

# Sunday of the Paralytic

## Fourth Sunday of Pascha

6 / 19 May

**Resurrection Tone 3:** Let the heavens be glad; let earthly things rejoice; \* for the Lord hath wrought might with His arm. \* He hath trampled down death by death; \* the first-born of the dead hath He become. \* From the belly of Hades hath He delivered us \* and Hath granted to the world great mercy.

**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 Sunday of the Paralytic, Tone 3:** As of old Thou didst raise the paralytic, O Lord, by Thy Divine presence, raise my soul which is paralysed grievously by all manner of sins and unseemly deeds, that being saved I may cry out: O compassionate Christ, glory be to Thy power.

**Kondak of Pascha, Tone 8:** Though Thou didst descend into the grave, O Immortal One, yet didst Thou destroy the power of Hades, and didst arise as victor, O Christ God, calling to the myrrh-bearing women, Rejoice, and giving peace unto Thine Apostles, O Thou Who dost grant resurrection to the fallen.



### Matins Gospel IV

#### Epistle: The Acts of the Apostles 9: 32 - 42

Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralysed. And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.

#### PETER RAISES TABITHA FROM DEATH

He sends them all out, imitating his master in this also (Ref. Mk.5:40). For where tears are - or rather, where miracles are, there tears have no place. Certainly not in the celebration of such a mystery. Listen, I beseech you: although something of a similar kind is not happening now, yet in the case of our dead, a great mystery is celebrating likewise ...Angels are present, commissioned from heaven ...sent from the King Himself to call their fellow servant, and I ask you, Do you weep? Do you not know what a mystery it is that is taking place, how awful, how dread, and worthy indeed of hymns and lauds? ...For it is a very great mystery of the Wisdom of God. As if leaving the dwelling, the soul goes forth, speeding on her way to her own Lord, and do you mourn? Why then you should do this on the birth of a child: for this in fact is also a birth, and better than that... For as the sun arises, clear and bright, so the soul leaving the body with a clear conscience, shines joyously ...Think what the soul must then be! in what amazement, what wonder, what delight!

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXI on Acts IX. B#55, pp. 138, 139.*

## Gospel: John 5: 1-15

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralysed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed." He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.'" Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk?'" But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

### JESUS HEALS THE PARALYTIC BY THE POOL

Great is the profit of divine Scriptures, and all sufficient is the aid which comes from them ...for the divine oracles are a treasury of all manner of medicines. Whether it be needful to quench pride, to lull passion to sleep, to tread under foot the love of money, to despise pain, to inspire confidence, to gain patience - in the Scriptures we may find abundant resource. For what man of those who struggle with long poverty or who are nailed by a grievous disease will not, when he reads the passage before us, receive much comfort? Since this man had been a paralytic for thirty eight years, and he saw others delivered each year, and himself bound by his disease, not even so did he fall back and despair, though in truth not merely despondency for the past, but also hopelessness for the future was sufficient to overstrain him ...Yes, Lord, he says, but I have no man ...to put me in the pool. What can be more pitiable than these words? ...Do you see a heart crushed through long sickness? Do you see all violence subdued? ...He did not curse his day ...but replied gently ...Yes, Lord; yet he did not know who it was who asked him.

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXXVII on John V, 1. B#58, p. 128.*

### Christ is Risen!

Today's Gospel reading confirms us more and more strongly in the divinity of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The Gospels for the last two Sundays told us about the appearances of the Risen One. They were as if filled with the light of Christ's Resurrection: the wonderful appearances to the disciples, to Thomas, to the myrrh-bearers. But today's Gospel starts with a dismal, horrible picture: there is no brightness, no light. At the Sheep Gate there was a pool which had five porches. "In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered.... For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years" (Jn. 5:2-5). Just picture this: thirty-eight years in such a terrible condition, in pain and suffering, without a doctor, without care, without medicine, and maybe even often without food. And this unfortunate man bore all this because he wanted to be well. He tried to enter the water after it was troubled, but he had no one to help him, was late, and did not receive healing. And so passed thirty-eight years. Why this is a human lifetime!

Suddenly everything changed. Jesus came up to him and said: "Rise, take up thy bed and walk. . ." and he walked (Jn. 5:8,9).

