

33rd Sunday After Pentecost

Zaccheus Sunday &

Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia

28 January / 10 February



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.

Tropar to the New Martyrs of Russia, Tone 4: O ye holy hierarchs, royal passion-bearers and pastors, monks and laymen, ye countless new martyrs and confessors, men, women and children, flowers of the spiritual meadow of Russia, who blossomed forth wondrously in time of grievous persecutions, bearing good fruit for Christ in your endurance: entreat Him as the One Who planted you, that He deliver His people from godless and evil men, and that the Church of Russia be made steadfast through your blood and suffering unto the salvation of our souls.

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 New-Martyrs and Confessors (Tone 2): O ye new passion-bearers of Russia, who have with your confession finished the course of this earth, receiving boldness through your sufferings: Beseech Christ Who suffered for you, that they who pray to you in the hour of the testing of their faith may receive the gift of courage. For ye are a witness to us who kiss your feet, that neither tribulation, prison, nor death can separate us from the love of God.



Vespers: Isa . 43:9-14a; Wisd . 3:1-9; Wisd . 4:7-15

Matins Gospel IV

Epistle for Sunday: I Timothy 4: 9-15

9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. 10 For to this end we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. 11 These things command and teach. 12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. 15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

GIVE YOURSELF ENTIRELY TO THEM, THAT YOUR PROGRESS MAY BE EVIDENT TO ALL

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, Who ...made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ...He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death (Phil 2:5-8). For I think that God has set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake ...We both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place ...being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it (I Cor. 4:9-12). But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the Gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ (Phil 1:12-13). For in truth He was in servitude to flesh and to birth and to the conditions of our life with a view to our liberation, and to that of all those whom He has saved, who were in bondage under sin. What greater destiny can befall man's humility than that he should be intermingled with God, and by this intermingling should be deified.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus. The Fourth Theological Oration: On the Son, 3. B#7, p. 178.

for the New Martyrs: Rom . 8:28-39

Gospel for Sunday: St Luke 19: 1 – 10

1 Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. 2 Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. 3 And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house. 6 So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. 7 But when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner. 8 Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold. 9 And Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; 10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

ON THE GOOD FORTUNE OF ZACCHAEUS

Thus spoke He whose words are life and joy, and the renewal of the righteous. As the mountains are ever more verdant with the breath of spring, so each man, however withered and darkened with sin, becomes refreshed and rejuvenated by the nearness of Christ. For Christ's presence is like that of some life-giving, scented balsam which restores health, enriches life and gives savour to the soul, the thoughts, the words of a man. In brief, distance from Christ means corruption and death, and closeness to Him means salvation and life.

'Today salvation has come to this house', says the Lord as He enters the home of Zacchaeus the sinner. Christ is the salvation that comes, and Zacchaeus is the house to which He comes. Each of us, my brethren, is a house in which sin dwells while Christ is afar off, and to which salvation comes as Christ draws near. Whether Christ is able or not to draw near to my house and yours depends on us. You see that He did not force an entry into Zacchaeus's house, but came as a warmly-invited guest. Little Zacchaeus had climbed up into a tree, to see the Lord Jesus with his own eyes. He had sought Him, desired Him. And we must seek Him in order to find Him, and desire that He draw near to us, and climb up high in spirit to meet His glance. Then He will visit our house as he visited the house of Zacchaeus, and bring salvation with Him.

Draw near to us, O Lord, draw near, and bring us Your eternal salvation.

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic, the Prologue, 4 February. B#80, pp.90-1

In today's Gospel lesson we heard about how our Lord Jesus Christ once visited Zacchaeus, the chief of the publicans, in the city of Jericho. Zacchaeus was a rich man, yet his soul was uneasy: his conscience reproached him for his unjustly gained wealth.

Upon hearing one day that the Lord Jesus Christ—the Miracle worker and Teacher of man's renewal and regeneration—was coming to Jericho, Zacchaeus' heart was fired with the desire to see Him. He hoped that Christ would be able to help set him also on the path of righteousness. But, being small of stature, Zacchaeus was unable to see Christ because of the crowd surrounding Him, and, therefore, he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see the Savior better.

