



5th Sunday After Pentecost Synaxis of the Twelve Apostles

30 June / 13 July 2014

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 Twelve Apostles tone 3: Holy Apostles, intercede with our merciful God, / that He may grant to our souls / the forgiveness of our sins.

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 Twelve Apostles tone 2: Today Christ the Rock gladly glorifies the rock of faith, the chosen disciple, / together with Paul and the whole company of the Twelve. / As we celebrate their memory / we glorify Him Who has glorified them.

Matins Gospel V

EPISTLE: ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS 10:1-10

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down from above) Or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

SEEKING TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, THEY HAVE NOT SUBMITTED TO THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

Observe how adroitly he favours them in the word, and yet shows their unseasonable obstinacy ...These things he says to show that it was from a petulancy and love of power that they erred, rather than from ignorance ...For if Christ be 'the end of the Law,' he who does not have Christ, even if he seems to have righteousness, does not have it. But he who has Christ, even though he may not have properly fulfilled the Law, has received the whole. For the end of the physician's art is health ...He who does not know how to heal, though he may seem to be a follower of the art, comes short of everything: so is it in the case of the Law and of faith ...For what was the object of the Law? To make man righteous. But it did not have the power, for no one fulfilled it ...But to this end Christ gave a fuller accomplishment through faith. Be not then afraid, he says, as if you are transgressing the Law by having come over to the faith. For only then do you transgress it, when for the sake of the Law you do not believe in Christ.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XVII on Romans X. B#54, pp. 472- 473.

Second Epistle: 1 Cor 4: 9-16

GOSPEL: ST. MATTHEW 8:28 - 9:1

When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine." And He said to them, "Go." So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region. So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city.

THE DEMONIACS

The Gospel reading for last Sunday taught us a lesson on the deep humility of the Roman Centurion, who came to ask Christ for the healing of his servant. But today's Gospel does not give us a lesson of what we should do, but rather shows us what we should avoid, what we should not do. This shows us the striking reality of the existence of the power of evil. In our time such a reality doesn't even require proof. Every day, every newspaper tells about a whole list of crimes which simply cannot be explained without recognising that the person is possessed by an external, evil power.

Today's Gospel draws a terrible picture for us: two demoniacs came out from the tombs, "exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way" (Mt. 8:28). Christ permitted the demons to enter into a huge herd of swine. The possessed ones were healed, but the whole herd of swine jumped from the precipice into the sea. What a terrible force! A real, overt force of evil!

But here is the last verse of the Gospel: "And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus" (Mt. 8:34). And now you expect to find something gladdening: the whole town has united in order to meet the Lord. You want to think that it was faith that united them, that they, as once did the Samaritans, would ask the Lord to remain with them, would thank Him for His healing, for the salvation of two of their townspeople, and also for freeing them from the danger present when passing that way. And what happened? Yes, they asked the Lord, but not to stay with them, but rather to "depart out of their coasts!" (Mt. 8:34).

Here is the most terrible passage in this Gospel. First the demons were in two possessed men. Later, we saw them in an entire herd of swine. And then, a whole town — possessed. With what? With the passion for profit. According to Jewish law, raising pigs was unlawful, sinful. But it made money, and huge amounts of money. And here an entire herd perished. And the people seemed to be saying to the Lord: "You have only set foot on our land and have caused us such a terrible loss. What will happen next if you stay here any longer? You will ruin us completely! We see, we understand your greatness: even the devils are obedient to you! But what does that do for us? What do the two healed men matter to us? We don't need your miracles. We need thousands, millions of dollars. You are not for us. Go away, go away at once."

Brothers and sisters, let us examine our soul. Doesn't the same thing happen with us? Some kind of passion takes possession of us, but Christ becomes an obstacle. And in our soul, we whisper the same terrible words: "Go away from us." May the Lord keep us from this! May our words directed to Him always be: "Come to us and never leave us."

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei

Second Gospel: Mark 3: 13-19

Saints of the Week

30 June / 13 July — Synaxis of the Holy, Glorious and All-praised Twelve Apostles - although each of the Twelve Apostles has his own Feast Day during the year, the Church has set aside this day for a general Feast of all of them together, including St Paul. The names, their Feast Day(s) and how these most holy and selfless men in the history of the world died and finished their earthly course:

Peter—June 29th and January 16th - crucified upside-down.

