

# The Third Sunday of Great Lent / Veneration of the Holy Cross

18 / 31 March



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

**Tropar of the Holy Cross, Tone 1:** Save O Lord Thy people and bless Thine inheritance / Granting unto Orthodox Christians victory over their enemies / and by the power of Thy cross / preserving Thy community.

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

**Kondak of the Holy Cross, Tone 4:** O Thou Who wast lifted up willingly on the Cross, bestow Thy mercies upon the new community named after Thee, O Christ God: gladden with Thy power the Orthodox Christians, granting them victory over enemies; may they have as Thy help the weapon of peace, the invincible trophy.

## Matins Gospel XI

### Epistle - Hebrews 4: 14 - 5:6

14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Chapter 5: 1 For every priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also beset by weakness. 3 Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. 4 And no man takes this honour to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son today I have begotten You." 6 As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek".

### SEEING THEN THAT WE HAVE A GREAT HIGH PRIEST... JESUS, THE SON OF GOD

What priest could be so righteous and holy as the only Son of God, who had no need to purge his own sins by sacrifice, neither original sins nor additional sins committed during a man's life? And what more suitable offering for men could be taken from men than human flesh? What more fitting for this immolation than mortal flesh? And to cleanse the faults of mortals what offering so clean as flesh that came to life in a virgin womb, and from a virgin womb, without any pollution of lust? And what could be offered as acceptably, and received as readily, as the flesh of our sacrifice, the flesh that made up the body of our priest? In every sacrifice there are four considerations: to whom it is offered, by whom it is offered, what is offered, for whom it is offered. And so the one True Mediator Himself reconciled us to God, and in this he remained one with Him to whom He made the offering, and made one in Himself those for whom He offered, and was Himself one as the offerer and the offering.

*St. Augustine of Hippo. On the Trinity, 4.19. B#15, p. 226.*

### Gospel - Mark 8: 34 - 9:1

34 The Lord said, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it. 36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." MARK 9: 1 And He said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

## **WHOEVER DESIRES TO COME AFTER ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME**

And you see how He also makes his discourse unexceptionable: not saying at all, 'whether you will or not you must suffer this,' but how? 'If any man will come after Me.' I do not force, I do not compel, but each one I make lord of his own choice ...For to good things do I call you, not to things evil or burdensome; not to punishment and vengeance, that I should have to compel. No, the nature of the thing alone is sufficient to attract you ...For you ought not, O Peter, because you have confessed Me Son of God, therefore only to expect crowns (Cf Mark 8:29), and to suppose this enough for your salvation, and for the future to enjoy security, as having done all. For although it be in My power, as Son of God, to hinder you from having any trial at all of those hardships, yet such is not My will for your sake, that you may yourself contribute something, and be more approved.

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily LV on Matthew XVI, 1. B#54, p. 339.*

## **THE CROSS PRESERVES THE UNIVERSE**

In the Prophet Ezekiel (9:6), it is said that when the Angel of the Lord was sent to punish and destroy the sinning people, it was told him not to strike those on whom the "mark" had been made. In the original text this mark is called "tau," the Hebrew letter corresponding to the letter "T," which is how in ancient times the cross was made, which then was an instrument of punishment.

So, even then, it was foretold the power of the Cross, which preserves those who venerate it. Likewise, by many other events in the Old Testament the power of the Cross was indicated. Moses, who held his arms raised in the form of a cross during the battle, gave victory to the Israelites over the Amalekites. He also, dividing the Red Sea by a blow of his rod and by a transverse blow uniting the waters again, saved Israel from Pharaoh, who drowned in the water, while Israel crossed over on the dry bottom (Exodus, ch. 14, 17).

Through the laying on of his hands in the form of a cross on his grandsons, Jacob gave a blessing to his descendants, foretelling at the same time their future until the coming of the "expectation of the nations" (Genesis, ch. 48).

By the Cross, the Son of God, having become man and accomplished our salvation. He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the Cross (Phil. 2:8). Having stretched out His hands upon the Cross, the Savior with them as it were embraced the world, and by His blood shed on it, like a king with red ink, He signed the forgiveness of the human race.

