

Sunday of the Prodigal Son /

Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs:

St Basil the Great, St Gregory the Theologian and St John Chrysostom

30 January / 12 February 2012

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 2: When Thou didst descend to death, O Life Immortal, Thou didst slay hell with the splendour of Thy Godhead! And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead, all the powers of Heaven cried out: O Giver of Life, Christ our God, Glory to Thee!

Troparion of the Three great Hierarchs tone 1: Let all who love their words come together and honour with hymns the three luminaries of the light-creating Trinity./ Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and renowned John of golden speech,/ who have enlightened the world with the rays of their divine doctrines,/ and are rivers of wisdom who have watered all creation with streams of divine knowledge,/ they ever intercede with the Trinity for us.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 2: Hell became afraid, O Almighty Saviour, seeing the miracle of Thy resurrection from the tomb! The dead arose! Creation, with Adam, beheld this and rejoiced with Thee! And the world, O My Saviour, praises Thee forever.

Kontakion of the Three Great Hierarchs tone 2: Thou hast taken the sacred and divinely inspired heralds, the crown of Thy teachers, O Lord,/ for the enjoyment of Thy blessings and for repose./ For Thou hast accepted their sufferings and labours above every burnt offering,/ O Thou Who alone dost glorify Thy Saints.

Kondak for the Prodigal Son, Tone 3: Having foolishly abandoned Thy paternal glory, I squandered on vices the wealth which Thou gavest me. Wherefore, I cry unto Thee with the voice of the Prodigal: I have sinned before Thee, O compassionate Father. Receive me as one repentant, and make me as one of Thy hired-servants.



Matins Gospel II

Epistle: I Corinthians 6: 12-20

12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 13 Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "The two," He says, "shall become one flesh." 17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. 18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

YOUR BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Lord overlooks nothing. Even secrets are open to Him. Let us then do everything as if He were dwelling in us. Thus we shall be His temples, and He will be within us as our God - as He actually is. This will be clear to us just to the extent that we love Him rightly.

St. Ignatius of Antioch. Letter to the Ephesians. B#10, p. 92.

Second Epistle: Hebrews 13: 7-16

Gospel: St. Luke 15: 11-32

THE LORD SAID THIS PARABLE: A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. 25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. 28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. 29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: 30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. 31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

The second preparatory Sunday of Great Lent is termed the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. In the touching parable of the Prodigal Son read during the Liturgy, the Holy Church teaches us to rely on the mercy of God, provided we have sincerely repented of our sins. On this Sunday and the succeeding two Sundays, during the Polyeleos at the All-night Vigil, Psalm 136 is chanted: By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Sion... This psalm describes the suffering of the Jews during the Babylonian captivity and their longing for their fatherland. The words of this psalm teach us about our spiritual captivity, the captivity to sin, and that we should aspire towards our spiritual fatherland, the Heavenly Kingdom. The final words of this psalm scandalise many with reference to Blessed shall be he who shall seize and dash thine infants (those of the Babylonians) against the rock! Of course, the literal meaning of these words is brutal and unacceptable for the Christian, for the Lord Himself taught us to love and bless our enemies and to worship God in spirit and truth. These words gain a pure and lofty significance with a Christian and spiritual nature, for they mean, "Blessed is he who has a firm resolve to break, on the rock of faith, the newly forming evil thoughts and desires (as it were in their infant state) before they mature into evil deeds and habits".

The Law of God

Second Gospel: Matthew 5: 14-19

Saints of the Week

Meatfare week



30 January / 12 February — The Three Great Hierarchs: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom - Each has his personal feast day in the month of January; Basil on the 1st, Gregory on the 25th and Chrysostom on the 27th. The common feast we celebrate today was instituted in the 11th century, in the time of the Emperor Alexius Comnenus. At one time there was a quarrel among the people about who was the greatest of the three. Some gave Basil the pre-eminence for his purity and courage; others Gregory for the unfathomable depth and height of his theological mind; others still Chrysostom for the wonderful beauty of his speech and the clarity of his presentation of the Faith. So the first were called Basilians, the second Gregorians and the third Johannites. But, by the providence of God, this dispute was resolved to the benefit of the Church and the yet greater glory of the three saints. The Bishop of Euchaita, John (June 14th), had a vision in his sleep, in which each of these saints appeared to him in great glory and indescribable beauty, and then all three together. They then said to him: 'We are one in God, as you see, and there is no dispute among us . . . neither is there among us a first or a second.'

The saints also advised Bishop John to compile a common feast for them and to set aside for them a day of common commemoration. The quarrel was settled as indicated by the wonderful vision; January 30th being set aside for the common commemoration of the three hierarchs. The Hieromartyr Hippolytus, Bishop of Rome; The Holy Martyr Theophilus the New; St Peter, King of Bulgaria.