What happened? What took place? What happened is that the reason for his sickness was removed. Christ revealed this reason when He met this man in the temple and said to him: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (Jn. 5:14). Here is the reason—sin. Sin is the reason for all evil, for all our sufferings, for all our sicknesses. Yes, sin. . .sin alone. And Christ is the only one who can destroy it, who can forgive. But this is under one condition: "Sin no more."

We have lived through the Passion days, we have lived through the very death of Christ, the death of the Lamb of God, Who takes upon Himself the sin of the world. This means our sin, too. He, the Only Sinless One, has become the sacrifice for us before our Heavenly Father. And now we are walking in the Easter joy of the Risen Christ. And so week after week. But still we stumble, fall, sin. But let us not despond; let us turn to Him.

The pool at the Sheep Gate was only a shadow of what Christ performed and is performing. He alone is the source of healing and forgiveness. He alone, as God, can forgive sins. Let us turn to Him, and He will say to us the same words He said to the paralytic: "Rise, take up thy bed and walk."

And we will rise and walk again in the light of His Resurrection. But let us remember His words to the paralytic, "Sin no more." And let us not sin, because Christ is Risen!

*The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei*

Over the next 3 Sundays we will hear in the Gospel of events that occurred during the life of Christ, but which occurred in the time between the Jewish Passover (when our Lord was crucified and rose again) and the Jewish feast of Pentecost (when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles). The first of these events is the healing of the paralytic at the "Sheep's Pool". This pool was built by Solomon and was covered by a dome supported by 5 sets of pillars – thereby producing 5 separate "porches" around the pool. It was in this pool that the sacrificial lambs were washed before they were offered at the temple. We are also told in the Gospel that an angel of the Lord came down to the pool at a certain time and stirred the water, and the first person who entered the pool at this time was healed of whatever disease he had. As one might expect the 5 porches were filled with the sick and lame waiting for the stirring of the water in the hope that they might be healed. This particular miracle was set forth by God as a foreshadowing of the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Just as those who entered the pool after it had been blessed by an angel were healed of their physical ailments, so also those who enter the "pool" of the baptismal font after the water has been blessed by the priest are healed of their spiritual ailment – that is of the ailment of death and corruption which is brought about by our sinful state.

In addition to this overall parallel between the miracle of the sheep's pool and baptism, there are other parallels that reinforce their connection. The water is "stirred" by an angel endowing the water with the grace of God for healing. The water in the baptismal font during the service is "stirred" by the priest with his hand in the form of the cross as he invokes the Holy Spirit to "come now and sanctify this water". The one who enters the water of the pool is immersed in it just as the one who enters the baptismal font is likewise immersed and when each leaves the pool, his infirmity (physical or spiritual) is healed and left behind. It is not the water of the pool, nor is it simply the water of the baptismal font that of its own nature is healing – rather it is given this power by the grace of the Holy Spirit which is communicated by the blessing of the angel or the priest. Given that this miracle is manifested by God to lead His people towards the sacrament of baptism that would appear with the coming of the Messiah, let us consider this sacrament and its place in our lives.

It is necessary to point out here that the sacraments are not magic spells – they are prayers asking God to bestow upon us His sanctifying grace. We must cooperate with Him and work with the grace that He pours out upon us. If we neglect or misuse this grace then it has no beneficial effect on us and in fact when called to show the result of the grace in our lives by the Master at the Great Judgment, then we will face the fate of the slothful servant who hid his talent in the ground and even that which we think we have will be taken from us.

Grace is the power of God given to us for a holy life: as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "The Lord said, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." There are two aspects to the operation of this grace in us. "Both the spiritual birth and further spiritual growth of a man occur through the mutual action of two principles. One of these is the grace of the Holy Spirit; the other, man's opening of his heart for the reception of it, a thirst for it, the desire to receive it, as the thirsty, dry earth receives the moisture of rain – in other words, personal effort for the reception, preservation and activity in the soul of the Divine gifts." (Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*) Thus it is evident that grace is not some magic substance that instantly transforms us – rather it is a powerful spiritual tool which is entrusted to us by God so that by using it, we each might work out our own salvation. Grace does not interfere with the freedom of man; it does not act upon him irresistibly. Often people, making use of the Mysteries, do not receive from them that which they could give; for their hearts are not open to receive grace, or else they have not preserved the gifts of God which they have received.