The Cross of the Lord was the instrument by which He saved the world after the fall into sin. Through the Cross, He descended with His soul into hell, to raise up from it the souls who were awaiting Him. By the Cross Christ opened the doors of paradise which had been closed after our first ancestors had been banished from it. The Cross was sanctified by the Body of Christ which was nailed to it when He gave Himself over to torments and death for the salvation of the world. Then it was filled with life-giving power. By the Cross on Golgotha the prince of this world was cast out (John 12:31) and an end was put to his authority. The weapon by which he was crushed became the sign of Christ's victory.

The demonic hosts tremble when they see the Cross, because the kingdom of hell was destroyed by the Cross. They do not dare to draw near to anyone who is guarded by the Cross.

The whole human race, by the death of Christ on the Cross, received deliverance from the authority of the devil, and everyone who makes use of this saving weapon is inaccessible to the demons.

When legions of demons appeared to St. Anthony the Great and other desert-dwellers, they guarded themselves with the sign of the Cross, and the demons vanished.

When there appeared to St. Symeon the Stylite, who was standing on his pillar, what seemed to be a chariot to carry him to heaven, the Saint, before mounting it, crossed himself and it disappeared. The enemy, who had hoped to cast down the ascetic from the height of his pillar, was put to shame.

One cannot enumerate all the various incidents of the manifestation of the power of the Cross. Invisibly and unceasingly, Divine grace that gushes from it saves the world.

The sign of the Cross is made at all the Mysteries and prayers of the Church. With the making of the sign of the Cross over the bread and wine, they become the Body and Blood of Christ. With the immersion of the Cross the waters are sanctified. The sign of the Cross looses us from sins. "When we are guarded by the Cross, we oppose the enemy, without fearing his nets and barking." Just as the flaming sword in the hands of the Cherubim barred the entrance into paradise of old, so the Cross now acts invisibly in the world, guarding it from perdition.

The Cross is the unconquerable weapon of pious kings in the battle with enemies. Through the apparition of the Cross in the sky, the dominion of Emperor Constantine was confirmed and an end was put to the persecution against the Church. The apparition of the Cross in the sky in Jerusalem in the days of Constantius the Arian proclaimed the victory of Orthodoxy. By the power of the Cross of the Lord, Christian kings will continue to reign until Antichrist, barring his path to power and restraining lawlessness (St. John Chrysostom, Commentary on II Thes. 2:6-7).

The “sign of the Son of Man” (Matt. 24:30), that is, the Cross, will appear in the sky in order to proclaim the end of the present world and the coming of the eternal Kingdom of the Son of God. Then all the tribes of the earth shall weep, because they loved the present age and its lusts, but all who have endured persecution for righteousness and called on the name of the Lord shall rejoice and be glad. The Cross then will save all who conquered temptations, from eternal perdition by the Cross, who crucified their flesh with its passions and lusts, and took up their cross and followed afar Christ.

However, those who hated the Cross of the Lord and did not engrave the Cross in their soul will perish forever. For “the Cross is the preserver of the whole universe, the Cross is the beauty of the Church, the Cross is the might of kings, the Cross is the confirmation of the faithful, the Cross is the glory of angels and the scourge of demons” (Octoechos: Exapostilarion, Monday Matins).

*St John of Shanghai and San Francisco – Shanghai, Exaltation of the Cross, 1947*

### **Lenten Synaxarion Cross Veneration Sunday**

**Let all the earth venerate the Cross, through which it has learned to worship Thee, the Word.**

On this third Sunday of the Great Fast we celebrate the Veneration of the precious and life-giving Cross. Since during the forty days of the Fast we are also in a way crucified, mortified to the passions, contrite, abased and despondent, the precious and life-giving Cross is offered to us as refreshment and confirmation, calling to mind the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and comforting us. If our God was crucified for our sake, how great should be our effort for His sake, since our afflictions have been assuaged through the Lord’s tribulations, and by the commemoration and the hope of the Cross of glory. For as our Savior in ascending the Cross was glorified through dishonor and grief; so should we also endure our sorrows, in order to be glorified with Him. Also, as those who have traveled a long hard road, weighed down by the labors of their journey, in finding a shady tree, take their ease for a moment and continue their journey rejuvenated, so now in this time of the Fast, this sorrowful and laborious journey, the Holy Fathers have planted the life-giving Cross, for our relief and refreshment, to encourage and make easier the labors that lie ahead. Or as when there is a royal procession, the king’s scepter and banners precede him, he then appears himself, radiant and joyous in his victory, causing his subjects to rejoice with him. So then our Lord Jesus Christ, desiring to show His sure victory over death and His glory on the day of the Resurrection, sends His scepter before Himself, the sign of His kingship, the life-giving Cross, to gladden and refresh us, as it greatly fortifies and enables us to be prepared to receive the King with all possible strength, and to praise Him in His radiant victory.

