

7th Sunday After Pentecost

The Deposition of the Precious Robe of the Theotokos

2 / 15 July

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 6: The angelic powers were at Thy tomb; / the guards became as dead men. / Mary stood by Thy grave, / seeking Thy most pure Body. / Thou didst capture hell, not being tempted by it. / Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life. / O Lord who didst rise from the Dead, / Glory to Thee!

Troparion tone 8: O Ever-Virgin Mother of God, shelter of mankind, / thou hast given a powerful legacy to thy people, / thine immaculate body's tunic and sash which remain incorrupt through thy pure childbirth. / For in thee time and nature are renewed, / and we implore thee to obtain peace for the world and great mercy for our souls.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 6: When Christ God the Giver of Life, / raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His Mighty Hand, / He bestowed resurrection on the human race. / He is the Saviour of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of All.

Kontakion tone 4: Thou hast given the covering of thy pure body / as an incorrupt garment for all the faithful, / and as shelter for all mankind, / O pure Lady, Mother of God. / We celebrate its placing in Blachernae / and cry to thee with fear and love: / O Virgin, boast of Christians, rejoice.



Matins Gospel VII

EPISTLE: ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS 15: 1-7

We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, That you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

HAVING GIFTS THAT DIFFER ACCORDING TO THE GRACE GIVEN TO US, LET US USE THEM

He wants to make them vie with each other, and to labour more earnestly by showing that it is they themselves who give the grounds for their receiving more or less. For he says indeed that it is given by God ...But he also says that the beginnings lie with themselves in order to rouse the listless. This he does in the Epistle to the Corinthians as well, to produce these emotions. For when he says, 'covet the gifts earnestly,' (I Cor. 12:31), he shows that they were themselves the cause of the differences in what was given ...For though it is a grace, yet it is not poured forth at random, but framing its measure according to the recipients, it lets as much flow as it may find the vessel of faith that is brought to be capable of holding...

CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEEDS OF SAINTS, PRACTICE HOSPITALITY

Even the Apostleship is called a ministry, and every spiritual work is a ministry ... It is not enough to give, but we must also do it with munificence, for this always answers to the name of simplicity ...It is not enough to show mercy, but it behooves us to do it with largesse and an ungrudging spirit ... even with a cheerful and rejoicing one ...He said, 'He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully' (II Cor. 9:6) ... In this way the widow outweighed many talents by the two mites, for her spirit was large.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXI on Romans XII. B#55, pp. 501, 502.

for the Theotokos: Heb. 9:1-7

GOSPEL: ST. MATTHEW 9: 27-35

When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See that no one knows it." But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never seen like this in Israel!" But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons." Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

In today's Gospel lesson we heard, beloved, how our Lord Jesus Christ restored the sight of two blind men who *followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us"* (Matt. 9:27), that is to say, take pity on us and heal us, give us the sight which we have lost. Thus we may understand these Gospel words. Christ asked them: *Do you believe that I am able to do this* (Matt. 9:28)? And they said to Him: *Yes, Lord*. Then the Divine Teacher touched their eyes and said: *According to your faith let it be to you* (Matt. 9:29), and the blind men were able to see.

Faith in the victory of Good over Evil is inherent in every person. It is the foundation of our life. Faith moves us to activity. Thus, for example, a farmer sowing his wheat in the spring believes he will reap a harvest in the autumn. But the faith of which we are speaking today is higher and more perfect: We believe in God the Creator. This is the manifestation of our striving towards God. Such faith saves. *He who believes and is baptized will be saved* (Mark 16:16), says the Lord. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

"Faith is confidence in the unseen as in the seen, and in the desired and expected as in that which is present," Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow of blessed memory teaches us in his explanation of the words of the Holy Apostle Paul (Heb. 11:1). But faith alone, the simple recognition of God's existence, is insufficient for salvation, for *even the demons believe—and tremble!* (James 2:19), writes the Holy Apostle James. Faith without good deeds does not lead to salvation: *Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead* (James 2:17).

Man believes in God as the Creator of all things and the Providence, without Whose will nothing happens on earth. Man believes in God as the Source of all blessings, as the Supreme Being, Omnipresent, All-holy and Loving. Man is drawn to Him by his own heart, as a plant is drawn to the sun. He seeks communion with God and finds it in prayer. Through prayer he tastes the joy of communion with God. A believer loves God and feels in himself His merciful love. He wants to please God and always strives to fulfil God's commandments, keeping in mind the words of the Savior: *If you love Me, keep My commandments* (John 14:15).

Along this path one meets many tribulations and temptations. The believer must keep up an especially strenuous spiritual struggle with his thoughts and with sinful habits, affirming his will to sanctity in this struggle.