Andrew—November 30th - crucified.

James the Son of Zebedee—April 30th - beheaded.

John the Theologian—September 26th and May 8th - died in a wondrous way.

Philip—November 14th - crucified.

Bartholomew—June 11th and August 25th - crucified, then flayed and beheaded.

Thomas—October 6th - pierced with five spears.

Matthew the Evangelist—November 16th - burned by fire.

James the Son of Alphaeus—October 9th - crucified.

Thaddeus (or Jude the brother of James)—June 19th - crucified.

Simon the Zealot—May 10th - crucified.

Matthias—August 9th stoned, then beheaded with an axe when dead.

Paul—June 29th - beheaded.

THE HOLY APOSTLES - As a dry desert, the whole world was; / Across it [the world] the chariot of the Spirit flew / A fiery vision, the Holy Apostles; / The All-holy Spirit, through them, the universe rebuilt. / The rivers of wondrous grace flowed, . The dead desert, to life converted. / Wonderful Apostles, watery clouds, / Simple ones, wise ones, fishermen, heroes! / From the Ganges to the Thames, they carried the torch, / From the Nile to Pontus, holiness they proclaimed, / From variegated Persia to bronze Gaul, / Where the feet walk or the galleys sail / Everywhere, the miracle of the Incarnate God, brought, / Everywhere, the Name of the Resurrected Christ proclaimed, / Without complaint and fear, without any confusion: / Mountains and seas, to them were not obstacles, / The sword did not frighten them, nor persecution prevent them, / Neither all the fires of Hades which, against them, erupted. / Truth guided them and not a false fable: / Our life is Christ, and death a beautiful gain! / Thus, they spoke. To such as these, what could be done? / Crucify their bodies? Scrape their skins? / That, the world did, but what kind of harm did it do them? / To reign eternally! Thus, God judged.

Blessed Peter the Heir - by descent, was a Tartar and the nephew of the Tartar King Berkai. He heard the words of salvation from Bishop Cyril of Rostov and those words adhered to his heart. And yet when he witnessed the miraculous healing of Berkai's son, by the help of Bishop Cyril's prayer, he secretly left the Golden Horde and fled to Rostov where he was baptized and where, with all his soul and mind, dedicated himself to asceticism and the study of the honourable Faith. Once at night, Saints Peter and Paul appeared to him in a dream on the shores of the lake and commanded him to build a church in their name on that same place and along with that, Blessed Peter received from the saints the necessary amount of money for that purpose. Indeed, Blessed Peter built a most beautiful church there in which he in old age, following the death of his wife, was

tonsured a monk. Blessed Peter died peacefully in ripe old age on June 29, 1290 A.D. and his church became and remains a monastery called the Petrovski Monastery.;

Our Holy Father George the Georgian - George was born in Iberia [Georgia] in 1014 A.D. and was a relative of the Georgian kings. George

received a good classical education in his childhood but his heart drew him to the spiritual life. He lived a life of asceticism with the famous spiritual father George in the Black Mountain. He fled to Holy Mount Athos and continued his asceticism in the monastery Iveron. George became the abbot of Iveron. With the help of Emperor Constantine Monomachus he restored Iveron and covered the monastery church with lead. That lead roof remains even today. He translated the Holy Scriptures, the Prologue and books of the Divine Services into the Georgian language. King Bagrat invited him to Georgia to teach the people. George was royally welcomed in his homeland. He travelled everywhere and taught both the clergy and people. In his old age, he desired to die on Mt. Athos where he set out for but death overtook him in Constantinople in the year 1067 A.D. His relics were translated to Iveron. Even though he died on May 24, the monks of Iveron commemorate his memory on June 30 considering him to be as "equal to the apostles."; Synaxis of All Saints of Tver.