This week lies at the middle of the holy Forty Day Fast. The Fast is like a bitter source because of our contrition and the sadness and sorrow for sin that it brings. And as Moses plunged the branch in the bitter waters of Marah, making them sweet, so God, who has led us through the spiritual Red Sea away from Pharaoh, through the life-giving wood of the precious and life-giving Cross sweetens the bitterness of the Forty Day Fast, and comforts us as those who were in the wilderness, up until the time when by His Resurrection He will lead us to the spiritual Jerusalem. And since the Cross is called, and indeed is, the Tree of Life, it is the very tree that was planted in the Garden of Eden. So it is fitting that the Holy Fathers have planted the Tree of the Cross in the middle of the Forty Day Fast to commemorate both Adam’s tasting of its sweet fruit and of its being taken from us in favor of the Tree of the Cross, tasting of which we shall in no way die, but will have even greater life.

**Through the power of Thy Cross, O Christ our God,  
preserve us also from the temptations of the Evil One.  
And make us worthy to venerate  
Thy divine Passion and life-bearing Resurrection,  
having radiantly traversed the great length of the Fast,  
and have mercy on us, as Thou art good  
and lovest mankind.  
Amen.**

### **Saints of the Week**

**18 / 31 March — St. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem** - Born in Jerusalem in the time of Constantine the Great, he died in 386, in the time of Theodosius the Great. He was ordained priest in 346, and in 350 succeeded the blessed Patriarch Maximus on the patriarchal throne of Jerusalem. He was three times deposed from his throne and sent into exile; until in the end, in the time of Theodosius, he did not return but lived a further eight years in peace and gave his soul to the Lord. He had two great struggles: one against the Arians, who became strong under Constans, Constantine's son, and the other in the time of Julian the Apostate, with this renegade and with the Jews. In a time of Arian domination, at Pentecost, the sign of the Cross, brighter than the sun, appeared stretching over Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives and remaining several hours from nine o'clock in the morning. A letter was sent to the Emperor Constans about this happening, which was seen by all living in Jerusalem, and this served for the strengthening of Orthodoxy against the heretics. In the time of the Apostate, another sign took place. In order to humiliate the Christians, Julian arranged with the Jews for them to rebuild the Temple of Solomon. Cyril prayed to God that this should not happen. And there was a terrible earthquake which destroyed all that had been newly-built. The Jews began again, but again there was an earthquake, that destroyed not only the new building but also the old stones that were still in place beneath the earth. And so the words of the Lord came true: 'Not one stone shall remain on another.' Of this saint's many

writings there has been kept his 'Catecheses', a first-class work, which sets out the faith and practice of Orthodoxy to the present day. A rare arch-pastor and a great ascetic, he was meek, humble, worn out by fasting and pale of face. After a life of great labour and knightly battle for the Orthodox faith, he entered peacefully into rest and went to the eternal courts of the Lord.

**Aninus the Wonderworker** - born in Chalcedon. He was of short stature as was Zacchaeus of old but great in spirit and faith. He withdrew from the world in his fifteenth year and settled in a hut near the Euphrates river where he prayed to God and atoned for his sins, at first with his teacher Mayum and, after his death, alone. Through the power of his prayers, he replenished a dry well with water, healed the sick of various maladies and tamed wild beasts. A trained lion accompanied him and was at his service at all times. He discerned the future. When Pionius, a stylite, was attacked and badly beaten by robbers some distance away from Aninus, Pionius decided to descend from the pillar and proceed to complain to the judges. St. Aninus "discerned the soul" of this stylite and his intention. He sent a letter to Pionius, by his lion, counselling him to abandon his intention, to forgive his assailants and to continue in his asceticism. His charity was inexpressible. The bishop of Neo-Caesarea presented him with a donkey in order to ease the burden of carrying water from the river, but he gave the donkey to a needy man who had complained to him about his poverty. The bishop presented him with another donkey and he gave that one away. Finally, the bishop gave him a third donkey, not only to serve as a water-carrier but one that Aninus was to care for and to return. Before his death Aninus saw Moses, Aaron and Or [Egyptian Ascetic] approaching him, and they called out to him, "Aninus, the Lord is calling you, arise and come with us." He revealed this to his disciples and gave up his soul to the Lord, Whom he faithfully served. He was one-hundred ten years old when his earthly life was ended.