"In the Mysteries, prayers are joined with blessings in one form or another, and with special acts. The words of blessing accompanied by outward sacred acts are, as it were, spiritual vessels by which the grace of the Holy Spirit is scooped up and given to the members of the Church who are sincere believers. Thus a mystery (sacrament) is a sacred act which, under a visible aspect, communicates to the soul of a believer the invisible grace of God." (Pomazansky)

Now let us return to the sacrament of baptism. First when a person comes to be baptized they (or their sponsor on their behalf in the case of an infant) must first break with the life of world. They must place a decisive boundary between themselves and "the world" and for this they must openly and straightforwardly renounce the devil; for one cannot serve two masters. From antiquity, this renunciation of the devil and "all his works and all his service and all his pride" has been a part of the baptismal formula. This renunciation gives way to the opening of an entrance in to the Kingdom of grace, a birth into a new life "by water and the Spirit" and the beginning of the life in Christ.

Baptism stands first in the series of Mysteries – it is the door to the Church and to all the other Mysteries of grace bestowed therein. Baptism bestows on the believer a new life – he is "born again" and now is alive not with the life of this world, but with the life of Christ. The act of immersion which constitutes the Sacrament of Baptism recalls that we "die with Christ" and are buried with Him as we enter the water and we "rise with Christ" as we emerge from it. So in this sacrament, we "die" to the world and are "born" to the eternal life of Christ.

Orthodox Baptism is marked by triple immersion – that is the person is immersed in the water three times. This triple immersion signifies first the life of the Trinity – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It also represents the three day burial of our Lord and like Him we too are "buried" in the waters of baptism for three "days" after which we are raised with Him and enter into a new life. In Hebrew tradition there was a similar rite – a rite of washing from ritual impurity – that involved immersion in water. This was the baptism that the Forerunner offered to those who came in repentance. They were ritually "washed" from the uncleanness of their sins in the waters of the Jordan. But the baptism of John was itself only a foreshadowing of the Baptism of Christ, the sacrament that He bestowed upon His Church. In the Acts of the Apostles we see

that Paul comes upon believers who were only baptized with the baptism of John and did not know the regenerating life of the Holy Spirit. He caused them to be baptized anew with the Baptism of Christ and then the Apostles were called to lay hands upon them that they might also receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 19). (This bestowal of the Holy Spirit is preserved in the life of the Church and is given to us in the sacrament of Chrismation – but that is a topic for another day.) From this we see that the baptism of John and the baptism of Christ (that is the sacrament of Baptism) are two distinct things – the baptism of John foreshadows the baptism of Christ which encompasses it and fulfills it.

The sacrament of Baptism is indispensable for the Christian, for in Baptism a man receives in the place of the old existence he had, a new existence and life, and becomes a child of God, a member of the Body of Christ (that is the Church), and an inheritor of eternal life. It is therefore evident that Baptism is indispensable for all, so that growing in body and spirit we might grow in Christ. Having received this new life, we must cooperate with its action in our lives, we must work to incorporate it in our lives and to live in accordance with the Godly life that it instills in us.

Today we are told not only of the miracle of our Lord in the healing of the paralytic at the Sheep's Pool, but we also are shown how our Lord prepared the world for the Mystery of Baptism. If we wish to enter into the Kingdom of God (that is, heaven) and if we wish to share in the eternal life of union and communion with the God/man Jesus Christ, then we must begin by embracing this sacrament of Baptism for it is the door into the Church, the door into the Kingdom of Heaven and the door leading to eternal life.