1 / 14 July — The Holy Martyrs Cosmas and Damian - unmercenary doctors and wonderworkers, these two saints were brothers. Born in Rome, baptised as children and given a Christian education, they were endowed by God with the gift of healing, generally by the laying-on of their hands, of both men and animals. They sought no reward for their work, only urging the sick to faith in Christ the Lord. Inheriting great wealth, they compassionately divided it among the poor and needy. The Emperor Galerius was on the throne in Rome at that time. Persecutors of the Christian faith brought these two holy brothers, bound in chains, before him. After prolonged interrogation, the Emperor charged them to deny Christ and offer sacrifice to idols. Cosmas and Damian not only refused to obey the Emperor; they urged him to forsake dead idols and come to the knowledge of the one, true God. 'Our God is not created, but is the Creator of all, and your gods come of the imaginings of men and the hands of artists. If there were no artists to make your gods, you would have nothing to worship.' After a miracle performed on the Emperor himself—healing him of a grave infirmity—the Emperor declared his faith in Christ and let the holy brothers go in peace. They continued to glorify Christ our God and to heal the sick, and were themselves glorified on all sides by the people. A doctor, a former teacher of theirs, envying their fame, lured them into the hills on the pretext of collecting herbs and stoned them to death. They suffered with honour for the Christian faith in 284. Their memory endures in the Church on earth, and their souls went to the Kingdom of the Lord, to live eternally in glory and joy.

Our Holy Father Peter the Patrician - a nobleman from Constantinople and a commander during the reign of Emperor Nicephorus. In a war with the Bulgarians, Emperor Nicephorus was slain and Peter, with fifty Greek commanders and princes, was captured and cast into prison. St. John the Theologian miraculously freed Peter from prison. Peter then despised all earthly glory, left his wife and son, and withdrew to Mount Olympia where, as a monk and as a disciple of St. Joannicius the Great, lived a life of mortification for thirty-four years. Following the death of his wife and son, he settled in Constantinople where he spent eight more years in fasting and prayer and fell asleep in the Lord in the year 865 A.D. in the seventy-seventh year of his life;

The Holy Martyr Potitus - a thirteen-year-old child who was born in Sardinia. He endured much suffering for Christ both from his father and from the civil persecutors of Christianity. Potitus was beheaded during the reign of Emperor Antoninus (138-161 A.D.) but, before this, Potitus cured and baptized Agnes, the daughter of the emperor; Holy Julius and Aaron, protomartyrs of Wales (c.304); St. Servanus, Apostle of the Western Fife of East Scotland (6th c.).

2 / 15 July — Deposition of the Vesture of the Most Holy Mother of God in the Blachernae Church in Constantinople - in the time of the Emperor Leo the Great (457-474) and the Empress Verina and Patriarch Gennadius, two Constantinopolitan nobles, Galbius and Candidus, were travelling in the Holy Land to venerate the holy places there. In Nazareth, they stayed in the house of a Jewish girl who had the vesture of the Mother of God kept in a secret place. Many of the sick and wretched had received healing through prayer and the touching of this vesture. Galbius and Candidus took this holy relic to Constantinople and informed the Emperor and the Patriarch of its existence. It was the cause of great rejoicing in the imperial city. The vesture was ceremonially placed in the Blachernae church (a church built by the Emperor Marcian and Empress Pulcheria on the shore of a bay, and named 'Blachernae' after a General Blacheran from Scetis, who was killed there), and this commemorative feast was instituted;

St Juvenal, Patriarch of Jerusalem – a contemporary of the great illuminators of the Orthodox Church: Euthymius, Theodosius, Gerasimus, Simeon the Stylite and others. He participated in two Ecumenical Councils: the Third Council in Ephesus [431 A.D.] and the Fourth Council in Chalcedon [451 A.D.]. With great power and zeal, he fought against the blasphemous heresies: in Ephesus against Nestorius who called the Birth-giver of God the Birth-giver of Christ and in Chalcedon against Eutyches and Dioscorus who taught that there was only one nature in Christ, i.e., only a divine nature without a human nature. Following the victory of Orthodoxy at both councils, Juvenal returned to his throne in Jerusalem. Even though the heresies were condemned, the heretics were not eliminated. Through the intrigue and violence of Theodosius, a friend of Dioscorus, Juvenal was banished from the patriarchal throne and Theodosius, on his own, elevated himself in Juvenal's place. In the beginning, this heretic Theodosius was supported by Empress Eudocia, the widow of Theodosius the Younger who, at that time, took up residence in Jerusalem. Hesitant and indiscreet, Eudocia finally went to see St. Simeon the Stylite in order to ask him wherein lies the truth. The saint of God unmasked all the heretical teachings and instructed the empress to adhere to the teachings of Orthodoxy as confirmed at the councils. The empress heeded, repented and she herself became embittered against the false Patriarch Theodosius. During that time Marcian and Pulcheria reigned in Constantinople. A letter from the emperor was sent to Commander Athanasius ordering him to banish Theodosius and to return and reinstate Juvenal to his throne which the commander quickly did. Juvenal governed the Church in Jerusalem for thirty-eight years as its hierarch and at a ripe old age presented himself to the Lord in the year 458 A.D. to receive from Him

the reward for great suffering and misery which he had endured for the truth. During the reign of St. Juvenal, the celebration of Christmas was established on December 25;