Divine Grace helps a man along his good path of pleasing God. The believer becomes humble, grieves and cries over his sins; he becomes meek, moderate, chaste and merciful. A true believer becomes faithful to God. While still on earth, his faith turns into knowledge of God, spiritual vision. Such a man becomes a son of God through Grace.

The Lord calls all of us to faith and faithfulness. He says: *Have faith in God* (Mark 11:22). But do we, beloved, have faith like the faith of the blind men healed by Christ? There is a great rift in many of us between faith and the life of faith. We must pay deep attention to our inner life so as to detect the spiritual flaws in it, and correct and heal them as quickly as possible. And may the Lord help us to be not only believers in God, but also faithful to Him. Amen.

A.A.R.

for the Theotokos: Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28

Saints of the Week

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, Galbuis 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. Galbuis 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 1430A.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 crueler 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 renowned 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 — Fast Day - 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 Lampadus; 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).

7 / 20 July — Fast Day - Our Holy Father Thomas of Mt. Maleon - was a general, famed for his courage and wealth. He was massive of body and a source of fear to his enemies. But, when he came to love Christ more than the world or anything in the world, he left everything and retired to the desert, where he became a monk and gave himself to asceticism. St Elias the Prophet appeared to him, and led him to the mountain called Malea, near the Holy Mountain. There he lived in solitude, alone with God, in unceasing prayer day and night. Although he hid from the world, he could not succeed in concealing himself. Learning of the holiness of his life, people began to go to him, bringing their sick. St Thomas healed them of all ills and weaknesses. When he went to God (in the tenth century), his relics continued to give aid to all who drew near to them in faith; St. Acacius of Sinai, who is mentioned in The Ladder;

Our Holy Fathers, the Martyrs Epictetus and Astius - Astius, the only son of his parents, was persuaded to love the Faith of Christ by Epictetus the priest who baptized him and tonsured him a monk. After that they moved from somewhere in the eastern regions of Scythia and settled in the Scythian town of Almirida (now Ramzina) on the mouth of the Danube on the Black Sea. They were tortured and beheaded for the Faith of Christ about 290 A.D. After their deaths, they both appeared in great radiance to the parents of St. Astius, Alexander and Marcellina, who were converted to Christ and who were baptized by Bishop Evangelus who himself, then was beheaded for Christ: "Evangelus, another angel" as is sung about him

St. Illtyd, founder of the Llantwit abbey in Wales - (c. 425 to c. 505), the founder of the great school/seminary/abbey of Llan Illtyd Fawr (English, "Llantwit Major") in the west of South Glamorgan. Illtyd was considered the most learned person in Britain, expert alike in Maths, Grammar, Philosophy, Rhetoric and Scripture. One of the *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, or Welsh Triads, refers to him as one of the "three knights of the Court of Arthur who kept the Holy Grail". In an age when any schooling was available only to a very few privileged people, perhaps Illtud's seminary was the closest approximation in existence to an institution of higher education. Among Illtyd's pupils were Saints Pol Aurelian (in Latin, *Paulinus Aurelianus*), Samson, Gildas and Dewi (English, *David*).

8 / 21 July — Appearance of the "Kazan" Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos - The celebration of the Most-holy Theotokos, in honour of her Icon known as the Kazan Icon, was established in thanks for the saving of Moscow and all Russia from the attack of the Poles in 1612. The late 16th and early 17th Centuries are known in Russian history as the Time of Troubles. The nation was attacked by Polish armies, who mocked the Orthodox Faith, and who looted and burned churches, towns and villages. By means of deceit, they succeeded in seizing Moscow. In response to the appeal of His Holiness Patriarch Hermogenes (commemorated on May 12) the Russian people rose up in defence of the homeland. The miraculous Icon of the Most-holy Theotokos was sent from Kazan to join the militia led by Prince Dimitry Mikhailovitch Pozharsky. In his "Homily on the day of the appearance of the Icon of the Mother of God in Kazan" (celebrated July 8), Holy Hierarch Dimitry of Rostov (commemorated September 21) said: The Mother of God saves from great misfortunes and evils not only the righteous, but also the sinful, but what manner of sinners? Those, who like the prodigal son, return to their Heavenly Father; who lament [over their sins]; who, like the publican, beat their breasts; who are like the sinful woman that wept at the feet of Christ and washed His feet with her tears; those who, like the thief on the cross, confess Him. The Mother of God looks after such sinners and rushes to help them, and saves them from great misfortunes and evils. Recognizing that the misfortune had been permitted because of their sins, the entire people and militia observed 3-day fast, and turned to the Lord and His most-pure mother for divine help. Their prayers were heeded. Holy Hierarch Arseny (later to become bishop of Suzdal), who was a prisoner of the Poles, sent word that he had had a vision revealing by the intercession of the Most-holy Virgin, God's judgment been had turned to mercy. Inspired by this news, the armies on October 22, 1612 liberated Moscow from the Polish occupiers. The celebration in honour of the Kazan Icon of the Most-holy Theotokos was established in 1649. To this day, that Icon is highly venerated by the Russian Orthodox people;