When the crowd came to the sycamore tree, Christ saw Zacchaeus' hopeful gaze fixed on Him and said: *Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house* (Luke 19:5). These words amazed Zacchaeus. The Teacher of Truth, Mercy and Love Himself wanted to visit him, a man despised by all and a great sinner! Zacchaeus quickly climbed down from the sycamore and received the Lord into his home with great joy. He stood and said: *Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold* (Luke 19:8). The miracle of Zacchaeus' regeneration under the influence of the Lord's love had taken place! It affected not only Zacchaeus, but his entire household, and Christ said: *Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham* (Luke 19:9), that is, Zacchaeus was also worthy of salvation.

This was the consequence, beloved brothers and sisters, of Zacchaeus' meeting with Christ, Who appeared in the world *to seek and to save that which was lost* (Luke 19:10). This meeting produced a total transformation in Zacchaeus. The light of Christ's truth, which illuminated Zacchaeus' soul, changed his entire inner being. From a greedy, cruel publican, the Lord in His mercy made him a kind, generous, loving man filled with the Christian spirit. This is the meaning of today's Gospel lesson.

According to St. Luke, Zacchaeus was a rich man, and therefore could have enjoyed all earthly blessings. However, wealth was of no comfort to him. Something troubled, tormented, and disturbed his soul, and he strove to escape from this despondent spiritual state, but the way out lay only in the rebirth of his inner being, which could only be accomplished by the Lord God Himself.

Dear brothers and sisters, are there none among us who are like Zacchaeus before his regeneration? Of course there are! The story about Zacchaeus tells us that the path to regeneration is never closed to a penitent. No matter how deeply a man has sunk into the mire of sin and vice, no matter how far he may have departed from people and the Lord, he will always find divine mercy and help for spiritual renewal. We can always step onto the path of Christian truth, if only we desire it, if only we go out to meet Christ and often the doors of our souls to Him. And the Lord will say to us, as He did to Zacchaeus: *Today salvation has come to this house*. May the story of Zacchaeus' regeneration strengthen our faith in divine mercy and

awaken in us a desire to seek a meeting with Christ in our hearts, Who will not delay in coming to give solace to our souls.
Amen.

The Living Word

A.V.V.

for the New Martyrs: Luke 21:12-19

Saints of the week

28 January / 10 February — Our Holy Father Ephraim the Syrian - Born in Syria of poor parents in the reign of the Emperor Constantine the Great, his early youth was spent somewhat tempestuously, but he suddenly underwent a spiritual crisis and began to burn with love for the Lord Jesus. He was a disciple of St James of Nisibis (Jan. 13th). By the great grace of God, wisdom flowed from his tongue like a stream of honey and from his eyes tears flowed unceasingly. Loving work like a bee, Ephraim was constantly either writing books or teaching the monks in the monastery or the people in the city of Edessa, or was giving himself to prayer and pondering. His books are numerous; his prayers are beautiful. The best-known of the latter is the prayer in the Great Fast: 'O Lord and Master of my life ...' When they wished to take him by force and make him bishop, he feigned madness and began to run through the city of Edessa, trailing his garments along behind him. Seeing him mad, they left him in peace. He was a contemporary and friend of St Basil the Great. St Ephraim was especially the apostle of repentance. Even today his writings soften many hearts, strengthen them against sin and turn them back to Christ. He entered into rest at a great age in 373. Our Holy Father Isaac the Syrian; Our Holy Father Palladius; Our Holy Father Ephraim of the Kiev Caves;