St Photius, Metropolitan of Moscow - of Greek descent. He prudently governed the Russian Church for twenty years. Photius died in the year 1430 A.D. A week before his death an angel of God appeared to him and informed him of the exact time of his departure from this world.

3 / 16 July — The Holy Martyr Hyacinthus - a young man, a courtier at the court of the Emperor Trajan, he was a secret Christian. Once, when the Emperor and all his court were offering sacrifice to idols, Hyacinthus stood apart from these abominable ceremonies. He was therefore denounced and brought to trial before the Emperor. The Emperor urged him to deny Christ and sacrifice to idols, but Hyacinthus remained firm as diamond and said to the Emperor: 'I am a Christian. I revere Christ and worship Him, and I bring my living self to Him as a sacrifice.' Whipped, spat upon and flayed, this holy martyr was flung into prison. By order of the Emperor, he was given nothing to eat but food that had been sacrificed to idols. Hyacinthus would not eat this, and died in prison after eight days. The warder saw two shining angels in the prison, one covering the martyr's body with his own glorious vesture and the other placing a wreath of glory on his head; and the whole prison was filled with light and radiance. The young Hyacinthus suffered with honour and was crowned with a wreath of glory in the year 108.

St Anatolius, Patriarch of Constantinople - At first, Anatolius was a presbyter in the Church at Alexandria and following the death of Patriarch Flavian, he was elevated to the patriarchal throne of Constantinople in the year 449 A.D. During his reign, the throne of Constantinople was recognized as equal to the throne of Rome by the Ecumenical Council held at Chalcedon in 451 A.D. He struggled greatly for the purity of the Orthodox Faith, suffered much at the hands of the heretics and finally was slain by them in the year 458 A.D. during the reign of Pope Leo the Great. Anatolius governed the church for nearly nine years and took up his habitation among the holy hierarchs in the Kingdom of God;

Our Holy Father Alexander - born in Asia, educated in Constantinople and after the completion of his schooling he devoted himself to military service and attained the rank of an officer. Reading Holy Scripture, he came across the words of the Savior: "If you seek perfection, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor. You will then have treasure in heaven. Afterward come back and follow me" ([St. Matthew 19:21](#)). These words had such an effect on Alexander that he immediately sold and distributed all that he had and withdrew into the wilderness. After many mortifications and labours in purifying himself, he established a monastery of the Sleepless Ones with a special constitution according to this rule: the divine services [offices] were carried on night and day without interruption in his community. The brotherhood was divided into twenty-four relays [cursus]. Each relay knew their hour of the day and night and went to church to continue the reading and singing of the preceding relay. Carrying nothing with him, Alexander traveled much throughout the eastern regions enlightening men with the Faith of Christ. Alexander disputed with heretics, worked miracles by the Grace of God, grew old serving the Lord and finally ended his earthly life in Constantinople in the year 430 A.D. where his relics manifested miraculous power and glory through which God glorifies His holy servants; Our Holy Father Isaiah the Solitary.

St. Germanus, bishop of Isle of Man and enlightener of Peel, (5th c.) - a nephew of Saint Patrick; when Saint Germanus of Auxerre (July 31) visited Britain in 448 AD to refute the Pelagians, he met an Irish colonist whose son became his disciple and chose his master's name for himself. Germanus of Man was born in Brittany and went to Ireland to work with Saint Patrick. He was a missionary monk in Ireland, in Wales under Saints Brioc (May 1) and Illtyd (November 6), and Brittany. Germanus left Brittany to meet Patrick in Britain about 462. There he engaged in a magic contest with Gwrtheyrn. After that he returned to Ireland (c. 466) eventually to become the bishop of the Isle of Man during the lifetime of Patrick. After evangelising in Wales, his name is traced in Spain and Gaul. His martyrdom is recorded in Normandy. His memory is preserved in place names, such as Jarman and Gremain, in areas such as Caernavonshire, Denbighshire, Montgomeryshire, and Radnorshire. His name is also found in the Acts of Kieran and those of other early Irish saints. Leland mentions a pilgrimage to Garmon ("Armon") at Llanarmonyn.