*Archpriest David Moser*

<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/propoved/info>

### Saints of the Week

**6 / 19 May — Holy, Righteous and Longsuffering Job** - a descendant of Esau, the grandson of Abraham, and lived in Arabia about 2,000 years before Christ. His father's name was Zareth and his mother's Bosora; his full name was Jobab. He was an honourable and God-fearing man, and was very rich. But when he reached the age of seventy-nine, God permitted heavy temptation from Satan to fall on him, as is written in detail in the Book of Job. In one day, Job lost all his great possessions and his sons and daughters. Then a great sickness fell on him, from which his whole body was covered with sores from top to toe, and Job lay on a rubbish heap outside the town and scoured his boils with sherds of broken pottery. But Job did not complain of God, but patiently endured all his sufferings to the end. Therefore the Lord restored his health and gave him riches greater than he had had before, and there were born to him seven sons and three daughters; as many as he had had before. And Job lived for 248 years, glorifying and praising God. Job is regarded as the model of patient endurance of every suffering that God sends us, and is a type of the suffering Christ;

**The Holy Martyr Barbarus** - a soldier during the reign of Julian the Apostate. When the emperor's commander Bacchus led the Roman army against the Franks, Barbarus, who was secretly a Christian, was serving in the army. In battle there appeared a certain hero on the side of the Franks, similar to Goliath of old and he challenged the Romans to send one of their men to come out to do battle. Commander Bacchus advised Barbarus to go. Barbarus prayed in his heart to the Living Lord, went out and defeated that giant. As a result, the Frankish army became confused and fled. Then the commander prepared a great celebration and ordered that sacrifices be offered to the idols. During the sacrificial offerings, the commander learned that Barbarus kept himself apart. When he was asked about that, Barbarus declared that he is a Christian. The commander informed the emperor and the emperor ordered that Barbarus be subjected to the most severe tortures. But Barbarus endured all with rare courage and composure. During his tortures, many miracles were manifested and many soldiers, witnessing this, accepted the Faith of Christ. Among them was the Commander Bacchus along with Callimachus and Dionysius. All three were beheaded for the Name of Christ and, after them, Barbarus was also beheaded in the year 362 A.D. Their souls took up habitation in the kingdom of Christ the Immortal King; St Barbarus the Robber; Martyrdom of Father John (Karastamatis) of Santa Cruz (1985); St. Edbert, bishop of Lindisfarne (698).

**7 / 20 May — Commemoration of the Appearing of the Precious Cross over Jerusalem** - In the time of the Emperor Constantius, St Constantine's son, and Patriarch Cyril of Jerusalem, the Precious Cross appeared one day at nine o'clock in the morning above Golgotha, and spread as far as the Mount of Olives. This Cross was brighter than the sun and more beautiful than the loveliest rainbow. The whole people—believers and unbelievers—left their work and watched this heavenly sign in fear and wonder. Many unbelievers were converted to faith in Christ, and also many Arians abandoned their wicked heresy and returned to Orthodoxy. Patriarch Cyril wrote a letter to the Emperor Constantius about this sign, the Emperor himself being inclined towards Arianism. This took place on May 7th, 357. Thus was it demonstrated by this means that the Christian faith does not lie in the worldly theorising of the sensual understanding of men, but in the power of God, shown forth through wonders and signs without number; The Holy Martyr Acacius; Our Holy Fathers of Georgia;

**St. John of Beverley, bishop of York (721)** - Born in Harpham (Humberside), Yorkshire, England; died at Beverley, England, May 7, 721; canonized in 1037; feast of translation, October 25. Saint John trained for the priesthood and monastic life in Kent under the direction of SS. Adrian and Theodore, but returned to Yorkshire upon completing his studies to become a monk at Whitby Abbey, which was then under the rule of Saint Hilda. John founded a monastery in Humberside, England, on the site of a small church dedicated to Saint John the Evangelist, where he asked to be buried. In 687, after the death of Saint Eata, John he was consecrated bishop of Hexham. He is said to have shown special care for the poor and the handicapped. Whatever time he could spare from his episcopal duties he spent in contemplation. At regular seasons, especially during Lent, he retired to pray in a cell by the church of Saint Michael beyond the Tyne, near Hexham. He would take with him some poor person, whom he would serve during his retirement. He was transferred York as archbishop upon the death of Saint Bosa in 705, and Saint

Wilfrid succeeded him at Hexham as part of the final settlement of the latter's long dispute with the Northumbrian kings. He continued his practice of periodic retirement for spiritual refreshment. His chosen retreat was an abbey that he had built at Beverley, then a forest. Not until old age had worn him out did he resign his office to Saint Wilfrid the Younger in order to spend the last four years of his life in the peace of his beloved abbey at Beverley.