**St. Edward the Martyr, king of England (978)** - the eldest son of the first-crowned king of England, Edgar the Peaceable, and the only King of England formally recognised as a saint by the Orthodox Church. He was slain in 978 at the instigation of his step-mother and a party within the realm who wished to secularise the monastic properties and lands. The abundant miracles which took place at his tomb bore witness to the favour he had found with our Saviour, and he has been glorified by the Church for his righteous life and his defence of the monastics. His relics were uncovered in 1931 during an archaeological dig at the ruins of Shaftesbury Abbey in Dorset, which are privately owned. Mr John Wilson Claridge, the man who found the relics and whose family 'owned' them decided in the 1980's to hand them over to the care of a group of Russian Orthodox monks in England under the jurisdiction of the Russian Church Abroad. He made this decision as he wanted the relics to be kept in a place where they would be properly venerated. A small monastic brotherhood was formed and a church building was purchased to house the relics (now the Shrine Church of St. Edward). In 1982, the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad verified the correctness of the veneration of St. Edward. The significance for England of the martyred King Edward is akin to that of the martyred Tsar for the Russian people. Holy King-martyr Edward, pray for us!

**19 March / 1 April — The Holy Martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria** - Chrysanthus was the only son of a great noble, Polemon, who moved from Alexandria to Rome. As the son of rich parents, Chrysanthus studied all the secular disciplines, having the most learned men as his teachers. But worldly wisdom confused him, and he was left ignorant of the truth. And he grieved over this. But God, who provides for each and all, assuaged the grief of the young Chrysanthus by putting copies of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles into his hands. The truth was revealed to him in the reading of these. But he wanted a teacher, and found one in the person of Carpophorus, a priest, who instructed and baptised him. But this did not please his father, who did all in his power to turn him back from the Christian faith. Then, in no way succeeding, the wicked father tried to corrupt him by shutting him up alone with shameless girls, but Chrysanthus gained the victory over himself in that, and preserved his virginity. Then his father compelled him to marry the pagan Daria, but Chrysanthus persuaded Daria to receive the Christian faith and to live with him as his sister although appearing to be married. When his father died, Chrysanthus began openly to confess Christ and to live as a Christian, both he and his whole house. In the time of the Emperor Numerian, both he and Daria were terribly tortured for their faith. The torturer Claudius himself, though, seeing the endurance of these martyrs and the wonders that were revealed at their martyrdom, embraced the Christian faith with all his house. For this, Claudius was drowned, both his sons were beheaded and his wife died on the gallows with prayer on her lips. Daria showed such endurance under martyrdom that the pagans cried out: 'Daria is a goddess!' Finally it was decreed that Chrysanthus and Daria be buried in a deep pit and covered with stones. A church was later built on the site. Near this pit was a cave, in which some Christians at one time met together for prayer and communion in memory of the holy martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria. Discovering this, the pagans rolled a stone across the entrance to the cave, and thus by death drove those Christians from this world into that better world where Christ the Lord reigns in eternity. These glorious martyrs, Chrysanthus and Daria and the others with them, among whom are Diodorus the priest and Marianus the deacon, suffered for Christ in Rome in 283 and 284;

**The Holy Martyr Pancharius.**- born in Villach, Germany [present day Austria]. He was a high-ranking officer at the court of Diocletian and Maximian. At first, he denied Christ but, being counselled by his mother and sister, he returned to the Faith of Christ and died for it in the year 302 A.D.