Tropar of St German, Tone 2: Nephew of Patrick and missionary in Ireland,/ thou didst spread the Faith in many lands./ From Wales to Brittany, and thence to the Isle of Man,/ thou didst glorify Christ wherever thou didst tread./ Pray to Christ to save our souls.

4 / 17 July — The Royal Martyrs - In April of 1918, Tsar Nicholas and his family and faithful servants were transferred to Ekaterinburg by the now victorious Bolsheviks. There they spent three hellish months of psychological torture? and yet they all retained their inward calm and state of prayer, so that not a small number of their tormentors were softened by these valiant Christian strugglers. As Pierre Gilliard, the French tutor to the Tsarevich Alexis recalled: "The courage of the prisoners was sustained in a remarkable way by religion. They had kept that wonderful faith which at Tobolsk had been the admiration of their entourage and which had given them such strength, such serenity in suffering. They were already almost entirely detached from this world The Tsaritsa and Grand Duchesses could often be heard singing religious airs, which affected their guards in spite of themselves." Gradually these guards were humanized by contact with their prisoners. They were astonished at their simplicity, attracted by their gentleness, subdued by their serene dignity, and soon found themselves dominated by those whom they thought they held in their power. The drunken Avdiev found himself disarmed by such greatness of soul; he grew conscious of his own infamy. The early ferocity of these men was succeeded by profound pity." When this would happen, the inhuman Bolsheviks would replace the guards who had been so touched with crueller and more animalistic ones. Seldom being allowed to go to church, they nevertheless nourished their souls with home prayers and greatly rejoiced at every opportunity to receive the Divine Sacraments. Three days before their martyrdom, in the very house in which they were imprisoned, there took place the last church service of their suffering lives. As the officiating priest, Fr. John Storozhev, related: "' It appeared to me that the Emperor, and all his daughters too, were very tired. During such a service it is customary to read a prayer for the deceased. For some reason, the Deacon began to sing it, and I joined him? As soon as we started to sing, we heard the Imperial Family behind us drop to their knees' (as is done during funeral services)? Thus they prepared

themselves without suspecting it, for their own death in accepting the funeral viaticum. Contrary to their custom none of the family sang during the service, and upon leaving the house the clergymen expressed the opinion that they 'appeared different' as if something had happened to them." Finally, after midnight on July 4, 1918, the entire family, with their doctor and two faithful servants, was brought to the basement of the house of their confinement under the pretext of moving them once again. There they were brutally and mercilessly murdered, the children as well as the adults, under the cover of darkness? for "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). The Tsar was shot as he stood forward to defend his family. Tsaritsa Alexandra was able to make the sign of the Cross before she, too, fell. Amid screams, the children were shot, clubbed and bayoneted, in an act of indescribably brutality. There is evidence that the murders were ritualistic; strange symbols (CANABALISTIC) were found on the walls of the room where the crime took place. Thus ended the life of the gentle, Christ-like Tsar, as a sacrifice for the Orthodox Faith and for the Russian people, both of whom he so fervently loved and believed in. This crime was the beginning of an inhuman bloodbath which left tens of millions dead, the Church in the grip of atheists and Holy Russia entirely unrecognizable. Now it is up to us to pray to the twice-crowned Tsar-Martyr Nicholas and his family to intercede before the throne of God that the sins of the Orthodox might be forgiven. And may our Lord Jesus Christ grant us the strength of faith to follow the example of these true servants of His;