St. Cannera of Inis Cathaig, virgin - (also known as Cainder, Conaire, Kinnera) Died c. 530. Little is known of Saint Cannera except that which is recorded in the story of Saint Senan, who ruled an abbey on the Shannon River, which ministered to the dying- -but only men. Cannera was an anchorite from Bantry in southern Ireland. When she knew she was dying, she travelled to Senan's abbey without rest and walked upon the water to cross the river because no one would take her to the place forbidden to women. Upon her arrival, the abbot was adamant that no woman could enter his monastic enclosure. Arguing that Christ died for women, too, she convinced the abbot to give her last rites on the island and to bury her at its furthest edge. Against his argument that the waves would wash away her grave, she answered that she would leave that to God. Cannera told the abbot of a vision she had in her Bantry cell of the island and its holiness. Her appearance signalled a change in the attitude of the monks toward women, whose contamination they feared. Cannera charges Senan with this unchristian prejudice. She reminded him that "Christ is no worse than yourself." If He could find comfort in the presence of women, so should the monks. The monks believed that the holier a man, the more he distances himself from Eve. They saw their celibacy as a taboo against women, rather than a sacrifice of love to Christ. They also failed to recognize that Jesus broke the conventions of His time. Again, Cannera said, "Christ came to redeem women no less than to redeem men," and "women gave service and tended to Christ and His Apostles," so why should the monks so distance themselves? Other double (men and women) monasteries already existed in Ireland for Saint Patrick (March 17) and his followers did not reject the fellowship and ministry of women. Probably because Saint Cannera walked across the water, sailors honor their patron by saluting her resting place on Scatterry Island (Inis Chathaigh). They believed that pebbles from her island protected the bearer from shipwreck. A 16th-century Gaelic poem about Cannera prays, "Bless my good ship, protecting power of grace. . . ." St. Anthimus of Brantome, abbot;

St. Glastian of Kinglassie - (also known as Glastian of MacGlastian) Born in County Fife, Scotland; died at Kinglassie (Kinglace), Scotland, in 830. As bishop of Fife, Saint Glastian mediated in the bloody civil war between the Picts and the Scots. When the Picts were subjugated, Glastian did much to alleviate their lot. He is the patron saint of Kinglassie in Fife, and venerated in Kintyre,

29 January / 11 February —The Hieromartyr Ignatius - The chief feast of St Ignatius is in winter, on December 20th. Today we celebrate the translation of his relics from Rome, where he suffered martyrdom, to Antioch, where he had been archbishop. When St Ignatius was summoned to Rome to answer for his faith before the Emperor Trajan (98 - 117) a number of citizens from Antioch accompanied him on this long journey, prompted by their great love for their chief pastor. The saint of God, in no wise willing to deny the faith of Christ and scorning all the flattery and promises of the Emperor, was condemned to death and thrown into the Great Circus before the wild beasts. They tore him to pieces and he gave his soul to God. Then his companions collected his bare bones, took them to Antioch and buried them. When the Persians occupied Antioch in the sixth century, the relics of St Ignatius were again taken from Antioch to Rome; The Holy Martyrs Romanus, James, Philotheus, Hyperechius, Abibus, Julian and Paregorius; Our Holy Father Laurence of the Kiev Caves; New Martyr Demetrius of Chios; St. Andrew (Rublev) of Russia, iconographer;

St. Flora (Blath) of Kildare - virgin. Died 523. Saint Blath was the lay-sister who served as cook at Saint Brigid's convent in Kildare. She earned a reputation for heroic sanctity, and of her cooking it is said that bread and bacon at Brigid's table were better than a banquet elsewhere; **St. Dallan Forgaill the Blind** - (6th.cent.) A kinsman of St. Edan of Ferns, born in Connaught and a great scholar who, through his application to study, became blind. He wrote a poem in honour of St. Columba, called Ambra Choluim Kille which was only published after St. Columba's death. It is said that on its publication Dallan's sight was restored to him. St. Dallan was murdered at Triscoel by pirates (AD 598) and his head thrown into the sea. It was recovered and miraculously reunited to his body.

30 January / 12 February — The Three Great Hierarchs: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John

Chrysostom - Each has his personal feast day in the month of January; Basil on the 1st, Gregory on the 25th and Chrysostom on the 27th. The common feast we celebrate today was instituted in the 11th century, in the time of the Emperor Alexius Comnenus. At one time there was a quarrel among the people about who was the greatest of the three. Some gave Basil the pre-eminence for his purity and courage; others Gregory for the unfathomable depth and height of his theological mind; others still Chrysostom for the wonderful beauty of his speech and the clarity of his presentation of the Faith. So the first were called Basilians, the second Gregorians and the third Johannites. But, by the providence of God, this dispute was resolved to the benefit of the Church and the yet greater glory of the three saints. The Bishop of Euchaita, John (June 14th), had a vision in his sleep, in which each of these saints appeared to him in great glory and indescribable beauty, and then all three together. They then said to him: 'We are one in God, as you see, and there is no dispute among us . . . neither is there among us a first or a second.' The saints also advised Bishop John to compile a common feast for them and to set aside for them a day of common commemoration. The quarrel was settled as indicated by the wonderful vision; January 30th being set aside for the common commemoration of the three hierarchs. The Hieromartyr Hippolytus, Bishop of Rome; The Holy Martyr Theophilus the New; St Peter, King of Bulgaria.