**20 March / 2 April — Our Holy Father John and those martyred with him** - This glorious monastery, which still exists today, was visited by our own Serbian St. Sava and endowed by several Serbian rulers. Many times it was attacked by brutal Arabs, pillaged and laid waste. But, by the Divine Providence of God, it was always restored and is preserved until today. During the reign of Constantine and Irene, it was attacked and pillaged by the Arabs. The monks did not want to flee but, counselling with their abbot Thomas, they said, "We have fled from the world into this wilderness for the sake of our love for Christ and it would be shameful if we fled from the wilderness out of fear of men. If we are slain here, we will be slain because of our love for Christ for Whose cause we came to live here." Having decided, they awaited the armed Arabs, unarmed as lambs before wolves. Some of the monks the Arabs killed with arrows and some they sealed off in the cave of St. Sabbas. They lighted a fire at the entrance of the cave and all were suffocated by the smoke. Thus many of them died as martyrs for the sake of Christ and were translated into the Kingdom of Him Whom they loved and for Whose love they perished. They suffered honourably prior to the Feast of the Resurrection in 796 A.D., during the reign of Constantine and Irene and Elijah, the

Patriarch of Jerusalem. A just punishment quickly befell these savage attackers. Returning to their tents, they began to quarrel among themselves and in mutual combat all were slain. This occurred in the year 796 A.D.;

**The Holy Martyr Photina** - This was the Samaritan woman who had the rare fortune to converse with the Lord Christ Himself at the Well of Jacob, near Sychar (St. John 4:4-31). Believing in the Lord, Photina afterwards went to preach His Gospel with Victor and Josiah her two sons, and with her five sisters, Anatolia, Phota, Photida, Parasceve and Cyriaca. They had gone to Carthage in Africa. There they were arrested and taken to Rome during the reign of Emperor Nero and were thrown into prison. By God's Divine Providence, Domnina, the daughter of Nero, came into contact with St. Photina and was converted to the Faith of Christ by her. After imprisonment they all suffered for the sake of Christ. Photina, who for the first time was enlightened with the light of truth at the well of Sychar, was now thrown into a well where she died and entered into the eternal kingdom of Christ;

**St. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, bishop (687)** - one of the greatest English saints and missionaries, became a monk of Melrose abbey on the River Tweed 'then ruled by Abbot Eata, the gentlest and simplest of men,' as the Venerable Bede observed. The prior of Melrose, named Boisil, taught Cuthbert the Bible and the pattern of a devout life, and when Boisil died, Cuthbert became prior in his place. He would preach throughout the surrounding countryside, riding many miles on horseback to win the erring for Christ. 'Cuthbert was so great a speaker and had such a light in his angelic face,' wrote Bede, 'he had also such a love for proclaiming his good news, that none hid their innermost secrets from him.' But the saint preferred the life of a hermit and secured Eata's permission to live as one for eight years on the island of Farne. In the year 684 he was appointed, unwillingly, Bishop of Hexham. Cuthbert preferred Lindisfarne, where Eata was bishop, to Hexham and the two men exchanged bishoprics. He had two more years to live.

**21 March / 3 April — St James, Bishop and Confessor** - Neither his birthplace nor the place of his episcopate are known. It is known only that he fulfilled the Law of Christ, living in strict asceticism, in fasting and prayer and that, in the time of Copronymos, he endured much hardship and suffering at the hands of the iconoclasts: hunger, imprisonment and ridicule of every sort. He finally gave his soul to God, whom he had faithfully served in this life. He lived and suffered in the eighth century. Our Holy Father Cyril (Beryllus), Bishop of Catania; St Thomas, Patriarch of Constantinople; Our Holy Father Serapion; St. Enda, earliest leader of Irish monasticism.

