / for the Lord has shown strength with His arm! / He has trampled down death by death! / He has become the first-born of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell / and has granted the world great mercy.

Troparion of St Maximus the Confessor tone 3: Through thee the Spirit poured/ forth streams of teaching for the Church:/ thou didst expound God the Word's self-emptying,/ and shine forth in thy struggles as a true Confessor of the Faith;/ holy Father Maximus, pray to Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

Troparion of St Neophytus tone 5: Thou wast filled with divine grace/ from thine infancy,/ and thy youthful soul was a dwelling-place of the Trinity./ Thou didst work wondrous miracles,/ and wast steadfast in contest,/ O prize-winning Neophytus./ Pray unceasingly that our souls may be saved.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 3: On this day thou didst rise from the tomb, O Merciful One, / leading us from the gates of death / On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices. / With the prophets and the patriarchs they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Thy power.

Kontakion of St Maximus the Confessor tone 8: O faithful, let us acclaim the lover of the Trinity,/ great Maximus who taught the God-inspired Faith, that Christ is to be glorified in two natures, wills and energies;/ and let us cry to him: Rejoice, O herald of the Faith.

Kontakion of St Neophytus tone 4: O Great Martyr Neophytus, thou didst shine forth from the mountain/ and as an athlete glorify Christ in the stadium./ Wherefore thou didst receive the unfading crown.

Matins Gospel III

Epistle : 1 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 honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel St. Luke 18: 35-43

Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

On Spiritual Sight

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! In Holy Scripture there is often mention made of the blind and blindness. The Holy Gospel tells us of the healing of the blind man by the Lord (Luke 18:35-43), the restoration of sight to the man who was *blind from birth* (John 9:1-41), and about the healing of the blind man who was *demon-possessed* (Matt. 12:22-23). St. Luke the Apostle and Evangelist tells us that *to many who were blind He gave sight* (Luke 7:21).

There is another kind of blindness, however, which the Lord often denounced and of which He often spoke. Thus He calls the Pharisees blind leaders because they themselves did not perceive the Truth and prevented others from knowing it (Matt. 15:14). The Holy Apostle Peter calling the believers to Christian fervor regarding salvation and the virtues, which elevate man to Heaven, concludes: *For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins* (2 Pet. 1:8-9).

Man—God's creature—is composed of body and spirit; consequently, he has both physical and spiritual sight. Not to possess physical sight means not to be able to see the light of the sun, the beauty of the world, one's dear ones, and oneself. But more grievous is lack of spiritual eyes, which are given to contemplate God and the mysteries of the spiritual world. Spiritual sight is a gift of God and one who does not possess it is blind in his soul.

Those Christians suffer from such blindness, who know from the Word of God that through righteousness they may win Eternal Life and have communion with God and the Holy Angels, yet they are drawn with their whole being to sin, and forget Penance and the cleansing of their souls in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Such blind men affirm that they believe and confess Christ our Lord, but in deeds they reject Him.

The Holy Apostle, St. John the Divine, teaches: God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7).

What must we do? How can we find the path to perception? For if a man, during his lifetime, does not rid himself of this pernicious blindness and does not concern himself about illumining his soul with the Light of Divine Grace, he will get into a disastrous state. Tormented, he will repent bitterly of his sinful and spiritually fruitless life. But will not repentance be belated?

According to the teaching of the Orthodox Church, spiritual sight does not necessarily mean visions, appearances of angels and saints. One who strives after these, thinking that spiritual sight means precisely this, is in danger of falling into enchantment. One must remember that the Enemy of mankind often takes on the appearance of an angel of Light in order to destroy man's soul.

It is a matter for wonder that some do not notice their own spiritual blindness. In order to be free from this, it is necessary to become aware that we are living in darkness, that such a state is disastrous, and we must learn to hate sin with all our heart. Reading and listening to the Word of God will help to disperse the darkness, to open our spiritual eyes, to overcome enchantment and sin, to expose self-love and the vices of our soul, so that we may be illumined by grace and be moved to fulfil Christ's commandments.

True spiritual sight, according to the teaching of the Holy Fathers of the Church, consists in the ability to perceive one's sins and in recognizing Christ our Savior. The way to perceive our weakness and spiritual poverty is to turn for help to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

If we desire to cleanse our heart we must follow Christ Who is *the Light of the world* (John 9:5), Who came into the world that any who believe in Him would not remain in darkness. The Lord tells us: *he who follows Me shall...have the light of life* (John 8:12). And in order to follow Christ, and learn from Him meekness and humility, for He is *meek and lowly in heart* (Matt. 11:29), we must bear without murmuring the cross of life's trials and temptations, hate the darkness of sin and draw away from it.