31 January / 13 February — Fast Day - The Holy Unmercenaries and Wonderworkers Cyrus and John - These compassionate and wonderful saints were not blood-brothers, but were brothers in spirit. Cyrus lived at first in Alexandria, and working as a doctor, healed people by the power of Christ together with medicine for the body. Discovering that illness came upon people mainly through sin, he always told them to cleanse their souls from sin by repentance and prayer, that they might be restored and strengthened in body. When Diocletian began his persecution of Christians, Cyrus went off to Arabia, where he received the monastic habit. But, as he had become known in Alexandria, so he became known also in Arabia, and people went to him for help. John, hearing of him and being at that time a Roman officer in Edessa, came to Arabia to see Cyrus. On seeing each other, they loved each other as brothers and remained together to live in asceticism. At that time, a Christian woman called Athanasia was tortured together with her three daughters in the town of Canopus. Cyrus and John heard of this, and came to Canopus to encourage the mother and daughters not to fall back from the Faith. And, grateful indeed for the counsel of these saints, Athanasia endured all the tortures and, with her daughters, was slain for Christ. The daughters were: Theoctista, aged 15, Theodota aged 13 and Eudocia aged 11. Then the torturers took Cyrus and John and, after torture and imprisonment, slew them with the sword in the year 311. These holy martyrs performed innumerable miracles, both during their lives and after their death. Their relics were translated to Rome in the time of the Emperor Arcadius. They are invoked for help especially for the sleepless and for the blessing of water and food. The Holy Martyr Tryphaena; Our Holy Father Nikita of the Kiev Caves; in Ireland at Ferns, St. Maidoc, bishop & St. Aidan, bishop; at Coldingham, St. Adamnan, priest.

1 / 14 February — Forefeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — The Holy Martyr Tryphon; The Holy Martyrs Perpetua, Felicitas and Satyrus; Our Holy Father Peter of Galateia; St. Cinnia of Ulster; St. Crewenna, who traveled with St. Breacca; St. Kinnia, virgin, veiled by St. Patrick;

St. Brigit (Brigid), abs & her disciple St. Darlugdach, nun - St Brigit lived at the time when Christ's Holy Church was just being revealed in Ireland. In those days, the country was still wild and many of the kings and warriors were brutal and cruel. The power of God's Grace to change people and even whole lands, was shone forth in this holy saint. For, St Brigit is remembered above all else for her holy love, compassion and charity. By her Christ-like example, she taught kings to be merciful, the greedy to be charitable and the pagans to seek Christ. Brigit was born in the year of our Lord 436, at Tirconnell, Ireland. Her mother was a slave, her father, the master. Before St Brigit was born, her mother was sold to a different master, a pagan magician. Brigit's mother was a Christian, strong in faith, and she worked hard to raise her child according to the Gospel. Soon after St Brigit's birth, the magician (wizard) moved to the province of Connaught, taking his household with him. Here, Brigit's mother, whose name was Broiksech, became close to the Christian bishop, Mel. St Brigit herself was raised under the careful and loving eye of this holy bishop, and she grew strong in the Lord under the guidance of her elder. Very early in life, St Brigit showed special gifts of God's Grace, and several people were healed of illnesses through her pure prayers. Moreover, the saint was a hard worker, and she did every task to the glory of God. The people of the district had a special reverence for this blessed child, because of her open-hearted love for everyone and every creature. Now, in the old Irish law, if a master bought a slave woman who was expecting a child, he bought only the mother, and the child was born a free person. When the saint grew older, she wanted to go to visit her father, Dubthach, who lived in the province of Munster. The magician agreed to help her make the journey, and she went to her father's house. To her great joy, St Brigit soon brought her father to a true understanding of the Gospel. The blessed maiden worked on her father's estate, and continued to struggle in fasting and prayer. Once, the council of the bishops of Ireland was to be held in the town of Moy Liffey in nearby Leinster County. A woman in St Brigit's neighbourhood had some need to take her problems to the bishops for their advice and help, and she asked St Brigit to go with her on the journey. There was a certain holy bishop named Ibhair at the council, and it was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, that a blessed maiden was coming to the council. When St Brigit entered the council room, Bishop Ibhair rose to his feet and glorified God. "This is the maiden whom I foresaw," he said. Then, he blessed and consecrated the chosen virgin. Shortly after this, St Brigit went to visit her mother, who was still in slavery. The mother was very ill, but she still had to work hard in her master's dairy. The young saint took over her mother's duties, and with her hard work and prayers, the dairy soon began to produce more butter than ever before. St Brigit had a custom of always dividing the butter into thirteen portions, one each commemorating the twelve apostles, and a larger portion in honour of Christ the Saviour. This last portion, she always gave away to the poor people in the area. Soon, the magician and his wife heard of these things and they came to look over their dairy. They saw that it was now clean and well run. The calves were in good health, and there was much butter being sold every day. The magician's wife, however, out of greed, demanded of Brigit that she fill a large