**8 / 21 May — The Holy Apostle and Evangelist John** - The main commemoration of this great Apostle and Evangelist is on September 26th, but on May 8th is commemorated a wonderful revelation about his grave. When St John was more than a hundred years old, he took seven of his disciples, went outside the city of Ephesus and told the disciples to dig a grave in the form of a cross. Then the old man went down alive into the grave and was buried. When the faithful later opened John's grave, they did not find the body in it. And on May 8th each year a dust arose from the grave, from which those suffering from many diseases were healed;

**Our Holy Father Arsenius the Great** - This glorious saint was born of a patrician family in Rome and was well educated in the secular sciences and philosophy as well as in spiritual wisdom. Abandoning all the vanity of the world, he dedicated himself to the service of the Church and was a deacon of the great church in Rome. Unmarried, withdrawn, quiet and devout, Arsenius thought to live that way his entire life. But the Providence of God directed his path in life otherwise. Emperor Theodosius took him as a tutor and teacher of his sons Arcadius and Honorius, and installed him as a senator surrounding him with great wealth, honours and luxury. But all of this burdened Arsenius' heart rather than pleasing him. It happened that Arcadius committed a wrong and for that Arsenius punished him. The offended Arcadius conceived a terrible revenge against his teacher and when Arsenius found out he changed into the clothes of a beggar, left for the seashore, boarded a boat and sailed to Egypt. When he arrived at the renowned Scete, he became a disciple of the glorious John Colobus [The Short] and dedicated himself to a life of asceticism. He considered himself dead and when someone informed him that a wealthy relative died and willed his entire estate to him, Arsenius replied: "But I died before him, how is it therefore that I could be his heir?" Withdrawn in a hermit's cell as in a tomb, throughout the entire day, he wove baskets of palm leaves, and at night, he prayed to God. He avoided men and all conversations with them. Only on feast days did he leave his cell and attend church to receive Holy Communion. In order not to become lazy, he often asked himself the question: "Arsenius, why did you come to the wilderness?" He remained in the wilderness for fifty-five years as a "desert dweller" and for that entire time was a model to the monks and a glory to monastics in general. In all, Arsenius lived one hundred years and died peacefully in the year 448 A.D. after prolonged labour and voluntarily imposing hardships upon himself and took up habitation in the kingdom of Christ the Lord, Whom he loved with all his heart, all his mind and all his soul.;

**St Emilia** - the mother of Saint Basil the Great. In her youth she desired to remain a virgin for life but was forced into marriage. Emilia gave birth to nine children and so inspired them with the Spirit of Christ that five of them became Christian saints: Basil the Great, Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, Peter, Bishop of Sebaste, Macrina and Theosevia. In her old age Emilia established a convent where she lived with Macrina her daughter and where she died in the Lord on May 8, 375 A.D.; Our Holy Father Arsenius the Lover of Labour; St. Wiro, monk-missionary of the Netherlands (c.753).

**9 / 22 May — Fast Day - St Nicolas the Wonderworker of Myra in Lycia** - on this day is commemorated the translation of his relics. In the time of the Emperor Alexius I Comnenus and Patriarch Nicolas Grammaticus, in 1087, the body of this saint was taken from Myra in Lycia to the town of Bari in Italy. This came to pass because of a Moslem attack on Lycia. The saint appeared to a priest in Bari and commanded that his relics be taken there. At that time, the town of Bari was Orthodox and under the administration of an Orthodox patriarch. At the translation of the saint's relics, many miracles were wrought on those who touched them, and a healing myrrh flowed in abundance from them. Also on this day is commemorated the miracle worked by St Nicolas on Stefan of Decani, King of Serbia. This was when the saint restored the sight of the blind King Stefan.