**22 March / 4 April — The Hieromartyr Basil, Priest of Ancyra** - Under the Emperor Constantius there was much suffering at the hands of the Arians. At that time, Basil became known as a staunch defender of Orthodoxy and a true shepherd of his flock in Ancyra. When, after Constantius, Julian the Apostate came to the throne and began to persecute the Christians, Basil openly denounced this new wickedness and encouraged his people in the Faith. For this he was thrown into prison. When the Emperor Julian came to Ancyra, Basil was brought before him and he began to urge Basil to abandon the Christian faith, promising him honours and wealth. Then Basil answered him: 'I believe in my Christ, whom you have denied and who gave you this earthly kingdom, but He will shortly take this from you. How can you have no shame before the altar under which you were saved from death as an eight-year-old child when they sought to kill you? Therefore He will soon take this earthly kingdom from you, and your body shall not be buried when you have spewed forth your soul in bitter torments.' Julian was furious and ordered that seven strips of skin be torn from his body every day. And his torturers carried this out for seven days. When Basil was brought out again before the Emperor, he tore a strip of his own flesh off and threw it into Julian's face, shouting: 'Take this and eat it, Julian, if such food is sweet to you, but Christ is life for me!' This occurrence was noised in the town, and the Emperor left Ancyra in secret out of shame and went to Antioch. And they continued to torture Basil with red hot irons until he surrendered his soul to his Lord for whom he had suffered so much. This was in the year 363; St Drossida; Our Holy Father Euthymius the Martyr.

**23 March / 5 April — The Hieromartyr Nikon** - Born in Naples of a pagan father and a Christian mother, he was an officer in the Roman army in Naples. He was not baptised, although his mother, unbeknown to his father, had instructed him in the Christian faith. Once, when he was setting off with his company to war, his mother advised him, if he were in trouble, to make the sign of the Cross and call on Christ to help him. And so, when Nikon's company was surrounded during the battle and close to final extermination, Nikon made the sign of the Cross and began to call upon Christ. At that moment he was filled with exceptional strength and rushed upon his opponents, killing some and putting the others to flight. Returning home, Nikon could not stop exclaiming in wonder: 'Great is the God of the Christians!' After he had brought joy to his mother with his report of the victory by the aid of Christ's Cross, he set sail in secret for Asia, where the Bishop of Cyzicus, Theodosius, baptised him. After his baptism, he shut himself up in a monastery and devoted himself to study and to asceticism. However, Bishop Theodosius had a vision before his death, in which he was told to consecrate Nikon as his successor. The aged Theodosius summoned Nikon immediately and ordained him deacon, and then priest and bishop. By divine providence Nikon came soon after this to Neapolis, where he found his mother still alive. On her death, he went to Sicily with nine disciples, one-time comrades in battle, and devoted himself to preaching the Gospel. There was a terrible persecution of Christians at that time, and Prince Quintianus seized Nikon and his companions and gave them over to great torture. One hundred and ninety of his disciples and friends were slain. The torturer tied Nikon to the tails of horses, threw him from a high cliff into a ravine, beat him and flayed him, yet Nikon survived all these tortures. He was finally slain with the sword and his body was abandoned in a field for the birds to eat, but a shepherd boy, possessed by a raging evil spirit, fell on the dead body of Christ's martyr, took hold of it, and was immediately healed. He spread the news about Nikon's body, and Christians came and buried it. St Nikon suffered and went to the Lord in the reign of the Emperor Decius; Our Holy Father Nikhon of the Kiev Caves.

**24 March / 6 April — Forefeast of the Annunciation — St Artemon, Bishop of Seleucia;** Our Holy Father James the Confessor; The Hieromartyr Parthenius, Patriarch of Constantinople;

**Commemoration of the miracles at the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev** - Two friends, John and Sergius, swore brotherhood before the icon of the holy Mother of God in this monastery. John was a rich man, with a five-year-old son, Zachariah. John fell ill, and at his death commended his son to the care of Sergius, and left in Sergius's keeping a large sum of silver and gold for him to hand over to Zachariah when he had grown up. When Zachariah came of age, however, Sergius denied receiving anything from the deceased John. Then Zachariah said: 'Let him swear before the same icon of the most holy Mother of God, in front of which he accepted brotherhood with my late father, that he received nothing from John, and then I will seek nothing more from him.' Sergius agreed, but when he had sworn this and went up to kiss the icon, some force held him back and would not allow him to come near. Then, tormented all at once by a demon, he began to cry out: 'Holy fathers Antony and Theodosius, do not let this merciless angel destroy me!' The demon had attacked him by God's permission. He then told them of all the money which John had left. But when they opened the box, they found double the amount. Taking it, Zachariah gave it to the monastery and was himself tonsured as a monk. He lived a long time and was worthy of God's great gifts, entering peacefully into eternity; Our Holy Father Zacharias.

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