St. Andrew of Crete - born in Damascus of Christian parents. He was a mute from birth until the age of seven. When his parents brought him to church and he received Holy Communion, he began to speak. So great is the power of the Divine and Holy Communion. At age fourteen, Andrew went to Jerusalem and was tonsured in the Lavra of St. Sabas the Sanctified. By virtue of his understanding and asceticism, he surpassed many of the older monks and was an example to them. After a while, the patriarch took him as his personal secretary. When the Monothelite heresy began to rage the heresy which taught that the Lord Jesus did not possess a human will but only a divine will the Sixth Ecumenical Council convened in Constantinople in the year 681 A.D. during the reign of Constantine IV [Bearded One]. Theodore, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, was unable to attend the council but sent Andrew as his representative who, at that time, was an Archdeacon. At the council, Andrew displayed his wonderful gift of oratory, his zeal for the Faith and rare prudence. Having assisted in strengthening the Orthodox Faith, Andrew returned to his duties in Jerusalem. Later, he was elected and installed as the Archbishop of the Island of Crete. As an archbishop, he was greatly loved by the people. Andrew was very zealous for Orthodoxy and vehemently eradicated all heresies. Through his prayers he worked miracles. By his prayers, he drove the Saracens from the Island of Crete. Andrew wrote many books of instruction, hymns and canons of which the most renown is the Great Canon to the Birth-giver of God read on Thursday of the Fifth Sunday of the Great Lenten Season. His outward appearance was such that "seeing his face and hearing his words flowing like honey, everyone found pleasure and amended their ways." On one occasion, returning from Constantinople, Andrew foretold his death before he arrived in Crete. And so it happened. When the boat in which he traveled sailed near the island of Mitylene, this beacon of the Church ended his earthly life and with his soul, took up habitation in the Kingdom of Christ in the year 721 A.D., St. Martha - the mother of St. Simeon of the Wonderful Mountain;

St. Finbar of Wexford - Founded a monastery on the Innis Doimhle (Isle of Crimlen), Wexford, Ireland in the sixth century, and served as its first abbot. His name means white head (Fionnbharr) .

Tropar of St Finbar tone 3: O holy Finbar, thou didst labour faithfully/ and gain many disciples who followed thee to Christ./ As thou didst guide souls in thine Irish monastery,/ pray to Christ our God/ to grant us His great mercy.

5 / 18 July — Our Holy Father Athanasius the Athonite - born in Trebizond of God-fearing parents, he was early left destitute, but, by the providence of God, a high-ranking army officer took him, removed him to Constantinople and had him educated there. He was beloved by all his contemporaries for his meekness and humility. In their childish games, they appointed one of themselves to be Emperor, another Commander and so forth. Athanasius was always chosen Abbot, as if in prophecy. Finishing his schooling, Athanasius (called Abraham until his tonsuring) retired to Mount Kyminas in Bithynia, where he lived in asceticism as a disciple of the famous Michael Maleinos. Desiring yet stricter asceticism, he moved to the Holy Mountain, to live in silence. Many, desirous of the ascetic life, began to gather round him and he was constrained to build the famous Lavra. The Byzantine Emperors gave him generous help in this, especially Nicephorus Phocas, who himself had the intention of retiring and becoming a monk. Later, John Tzimiskes also gave him great help. Manifold temptations were visited upon Athanasius, from demons and from men, but he, as a valiant soldier of Christ, resisted and overcame them all by his immense humility and unceasing prayer to the living God. Filled with the grace of God, he was found worthy to behold the most holy Mother of God, who miraculously brought forth water from a rock and promised him that she would evermore be the abbess of his monastery. Athanasius surpassed his brethren in work and in prayer, and loved them all with the love of a spiritual father and shepherd. Death came to him suddenly. He, together with six of his monks, had climbed up onto a newly-constructed part of the church to inspect a wall that was in building when the wall fell in and buried them all. So died this great light of monasticism in 1003. He appeared a number of times to his brethren after his death, to console or rebuke them; Our Holy Father, the Martyr Cyprian the New; Our Holy Father Lampadius; Uncovering of the relics of Sergius of Radonezh;

St. Fragan and St. Gwen (Blanche) - 5th century. During the troubled times following the Roman departure from Britain, Saints Fragan and Gwen became refugees in Brittany, when many churches are dedicated to each of them. They are the parents of Saints Winwaloe, Jacut, Guethenoc, and Gunthiern.

Tropar of Ss Fragan and Gwen tone 4: O noble exiles Fragan and Gwen/ who fled to Brittany in troubled times:/ you established churches to God's praise and glory;/ your children brought joy and gladness to the Breton people./ We praise you, glorious Saints.

St. Morwenna, patron of Morewenstow, England (6th c.) - her name means 'maiden' in Cornish.