**The Holy Prophet Isaiah** - This great prophet was of royal birth. He was born in Jerusalem of Amoz the brother of Amaziah, King of the Jews. By the great grace of God that was within him, Isaiah was made worthy to see the Lord of Sabaoth on His heavenly throne, surrounded by six-winged seraphim which cried unceasingly: 'Holy, holy, holy Lord of Sabaoth' (Is. 6). Isaiah prophesied many things, both to individuals and to nations. Once he walked for three days naked through the streets of Jerusalem, prophesying the imminent fall of the city to the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, and warning the King and the leaders of the people not to seek help from Egypt and Ethiopia, because they too would shortly be over-run by the same Sennacherib, but to seek the aid of the all-seeing God. And this prophecy, like all the rest, was literally fulfilled (37:31-35). But his most important prophecies were on the incarnation of God, on the conception of the most pure Mother of God, on John the Baptist and on many events in the life of Christ. This seer, because of his pure heart and zeal for God, also received the gift of working miracles. Thus, when the besieged city of Jerusalem was suffering from thirst, he prayed to God and water flowed out from beneath the hill of Sion. This water was named Siloam (Sent), and it was to that water that, later, the Lord sent the man born blind, to wash himself and receive his sight (Is. 8:6; Jn 9:7). In the time of King Manasseh, when Isaiah thundered against the pagan practices of the king and the leaders of the people, comparing that generation with Sodom and Gomorrah, the anger of the leaders and the people was lifted up against this great prophet, and he was seized, taken out of Jerusalem and sawn in half. He lived and prophesied seven hundred years before Christ;

**The Holy Martyr Christopher** - Third century martyr in the persecutions of Decius. His fame derives from the pious legend of him being a "Christ-bearer" (= Christopher). He was a powerfully built man who wandered the world in search of novelty and adventure. He came upon a hermit who lived beside a dangerous stream and served others by guiding them to safe places to cross. He gave Offero instruction in the truth of God. Offero took the hermit's place, but instead of guiding travellers, he carried them safely across the stream. One day he carried a small child across the stream; the child's weight nearly crushed him. When they arrived on the other side, the child revealed himself as Christ, and he was so heavy because he bore the weight of the world on himself. He then baptised Offero with water from the stream. Christopher's service at the stream led to his patronage of things related to travel and travellers, people who carry things.

**10 / 23 May — The Holy Apostle Simon the Zealot** - One of the twelve Great Apostles, he was born in Cana of Galilee. The Lord Jesus came to his wedding with His Mother and His disciples, and, when the wine ran out, the Lord changed water into wine. Seeing this wonder, the newly-married Simon left his home and parents and bride, to go after Christ. Simon was called the Zealot because of his great and burning zeal for the Saviour and His Gospel. After receiving the Holy Spirit, he went off to preach the Gospel in Mauretania in Africa. As a result of his success in bringing many to the Faith of Christ, he was tortured and finally crucified like his Lord, who had prepared a crown of glory for him in His immortal Kingdom. The Holy Martyrs Alphaeus, Philadelphus and Cyprinus;

**Our Holy Mother Isidora the Fool for Christ** - Isidora lived in the fourth century and was a nun in a convent in Tabennisi. She pretended insanity in order to conceal her virtues and her mortification. Isidora performed the most menial tasks, fed on the leftovers on the dishes, served all and everyone and was despised by all and everyone. At that time, an angel of God revealed to the great ascetic Pitirim about Isidora's secret. Pitirim came to the convent and when he saw Isidora he bowed down to the ground before her. And so, she to him. Then the sisters informed Pitirim that she was insane. "All of you are insane" replied Pitirim, "and this one is greater before the Lord than I and all of you; I only pray that God will render to me that which is intended for her at the Dreadful Judgment!" Then the sisters became ashamed and begged both Pitirim and Isidora for forgiveness. From then on, everyone began to show respect for Isidora. And she, to escape the honours of men, fled the convent to a place unknown and died about the year 365 A.D.; Blessed Thais;

**St. Conleth, hermit and bishop of Kildare (c.520) - Skilled** worker in gold and silver, and manuscript illuminator. Hermit in a cell in Old Connell, Ireland near the Liffey river. His reputation for holiness attracted would-be disciples. Friend and co-worker with Saint Brigid; they ran first double monastery together. First bishop of Kildare, Ireland c.490. Baptised Saint Tigernach of Clogher Died while on pilgrimage to Rome.

Born c.450 in Ireland Died attacked by wolves on 3 May 519 in the forests of Leinster, Ireland; buried nearby; relics translated to the Kildare cathedral in 799; relics taken to Connell in 835 to protect them from Danish invaders.