In order to draw nearer to Christ and be illumined by Him, a Christian must be like the Lord in everything. He must be holy in his lifetime as St. Paul teaches: *Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord* (Heb. 12:14).

Many of us may ask: "Is this possible in our days?" If we stand firmly on the saving path of cleansing our soul, if we study diligently and observe the Word of God, zealously fulfilling His commandments and struggle against sin, then we shall come to know that there are such things as spiritual poverty and blindness and yearn to be free of them. We, just as the blind man in the Gospel, will come to believe and understand that without Christ we cannot receive sight. Such a spiritual attitude promotes heartfelt and ardent prayer, like that of the blind man of Jericho: *Son of David, have mercy on me* (Luke 18:39)!

Likewise sins and vices will destroy our prayer and therefore we must turn to the Savior with greater fervor and say: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me. Open my eyes, Christ God, and let me not someday sleep in death." Only when we have acquired this state of awareness will the Lord heal us. This cry, with ardent tearful prayer, will draw down on us the mercy of our Merciful God, and He, as the Physician of our soul and body, will heal the suffering soul, illumine it with the light of knowledge, and grant it the ability to see Him, the Unwaning Light in His Eternal Kingdom. Amen.

The Living Word

A.E.

Saints of the week

21 January / 3 February — Our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor - By birth a citizen of Constantinople and at first a high-ranking courtier at the court of the Emperor Heraclius, he then became a monk and the abbot of a monastery not far from

the capital. He was the greatest defender of Orthodoxy against the so-called Monothelite heresy, which developed from the heresy of Eutyches. That is to say: as Eutyches asserted that there is in Christ only one nature, so the Monothelites asserted that there is in Him only one will. Maximus resisted this assertion and found himself in opposition to both the Emperor and the Patriarch. But he was unafraid, and persevered to the end in proving that there are in the Lord two wills and also two natures. By his efforts, one Council in Carthage and one in Rome stood firm, and both these Councils anathematized the Monothelite teaching. Maximus's sufferings for Orthodoxy cannot be described: tortured by hierarchs, spat upon by the mass of the people, beaten by soldiers, persecuted, imprisoned; until finally, with his tongue cut out and one hand cut off, he was condemned to exile for life in Skhimaris, where he gave his soul into God's hands in the year 662. Blessed Maximus the Greek; The Holy Martyr Neophytus; The Holy Martyr Agnes; in Wales, St. Laudog, confessor; in Scotland,

St. Vimin (6th C) - the founder of the monastery of Holywood at Nithsdale. It is related that St. Vimin was an abbot in Fifeshire when he was consecrated bishop. He actively evangelized the region. In order to avoid the temptations to pride that accompanied his many miracles, he moved to a deserted place and founded Holywood (Sacrumboscum), which later became famous for producing many holy and learned men

22 January / 4 February —The Holy Apostle Timothy - One of the Seventy, he was born in Lystra of Lycaonia of a Greek father and a Jewish mother. His mother and grandmother were praised by the Apostle Paul for their sincere faith (2 Tim. 1:4-5). He met the great Apostle for the first time in Lystra, and was the only witness of Paul's healing of the man lame from birth. Later, Timothy was an almost constant travelling-companion of Paul's, visiting Achaia, Macedonia, Italy and Spain with him. A great zealot for the Faith, a superb preacher and of a gentle spirit, Timothy contributed greatly to the spreading and establishing of the Christian faith. Paul called him his own son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2). After Paul's martyrdom, Timothy had St John the Evangelist as his teacher. But when the Emperor Domitian exiled John from Ephesus to the island of Patmos, Timothy remained in Ephesus as bishop. At the time of an idolatrous feast called Katagogium, the pagans, resentful of the Christians, made a merciless, masked attack on Timothy and killed him, in about the year 93. His honoured relics were later taken to Constantinople and buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles by the graves of St Luke the Evangelist and St Andrew the First-Called. Our Holy Father, the Martyr Anastasius; St. Brithwald, monk of Glastonbury, bishop of Sarum who removed his see from Ramsbury to Sarum.