container with butter then and there, so the mistress could take it home with her. There was only a small quantity of butter left at that time, because the saint had given the extra butter away to poor people. The mistress became angry and began to scold and mock; the blessed one. At this, the saint brought what butter there was in the church, and began to pray to God, making the sign of the Cross upon herself and over the butter. The merciful Lord heard the prayers of his servant, and when she began to take the butter out of the churn, there was more than there had been. Indeed, by God's Grace, there was even more than was needed to fill the container. When the magician saw this, he was amazed. He asked to be taught about this Christ Whom St Brigit and her mother adored. Moreover, he set St Brigit's mother free. After he had been taught the Christian faith, the magician and his whole household were baptized into Christ's Holy Church, and he gave away not only butter, but also cows, to the poor, and completely changed his way of life. St Brigit returned to her father's house, and though he loved her, he was often angry with her. The saint was in the habit of giving away something to every beggar or poor person who asked for her help. In this way, Brigit was giving away all her father's food, property and wealth. In despair, St Brigit's father took her to the fortress of King Dunlaing of Leinster, and asked him to take her into his service as a worker. It was the law in those days, that no-one could carry his sword into the king's house. So, when Dubthach started to enter the king's house, he took off his sword and gave it to St Brigit to hold, until she was sent for. When the king asked why St Brigit's father wanted to be rid of her, Dubthach replied, "She is a good and hard worker, but she is giving everything of mine away to those who do not work, and soon I will be poor." The king told him to bring in Brigit, but when Dubthach came to St Brigit, he noticed that she no longer held his sword. "Where is my sword?" he asked in alarm? "Father, a poor leper came and asked help of me. I had no gold, so I gave him your sword, that he might sell it." St Brigit was brought before the king, and her father angrily told him what had happened with the sword. The king asked in surprise: "Why did you take your father's wealth, and even his sword, and give it away?" St Brigit replied: "The Virgin's Son knows. If I had your power and wealth and all of Leinster, I would give it all to the Lord of the poor." The king was amazed. Then Brigit boldly told him and all those present about the Gospel of Christ and the life God commands of all those who would obtain the Heavenly Kingdom. The king glorified Christ because of the love and compassion of His saint, and sent her away in peace. Not long after this, a certain man came and asked for the hand of Brigit in marriage. Her father was happy to give her away, and the family encouraged her to marry the man. He was wealthy and had a good reputation, and everyone thought he would be a good husband. The saint, however, had already decided to become a nun. She replied to all, "The Son of the Virgin knows. Nothing is good for us if it harms our souls." St Brigit soon went down to the cathedral of Telcha Mide, to Bishop Mel, her elder, with eight other virgins to be tonsured. When they came to church on the day of their tonsure, St Brigit, out of humility, stood at the end of the line, thinking to herself that the others were all more worthy than she. When Bishop Mel saw the merciful saint standing last of all, he called her forth, and said: "Blessed are the least, for they shall be first." He tonsured St Brigit first and set her over the rest as Abbess. She later founded the convent at Kildare. For many years, then, St Brigit struggled and guided her nuns. God granted her many gifts of Grace. People from across the whole country came to the saint for healing, comfort and for help. The saint knew and often helped the great apostle, St Patrick in his tireless labour of enlightening Ireland. St Brigit was renowned for her charity and mercifulness. The number of the poor that she fed is known only to God, and she saved many from prison and death. St Brigit lived for eighty-eight God-pleasing years. As the time of her repose drew near, Bishop Nin, called by the people, "The Pure-Hand," arrived from Rome. He came to visit St Brigit, and found her near death. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy and gave her the Holy Communion. Soon after, the saint gave up her holy soul into the hands of Christ the Saviour, to Whom be all glory and adoration, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen! The great St Columba (Colum-cille), who was the apostle to the Scots in Scotland, when he was sailing to his monastery on the Isle of Iona, was caught in a great storm. He called upon Christ and His saint Brigit to calm the storm, and his prayers were answered. After that, he wrote an ode to the saint, from which the following troparion is composed: Pure virgin and flame of the Lord, / O Brigit, guide to the Eternal Kingdom, / deliver us, by thy prayers, from the throngs of demons and the storms of life, / and pray to Christ God that our souls be saved.