The Holy and Great Martyr Procopius - born in Jerusalem of a Christian father and a pagan mother, at first bearing the name Neanias. After his father's death, his mother brought him up entirely in the spirit of Roman idolatry. When he had grown up, the Emperor Diocletian saw him at sometime and was so pleased with him that he took him to court to serve in the army. When this wicked Emperor launched a persecution of Christians, he ordered Neanias to go with a detachment of soldiers to Alexandria and exterminate the Christians there. But, on the road, there happened to Neanias something similar to that which happened to Saul. At three o'clock in the morning there was a violent earthquake, the Lord Jesus appearing to him and saying: 'Neanias, where are you going, and against whom are you rebelling?' In great fear, Neanias replied: 'Who are you, Lord? I cannot recognise You.' Then a brilliant Cross, as of crystal, appeared in the sky and a voice came from the Cross: 'I am Jesus, the crucified Son of God.' The Lord went on: 'By this sign that you have seen, overcome your enemies, and My peace will be with you.' This event utterly changed Neanias's life. He caused a cross such as he had seen to be made, and, instead of moving against the Christians, set off with his soldiers against the Agarians, who were attacking Jerusalem. He entered Jerusalem victorious and told his mother that he was a Christian. Brought to trial, he took off his army belt and sword and cast them before the judge, demonstrating by this that he was a soldier only of Christ the King. After harsh torture, he was thrown into prison. There Christ the Lord appeared to him again, baptising him and giving him the name Procopius. One day twelve women came to the window of his cell and said to him: 'We also are the servants of Christ.' Arrested for this, they were thrown into the same prison, where St Procopius instructed them in the Christian faith and carefully prepared them to receive the crown of martyrdom. (*) These twelve women were then harshly tortured. Beholding their sufferings and courage, Procopius's mother also came to faith in Christ, and then all thirteen were put to death. When St Procopius was led to the scaffold, he raised his hands towards the East and prayed to God for all the poor and needy, the destitute and the widowed, and especially for the holy Church, that it might grow and spread and that Orthodoxy might shine to the end of time. He was assured from heaven that his prayer was heard, after which he joyfully laid his head under the sword and went to his Lord, to eternal joy. St Procopius suffered with honour in Palestinian Caesarea, and was crowned with an eternal wreath of glory, on July 8th, 303. *Author's note: Therefore those in the married state ('crowned'), invoke St Procopius, together with the God-crowned Constantine and Helena; St Procopius the Fool for Christ; Our Holy Father Theophilus the Outpurer of Myrrh; Blessed King Edgar the Peaceable (975).

HOMILY

About the trial of our faith

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearance of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

Brethren, our faith is tried more often than is the reed rocked by the winds. Trials are like the winds: a weak faith they will uproot and a strong faith will be strengthened even more. Trials are also like the flame in which straw is burned and gold is purified.

Man's intellectual pursuits and suppositions also try our faith. These are very strong and bitter winds. But we can overcome them if we are willing to adhere to the words of God and if, in opposition to those intellectual pursuits, we are able to emphasize the teachings of the Faith of Christ.

Our faith is further tried by fear and shame: fear of men who persecute the Faith and shame of men who arrogantly despise the Faith. These also are strong winds which we must resist if we wish to remain alive. How will we resist them? By the fear of God which should always be greater in our soul than the fear of men and of shame before the apostles, saints and martyrs who were not ashamed of their faith before emperors, princes and sages of this world.

Our faith is further tried by suffering and misery. This is the fire in which our faith either has to be burned like straw or to be tempered as pure gold. We will resist these trials if we would but remember Christ crucified on the Cross for us and so many thousands of martyrs for the Faith who, in their patience, conquered all and emerged from the flames as gold and who for centuries glow among the angels and among men.

Our faith is also tried by death, the death of our relatives and friends and the death of mankind in general. This is the bitter fire in which the faith of many have been burned. Is death the end of everything? It is not, but rather believe that it is the beginning of everything; it is the beginning of a new and just life. Believe in the Resurrection of Christ, believe in life beyond the grave and believe in the general resurrection and the Dreadful Judgment.

O Good Lord, strengthen the faith in us and have mercy on us.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.