23 January / 5 February — The Hieromartyr Clement, Bishop of Ancyra - He was born in 258 in the town of Ancyra of a pagan father and a Christian mother. His devout mother, Euphrosyne, prophesied a martyr's death for her son, and left this world when Clement was twelve years old. Her friend Sophia took Clement into her own home as her son and saw that he was brought up a Christian. Clement became so famed for his virtuous life that he was chosen as bishop of Ancyra at the age of twenty. He acquired a mature wisdom in his early years, and harnessed and conquered his body by great restraint. He ate only bread and vegetables, and never anything slaughtered or with blood. In the reign of Diocletian, he was tortured as terribly 'as anyone has ever been since the foundation of the world'. He spent twenty-eight years under torture and imprisonment. Eleven different torturers tormented him. When, at one time, they were smiting him on the face, spitting on him and breaking his teeth, he cried out to Domentian the torturer: 'You are doing me honour, O Domentian, not torturing me, for the mouth of my Lord Jesus Christ was struck in like manner, and His cheeks slapped; and lo, I, unworthy as I am, am now made worthy of this!' When he was brought before the Emperor Diocletian in Rome, the Emperor placed on one side various instruments of torture, and on the other side gifts—medals, clothing, money—whatever the Emperor was able to bestow, and then told Clement to choose. Christ's martyr, with a scornful glance at all the Emperor's gifts, chose the instruments of torture. And he was terribly tortured; piece by piece the flesh was flayed from his body until the bones showed white beneath. He was healed of these wounds, and was finally beheaded by a soldier in 312, while he was presiding at the Liturgy as bishop in the church in Ancyra. St Clement's miracles are without number. The Sixth Ecumenical Council; St Paulinus the Merciful;

St. Colman - Died c. 702. Saint Colman succeeded Saint Hierlug (Zailug) as abbot-bishop of Lismore in 698. During his rule the fame of Lismore monastery, Ireland reached its peak

24 January / 6 February — Fast Day - Our Holy Mother Xenia - Born in Rome, she was the only daughter of a famous senator. Drawn by the love of Christ, she refused to marry as her parents desired. In order to escape this, she fled from her home with two of her slaves and came to the island of Kos, to a place called Mylassa, where she started a community for virgins, remaining there in asceticism till her death. Though she was a weak woman, she had a man's perseverance in fasting, prayer and vigils. She often spent entire nights standing in prayer, was dressed more poorly than her sisters, and on her bread, when she ate, she often put ashes from the censer. At the hour of her death (in 450), a wonderful sign appeared over the monastery: a wreath of stars encircling a cross more resplendent than the sun. Many of the sick were healed by her relics. Her two slaves girls followed the example of their abbess in all things, and when they died, they were buried, by their wish, at the feet of blessed Xenia. The Holy Martyr Babylas; Our Holy Father Macedonius; Our Holy Father Philo, Bishop of Cyprus; Our Holy Father Dionysius of Olympus;

St. Cadoc of Llancarvan Wales - Son of Saint Gwynllyw, a king in Wales, a robber chieftain who led a band of 300; his mother, Saint Gladys, had been stolen in a raid on a neighbouring chief. Raised by an Irish monk; Cadoc's father had stolen the monk's cow, and when he came to demand its return, the king decided it was sign. Studied in Wales and Ireland. Priest. Once chased through a wood by an armed swineherd from an enemy tribe. His hiding place spooked an old, grey, wild boar that made three great leaps at him - then disappeared; Cadoc took this as a sign, and the location became the site of the great church and monastery at Llancarvan. He once saved his brother monks in a famine by tying a white thread to the foot of a (well-fed) mouse; he then following the thread to an abandoned, well-stocked, underground granary. Another time he and his brothers went out to meet a band of thieves, chanting and playing harps; it surprised the highwaymen so much, they turned and left. Lived as a hermit with Saint Gildas on the Island of Flatholmes off Vannes, Brittany. Established a monastery on a small island just off Brittany, joined by a stone bridge so local children could walk out for school. Returned to Britain to evangelize, and

work with Christian survivors of Saxon raids. Born 6th century Welsh Died martyred by Saxons while serving at Mass c.580 near Weedon, Northamptonshire, England

25 January / 7 February — St Gregory the Theologian - Born in Nazianzus of a Greek father (who later became a Christian and a bishop) and a Christian mother, he studied in Athens before his baptism with St Basil the Great and Julian the Apostate. He often foretold to Julian that he would be an apostate and a persecutor of the Church, and so it came to pass. Gregory was especially influenced by his mother, Nonna. He was baptised when he had completed his studies. St Basil consecrated him bishop of Sasima, and the Emperor Theodosius quickly called him to the vacant archiepiscopal throne of Constantinople. His works were manifold, the best-known being his theological writings, for which he received the title 'the Theologian'. He is particularly famed for the depth of his Sermons on the Holy Trinity. He also wrote against the heretic Macedonius, who taught wrongly of the Holy Spirit (that the Spirit was a creature of God), and against Apollinarius who taught that Christ did not have a human soul but that His divinity was in place of His soul. He also wrote against the Emperor Julian the Apostate, his sometime schoolfellow. In the year 381, when a quarrel broke out in the Council concerning his election as archbishop, he withdrew himself, declaring: 'Those who deprive us of the (archiepiscopal) throne cannot deprive us of God.' He then left Constantinople and went to Nazianzus, remaining there in retirement, prayer and the writing of instructive books until his death. And, although he was in weak health all his life, he lived to the age of seventy. His relics were later taken to Rome, and his head to the Cathedral of the Dormition in Moscow. He was, and remains, a great and wonderful light of the Orthodox Church, as much for the meekness and purity of his character as for the unsurpassable depth of his mind. He entered into rest in the Lord in the year 389. Our Holy Father Publius; Our Holy Father Mares; The Holy Martyr Felicitas and her seven sons;