**11 / 24 May — Fast Day - Ss Cyril and Methodius, Equal to the Apostles** - brothers from Salonica, of eminent and wealthy parents, Leo and Maria. The elder brother, Methodius, spent ten years as an officer among the Slavs in Macedonia, and thus learned the Slavic language. After that, Methodius went off to Olympus and gave himself to monastic asceticism, and Cyril (Constantine) later joined him there. When the Khazarite king, Kagan, sought preachers of the Christian faith from the Emperor Michael, the Emperor commanded that these two brothers be found and sent to the Khazars. They converted Kagan to the Christian faith and baptised him, together with a great number of his nobles and an even greater number of the people. After some time, they returned to Constantinople, where they compiled a Slavic alphabet of 38 letters and began to translate the service books from Greek into Slavonic. At the invitation of Prince Rastislav, they went to Moravia, where, with great devotion, they spread and confirmed the Faith, made more copies of the books, brought them priests and taught the young. They went to Rome at the invitation of the Pope, and Cyril fell ill and died there, on February 14th, 869. Then Methodius returned to Moravia and laboured at the confirming of the Faith among the Slavs until his death. After his death—he entered into rest in the Lord on April 6th, 885 —his disciples, the Five Followers, with St Clement as bishop at the beginning, crossed the Danube and moved towards the south, to Macedonia, where, from Ochrid, they continued the work among the Slavs that Cyril and Methodius had begun in the north; The Hieromartyr Mocius;

**St Nicodemus, Archbishop of Pec** - This great hierarch was a Serb by birth. He lived a life of asceticism on Holy Mt. Athos and was abbot of Hilendar Monastery. Following the death of Sava III, he was elected as the Archbishop of "All the Serbs and the Coastal Lands" in the year 1317 A.D. Nicodemus crowned King Milutin in the year 1321 A.D. He translated the Jerusalem Typikon into Serbian. [The Typikon is a book containing the rubrics (directions) for the celebration of the Divine Mysteries and other offices of the Orthodox Church.] In the introduction of this book, Nicodemus says: "Almighty God, Who knows our weaknesses, will give us spiritual strength, but only if we first display effort." He sincerely loved the ascetical life and laboured to strengthen it throughout the Serbian land. He laboured relentlessly to uproot the Bogomil heresy and to strengthen the Orthodox Faith. He died in the Lord in the year 1325 A.D. His miracle-working relics repose in the monastery in Pec.; St. Comgall, founder and abbot of Bangor (c.601); St. Mayeul, abbot of Cluny (994).

**12 / 25 May — St Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus** - born a Jew, but, seeing the power of the Christian faith, was baptised together with his sister, Callithrope. He became a monk at the age of twenty-six, in the monastery of St Hilarion. He later founded a monastery of his own, and became famed throughout Palestine and Egypt for his asceticism, his spiritual wisdom and the wonders he worked. Fleeing the praise of men, he went off to Egypt. On the way, he met Paphnutius the Great, who prophesied that he would be a hierarch on the island of Cyprus. And indeed, many years later, by God's providence, Epiphanius came to Cyprus, where he was unexpectedly chosen as bishop. He became bishop of the town of Salamis at the age of fifty, and governed the Church of God for thirty-six years. In all, he lived nearly ninety years on this earth, and entered into rest from this life to live eternally in the Kingdom of Christ. Before his death, he was invited to Constantinople by the Emperor Arcadius and his wife, Eudoxia, for the Council of Bishops which was forced, at the desire of the Emperor and Empress, to condemn St John Chrysostom. Arriving in Constantinople, he came to the Emperor's court, where the Emperor and Empress talked with him at great length, endeavouring to make him declare against Chrysostom. The citizens and Chrysostom heard that Epiphanius had agreed with the Emperor against him. Chrysostom therefore wrote him a letter: 'My brother Epiphanius, I hear that you have advised the Emperor that I should be banished: know that you will never again see your episcopal throne.' To this, Epiphanius wrote in return: 'John, my suffering brother, withstand insults, but know that you will not reach the place to which you are exiled.' And these two prophecies of the two saints soon came about. Refusing to agree with the Emperor on the exile of Chrysostom, Epiphanius took ship and set off for Cyprus, but died on the voyage. The Emperor sent Chrysostom into exile in Armenia, but the saint died on the road. Saint Epiphanius entered into rest in the year 403. Of his many writings the best-known is his 'Medicine Chest', in Greek, in which he explains and refutes eight heresies;