2 / 15 February — Fast Day - The Meeting of Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ — On the fortieth day after His birth, the most holy Virgin brought her divine Son to the Temple in Jerusalem, to consecrate Him to the Lord and to purify herself according to the Law (Lev. 12:2-7, Exod. 12:2). And though neither the one nor the other was necessary, nevertheless the Lawgiver would not in any way transgress the Law which He had given through His servant and prophet Moses. At that time Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was serving his turn as high priest in the Temple. He stood the Virgin Mary in the place for maidens, not that for married women. On this occasion, there were two very special people present: the elder, Simeon, and Anna the daughter of Phanuel. The righteous elder took his Messiah up in his arms and said: 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.' Simeon also spoke the following words of the Christ Child: 'Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.' Then Anna, who had from her youth served God in the Temple in fasting and prayer, and who herself recognised the Messiah, praised the Lord and made known to the inhabitants of Jerusalem the coming of the awaited One. But the Pharisees, present in the Temple and seeing and hearing all that passed, and being vexed with Zacharias for having stood the Virgin Mary in the place for maidens, made this known to King Herod. Believing this to be the new King of whom the star-followers from the East had spoken, Herod quickly sent to have Jesus killed. But in the meantime the holy family had already escaped from the city and set out for Egypt, under the direction of an angel of God. This day has been celebrated from the very earliest times, but its solemn celebration dates from 544, in the time of the Emperor Justinian. The Holy New Martyr Jordan — Candlemas — Blessing of Fruit

Tropar of The Meeting of the Lord, First Tone: Rejoice thou who art full of grace, O Virgin Theotokos, for from thee hath risen the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, enlightening those in darkness. Rejoice, thou also, O righteous Elder, as thou receivest in thine arms the Redeemer of our souls, Who also granteth unto us the Resurrection.

Kondak of The Meeting of the Lord, First Tone: Thou Who didst sanctify the Virgin's womb by Thy birth, and didst bless Simeon's hands as was meet, by anticipation didst even now save us, O Christ God. But grant peace in the midst of wars unto thy commonwealth and strengthen Orthodox Christians whom Thou hast loved, O only lover of mankind.

3 / 16 February — Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — St Simeon the Host of God; The Holy Martyrs Adrian and Eubulus.