St. Theneva (also known as St Dwyn) - British princess. When she became pregnant before marriage, her family threw her from a cliff. She survived the fall unharmed, and was soon met by an unmanned boat. She knew she had no home to go to, so got into the boat; it sailed her across the Firth of Forth to land at Culross where she was cared for by Saint Serf; he became foster-father of her son, Saint Kentigern.. Born British Isles. Died 7th century.

St. Eochod - Died 597. One of Saint Columba's (f.d. June 9) twelve companions, Saint Eochod was chosen by Columba to evangelize northern Britain. He is called the Apostle of the Picts of Galloway.

St. Theoritgitha, virgin, novice-mistress of Barking on the Thames.

26 January / 8 February — Fast Day - Our Holy Father Xenophon and our Mother Maria, and their sons John and Arcadius - They were rich and respected citizens of Constantinople. Xenophon and Maria lived godly lives, and made every effort to give their sons a Christian upbringing. When the boys were grown, their parents sent them to Beirut to study, but a storm capsized their ship. By God's providence, both John and Arcadius were somehow saved and thrown onto the shore by the waves; in two separate places, however, so that each thought the other had perished. Out of grief for each other, they became monks in two different monasteries. After two years of mourning, their parents travelled to Jerusalem to venerate the holy places. There, helped by the insight of a holy man, the brothers were first united with each other and then with their parents. Out of gratitude to God, Xenophon and Maria gave away all their goods to the poor and both embraced the monastic state. This touching story of these four holy souls demonstrates clearly how the Lord guides most wonderfully the destinies of those who believe in Him; how He looses on them trials and sorrows, that they may later, yet more greatly strengthened in their faith, experience the greater joy. They lived and died in the fifth century. Our Holy Father Simeon the Ancient; St David, King of Georgia;

St. Conan of Iona - Died 648 -A bishop of Ireland, pr possibly from Scotland. It is believed that Conan taught St. Fiacre before going to the Isle of Man, where he served as a missionary and was consecrated bishop;

St. Theofrid - Died c. 690. Saint Theofrid was a monk of Luxeuil who became abbot of Corbie in 622 and a regional bishop

27 January / 9 February - SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, THE GOLDEN TRUMPET OF ORTHODOXY - The memory of this illuminary of the Church is celebrated on November 13 and January 30 but, on this date, the Church celebrates the translation of his honourable relics from the village of Comana, where he died in exile, to Constantinople, where earlier he had governed the Church. Thirty years after his death, Patriarch Proculus delivered a homily in memory of his spiritual father and teacher. He so enflamed the love of the people and Emperor Theodosius the Younger toward this great saint that all of them desired that Chrysostom's relics be translated to Constantinople. It was said that the sarcophagus, containing the relics of St. John Chrysostom, did not allow itself to be moved from its resting place until the emperor wrote a letter to Chrysostom begging him for forgiveness (for Theodosius' mother, Eudoxia, was the culprit responsible for the banishment of this saint) and appealing to him to come to Constantinople, his former residence. When this letter of repentance was placed on the sarcophagus, its weight became extremely light. At the time of the translation of his relics, many who were ill and who touched the sarcophagus were healed. When the relics arrived in the capital, then the emperor in the name of his mother as though she herself was speaking over the relics, again, prayed to the saint for forgiveness. "While I lived in this transient life, I did you malice and, now, when you live the immortal life, be beneficial to my soul. My glory passed away and it helped nothing. Help me, father; in your glory, help me before I am condemned at the Judgment of Christ!" When the saint was brought into the Church of the Twelve Apostles and placed on the patriarchal throne, the masses of people heard the words from St. Chrysostom's mouth saying: "Peace be to you all." The translation of the relics of St. John Chrysostom was accomplished in the year 438 A.D.