6 / 19 July — Our Holy Father Sisoës the Great - an Egyptian by birth, he lived at first in Scetis then, after St Antony's death, settled on the desert mountain on which Antony had earlier lived in asceticism and which was named after him. He learned humility through great struggles with himself, becoming meek and guileless as a lamb. Therefore God gave him the great gifts of healing the sick, driving out unclean spirits and raising the dead. Sisoës lived in the desert for sixty years, and was a fount of

living wisdom for all the monks and lay folk who came to him for advice. At the time of his death, his face shone like the sun. The monks stood around him and marvelled at this sight and, when the saint gave up his soul, the whole chamber was filled with a wonderful fragrance. He entered into rest in great old age, in about 429. St Sisoës taught his monks: 'When temptation comes to a man, that man must give himself over to the will of God, and acknowledge that the temptation comes upon him because of his sins. If something good comes to pass, he must acknowledge that it comes about by the providence of God.' A monk asked him: 'How can I please God and be saved?' The saint replied: 'If you desire to please God, withdraw from the world, separate yourself from the earth, leave aside creation and draw near to the Creator, unite yourself to God with prayers and tears, and you will find rest in this world and in the next.' A monk asked Sisoës: 'How can I acquire humility?' The saint replied: 'When a man learns to regard every man as better than himself, he thus acquires humility.' Ammon complained to Sisoës that he could not memorise the wise sayings that he had read, to be able to quote them in conversation with others. The saint replied: 'It is not necessary. That which is necessary is to acquire purity of mind and to speak from this purity, placing one's hope in God.' The Holy Martyrs Marinus and Martha, with their sons, Audifax and Habakkuk, the Priest Valentine, Cyrinus, Asterius and many others; The Finding of the Relics of St Juliana the Virgin; The Holy Martyr Lucy; St. Monenna, foundress of Killeevy Monastery, Ireland (c.518).

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE HOLY APOSTLES

As a dry desert, the whole world was; Across it [the world] the chariot of the Spirit flew A fiery vision, the Holy Apostles; The All-holy Spirit, through them, the universe rebuilt. The rivers of wondrous grace flowed, The dead desert, to life converted. Wonderful Apostles, watery clouds, Simple ones, wise ones, fishermen, heroes! From the Ganges to the Thames, they carried the torch, From the Nile to Pontus, holiness they proclaimed, From variegated Persia to bronze Gaul, Where the feet walk or the galleys sail Everywhere, the miracle of the Incarnate God, brought, Everywhere, the Name of the Resurrected Christ proclaimed, Without complaint and fear, without any confusion: Mountains and seas, to them were not obstacles, The sword did not frighten them, nor persecution prevent them, Neither all the fires of Hades which, against them, erupted. Truth guided them and not a false fable: Our life is Christ, and death a beautiful gain! Thus, they spoke. To such as these, what could be done? Crucify their bodies? Scrape their skins? That, the world did, but what kind of harm did it do them? To reign eternally! Thus, God judged.

REFLECTION

Concern for the good of all people! That concern filled the exalted spirits and noble hearts of the holy apostles. Writing about the Apostle Paul, St. John Chrysostom calls him: "The universal father of the world." "As though he", says Chrysostom, "gave birth to the entire world that he anxiously labored and tried to bring all into the Kingdom." Indeed, most exalted is this title: "Universal father of the world" and if this title could be attributed to anyone, other than God, it could only be attributed to the apostles of Christ. By their parental concern for the entire world, they in truth, were "the universal fathers of the world." There are many mothers in the world who care less about their own children than the apostles were concerned about the good of their persecutors and adversaries. The Apostle Peter twice saved his most bitter adversary, Simon the Magician, from death: once when the people wanted to burn him and another time when a dog wanted to tear him to pieces. Just think, how the world repaid these their benefactors! As if they were the greatest robbers and criminals. O how true are the words of St. Cyril who says: "As long as we are in the body, the same occurs to us Christians as to pagans, the difference is only in the spirit."

CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the miraculous repentance of the thief on the Cross: "But the other one rebuked him: 'Have you no fear of God seeing you are under the same sentence?' " (St. Luke 23:40): 1. How the sensible thief in his suffering senses God's closeness, repents and prays to God for salvation while the suffering of the insensible thief incites him to blaspheme God; 2. How because of sin I am a thief and because of sin I should be as that sensible thief whose suffering does not estrange him from God but rather draws him closer to God; God and salvation.

Available on the net at <http://www.saintjonah.org/bltn/> or at www.roq.org.au or, request your own copy from Father John Weir by emailing him at rev.john.weir@rocor.org.au