**St Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople** - Germanus was the son of the head imperial senator who was killed by Emperor Constantine Pogonatus. This same evil emperor castrated the senator's son, Germanus, and forcibly banished him to a monastery. As a monk, Germanus shone like a star by his life and good works. Because of that, he was chosen as the first bishop of Cyzicus and, when Anastatus II was crowned emperor, Germanus was elected as patriarch of Constantinople. As patriarch he baptized the ill-reputed Copronymos who, during the time of his baptism, soiled the water with his uncleanness. Then the patriarch prophesied that this child, when he becomes emperor, will introduce into the Holy Church some impure heresy. And this happened. When Copronymos became emperor, he restored the heresy of the iconoclasts. Leo Isaurian, the father of Copronymos, initiated the persecution of icons and when Patriarch Germanus protested, the arrogant Leo cried out: "I am emperor and priest!" He removed Germanus from the patriarchal throne and banished him to a monastery where this saint lived for ten more years until the Lord called him to Himself and to the heavenly kingdom in the year 740 A.D.; The Holy Martyr Pancras.

## HYMN OF PRAISE

### SAINT CYRIL

The Muslim leaders asked Cyril, What kind of three persons in God, were? If God is one, from where three persons? Our God is one, yours is three! Cyril replies: It is not that way, it is not, But, as the shining sun which warms at noon, And light, warmth, its cycle has,. But a pale picture of the Divine Triade, that is, One in essence and three divine persons Through Christ, this truth is revealed. Never, will a mortal man comprehend this God Himself revealed this; this the Church teaches.

## REFLECTION

In the encampment of the Saracens they asked St. Cyril: "How could Christians wage war and at the same time keep the commandment of Christ about praying to God for their enemies?" To that, St. Cyril replied: "If two commandments were written in one law and given to men for fulfilling, which man will be a better follower of the law: the one who fulfills one commandment or the one who fulfills both?" To that, the Saracens replied: "Undoubtedly, he who fulfills both commandments." St. Cyril continued: "Christ our God commands us to pray to God for those who persecute us and even to do good to them; but, He also said to us: greater love cannot be shown in this world than if one lay down his life for his friends." "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (St. John 15:13). That is why we bear the insults which our enemies do to us individually and we pray to God for them; and, as a society, we defend one another and give up our lives, that you would not somehow enslave our brethren, would not enslave their souls with their bodies and would not kill them in body and soul.

## HOMILY

### About the irresistible will of God

"I say to myself, I will not mention him, I will speak in his name no more. But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones; I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it" (Jeremiah 20:9).

If anyone still doubts that God spoke through the prophets, let him read this confession of the great prophet Jeremiah and let him doubt no more. The prophet confesses that he had decided not to speak anymore in the Name of the Lord. Why? Because so few paid attention to his word. If anyone heeded his word the prophet endured "reproach and derision daily" (Jeremiah 20:8). But, when he decided to remain silent, did he, in fact, remain silent? No, he could not: "I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it!" He was so pressed by the irresistible power of the Spirit of God upon him to speak and he had to speak. It is, therefore, not the affair of the prophet whether he is going to speak or not: that is the affair of the All-powerful Spirit of God. The prophet is merely the chosen vessel of the All-powerful Spirit of God. All of Holy Scripture is written thusly - not according to the will of man but according to the will of God, and not according to the mind of man but according to the mind of God.

How does the word of God feel when it enters the prophet from the Spirit of God; this the great Jeremiah explains from his personal experience: "It becomes like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones." That means, inspiration from the All-powerful Spirit of God. Under such irresistible internal pressure - as under the pressure of fire imprisoned in my bones - wrote the holy man of God. And many of them cried out: "I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it anymore." Who will go against the Spirit of God without punishment and destruction? Who will withstand Him when He wants to say something or to do something?

Only my brethren, the action of God the Holy Spirit is irresistible!

O All-powerful Spirit of God, direct us irresistibly on the path of salvation.

**To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.**