Saint Nicholas of Japan - In the world Ivan Dmitryevich Kasatkin, Saint Nicholas was born on 1 August 1836 in Smolensk province, the son of a deacon. His mother died when he was very young. Ivan Dmitryevich was always very serious in church. He attended the Smolensk Theological Seminary where he excelled in his studies, particularly in languages. As he approached the end of his studies he offered fervent prayer to God seeking to know what path his life should take. At that time the priest serving the Russian Consulate in Hakodate, Japan, took ill and was forced to return to Russia. A notice was posted at the Academy seeking candidates for the position. Filled with a strong desire to preach the Gospel to those who had not heard it, Ivan asked to be sent to Japan. His superiors were hesitant to send the talented Ivan to the Consulate position feeling that it would be a waste of his skills, but Ivan convinced them that he would not simply carry out his duties at the Consulate but would devote much time to missionary work. Thus was tonsured with the name Nicholas in 1860, ordained, and left for Japan. What labours awaited the saint in Japan! Eight long years he studied the Japanese language, literature, history, customs, philosophy. He laboured at translating the Gospel into Japanese, the services, the catechism, and only after eight years did he acquire his first disciple, a pagan priest who at first wanted to kill him. Facing his assailant, Father Nicholas asked the priest - a man named Sawabe - if he was acquainted with Christian doctrine. Mr Sawabe replied that he was not, but that he knew the doctrines to be evil. Father Nicholas questioned him again: "How can you be sure of that? Before making such an assertion, ought you not to examine my religion to see whether or not it is so hateful as you suppose?" Mr Sawabe agreed, and Father Nicholas began to explain the tenets of the Christian faith. Mr Sawabe became interested, took notes, and asked if he could return for daily instruction. He was later baptised with the name Paul. Then there began the struggle for each Japanese soul, amidst constant danger of being killed by pagan fanatics. There was joy over the first small Japanese Orthodox community, then joy over the first Japanese priest, then the construction of the cathedral, the school for catechists, and finally - recognition as a diocese, in essence, a local church. It was in fact Paul Sawabe who became the first Japanese priest, ordained in 1875. In 1878 five more priests were ordained to minister to the Japanese flock which by then numbered about 4,000. Then, in 1880, Father Nicholas was summoned to Russia and on March 30 he was consecrated bishop in the Holy Trinity Cathedral of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra. On his return to Japan Bishop Nicholas began to devote even more time to liturgical translations. He considered the holding of the divine services in Japanese as one of the conditions for the successful spreading of Orthodoxy since the entire majesty, wealth and depth of Christian thought was contained in the Orthodox divine services and had to be revealed to the members of the Japanese Church. To this end he faithfully spent four hours a night over the last thirty years of his life. Bishop Nicholas reposed on February 3, 1912. His funeral was the largest ever of a foreigner to be held in Tokyo. By the time of his repose, there were 35,000 native believers, 32 priests, 7 deacons, 15 choir directors, 121 lay preachers, a cathedral, 96 churches, and 265 chapels. To think that there had been no native believers when the young Father Nicholas arrived in Japan in 1860! There are no accounts of miracles attributed to Saint Nicholas. His "miracle" is evident in his efforts as a modern apostle who brought Orthodoxy to Japan and established a Church which continues to prosper to this day with some 30,000 Japanese Orthodox faithful, over forty parishes, and between two to three hundred converts made every year. For these labours in May 1993 the Synod of Bishops of the ROCA resolved to recognise Archbishop Nicholas as a saint, along with Metropolitan Innocent of Moscow and Archbishop John of Shanghai and San Francisco. The service of glorification of Saints Innocent and Nicholas took place on 17/30 January 1994; at Chester, St. Werburga, virgin; in Cornwall, St. Ia (Ives), virgin & martyr; in Ireland, St. Caellainn, virgin; St., Werburga of Mercia, widow, abbess (ca700); St. Colman MacDuach, bishop of Connaught; St. Laurence of Canterbury, bishop (619).

About the providence of Zacchaeus of little stature

Thus it was spoken by the One Whose word is life and joy and restoration of the righteous. Just as the bleak forest clothes itself into greenery and flowers from the breath of spring, so does every man, regardless of how arid and darkened by sin, becomes fresh and youthful from the nearness of Christ. For the nearness of Christ is as the nearness of some life-giving and fragrant balsam which restores health, increases life, give fragrance to the soul, to the thoughts and to the words of man. In other words, distance from Christ means decay and death and His nearness means salvation and life.

"Today, salvation has come to this house" said the Lord upon entering the house of Zacchaeus the sinner. Christ was the salvation that came and Zacchaeus was the house into which He entered. Brethren, each one of us is a house in which sin dwells as long as Christ is distant and to which salvation comes when Christ approaches it. Nevertheless, will Christ approach my house and your house? That depends on us. Behold, He did not arbitrarily enter the house of the sinner Zacchaeus, rather He entered as a most desired guest. Zacchaeus of little stature climbed into a tree in order to see the Lord Jesus with his own eyes. Zacchaeus, therefore, sought him; Zacchaeus desired Him. We must also seek Him in order to find Him and desire Him in order that He would draw nearer to us and, with our spirit, to climb high in order to encounter His glance. Then He will visit our house as He visited the house of Zacchaeus and with Him salvation will come.

Draw near to us O Lord, draw near and bring to us Your eternal salvation.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.

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