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

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

St. Brigit (Brigid), abs & her disciple St. Darlugdach, nun - St Brigit lived at the time when Christ's Holy Church was just being revealed in Ireland. In those days, the country was still wild and many of the kings and warriors were brutal and cruel. The power of God's Grace to change people and even whole lands, was shone forth in this holy saint. For, St Brigit is remembered above all else for her holy love, compassion and charity. By her Christ-like example, she taught kings to be merciful, the greedy to be charitable and the pagans to seek Christ. Brigit was born in the year of our Lord 436, at Tirconnell, Ireland. Her mother was a slave, her father, the master. Before St Brigit was born, her mother was sold to a different master, a pagan magician. Brigit's mother was a Christian, strong in faith, and she worked hard to raise her child according to the Gospel. Soon after St Brigit's birth, the magician (wizard) moved to the province of Connaught, taking his household with him. Here, Brigit's mother, whose name was Broiksech, became close to the Christian bishop, Mel. St Brigit herself was raised under the careful and loving eye of this holy bishop, and she grew strong in the Lord under the guidance of her elder. Very early in life, St Brigit showed special gifts of God's Grace, and several people were healed of illnesses through her pure prayers. Moreover, the saint was a hard worker, and she did every task to the glory of God. The people of the district had a special reverence for this blessed child, because of her open-hearted love for everyone and every creature. Now, in the old Irish law, if a master bought a slave woman who was expecting a child, he bought only the mother, and the child was born a free person. When the saint grew older, she wanted to go to visit her father, Dubthach, who lived in the province of Munster. The magician agreed to help her make the journey, and she went to her father's house. To her great joy, St Brigit soon brought her father to a true understanding of the Gospel. The blessed maiden worked on her father's estate, and continued to struggle in fasting and prayer. Once, the council of the bishops of Ireland was to be held in the town of Moy Liffey in nearby Leinster County. A woman in St Brigit's neighbourhood had some need to take her problems to the bishops for their advice and help, and she asked St Brigit to go with her on the journey. There was a certain holy bishop named Ibhair at the council, and it was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, that a blessed maiden was coming to the council. When St Brigit entered the council room, Bishop Ibhair rose to his feet and glorified God. "This is the maiden whom I foresaw," he said. Then, he blessed and consecrated the chosen virgin. Shortly after this, St Brigit went to visit her mother, who was still in slavery. The mother was very ill, but she still had to work hard in her master's dairy. The young saint took over her mother's duties, and with her hard work and prayers, the dairy soon began to produce more butter than ever before. St Brigit had a custom of always dividing the butter into thirteen portions, one each commemorating the twelve apostles, and a larger portion in honour of Christ the Saviour. This last portion, she always gave away to the poor people in the area. Soon, the magician and his wife heard of these things and they came to look over their dairy. They saw that it was now clean and well run. The calves were in good health, and there was much butter being sold every day. The magician's wife, however, out of greed, demanded of Brigit that she fill a large container with butter then and there, so the mistress could take it home with her. There was only a small quantity of butter left at that time, because the saint had given the extra butter away to poor people. The mistress became angry and began to scold and mock; the blessed one. At this, the saint brought what butter there was in the church, and began to pray to God, making the sign of the Cross upon herself and over the butter. The merciful Lord heard the prayers of his servant, and when she began to take the butter out of the churn, there was more than there had been. Indeed, by God's Grace, there was even more than was needed to fill the container. When the magician saw this, he was amazed. He asked to be taught about this Christ Whom St Brigit and her mother adored. Moreover, he set St Brigit's mother free. After he had been taught the Christian faith, the magician and his whole household were baptized into Christ's Holy Church, and he gave away not only butter, but also cows, to the poor, and completely changed his way of life. St Brigit returned to her father's house, and though he loved her, he was often angry with her. The saint was in the habit of giving away something to every beggar or poor person who asked for her help. In this way, Brigit was giving away all her father's food, property and wealth. In despair, St Brigit's father took her to the fortress of King Dunlaing of Leinster, and asked him to take her into his service as a worker. It was the law in those days, that no-one could carry his sword into the king's house. So, when Dubthach started to enter the king's house, he took off his sword and gave it to St Brigit to hold, until she was sent for. When the king asked why St Brigit's father wanted to be rid of her, Dubthach replied, "She is a good and hard worker, but she is giving everything of mine away to those who do not work, and soon I will be poor." The king told him to bring in Brigit, but when Dubthach came to St Brigit, he noticed that she

no longer held his sword. "Where is my sword?" he asked in alarm? "Father, a poor leper came and asked help of me. I had no gold, so I gave him your sword, that he might sell it." St Brigit was brought before the king, and her father angrily told him what had happened with the sword. The king asked in surprise: "Why did you take your father's wealth, and even his sword, and give it away?" St Brigit replied: "The Virgin's Son knows. If I had your power and wealth and all of Leinster, I would give it all to the Lord of the poor." The king was amazed. Then Brigit boldly told him and all those present about the Gospel of Christ and the life God commands of all those who would obtain the Heavenly Kingdom. The king glorified Christ because of the love and compassion of His saint, and sent her away in peace. Not long after this, a certain man came and asked for the hand of Brigit in marriage. Her father was happy to give her away, and the family encouraged her to marry the man. He was wealthy and had a good reputation, and everyone thought he would be a good husband. The saint, however, had already decided to become a nun. She replied to all, "The Son of the Virgin knows. Nothing is good for us if it harms our souls." St Brigit soon went down to the cathedral of Telcha Mide, to Bishop Mel, her elder, with eight other virgins to be tonsured. When they came to church on the day of their tonsure, St Brigit, out of humility, stood at the end of the line, thinking to herself that the others were all more worthy than she. When Bishop Mel saw the merciful saint standing last of all, he called her forth, and said: "Blessed are the least, for they shall be first." He tonsured St Brigit first and set her over the rest as Abbess. She later founded the convent at Kildare. For many years, then, St Brigit struggled and guided her nuns. God granted her many gifts of Grace. People from across the whole country came to the saint for healing, comfort and for help. The saint knew and often helped the great apostle, St Patrick in his tireless labour of enlightening Ireland. St Brigit was renowned for her charity and mercifulness. The number of the poor that she fed is known only to God, and she saved many from prison and death. St Brigit lived for eighty-eight God-pleasing years. As the time of her repose drew near, Bishop Nin, called by the people, "The Pure-Hand," arrived from Rome. He came to visit St Brigit, and found her near death. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy and gave her the Holy Communion. Soon after, the saint gave up her holy soul into the hands of Christ the Saviour, to Whom be all glory and adoration, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen! The great St Columba (Colum-cille), who was the apostle to the Scots in Scotland, when he was sailing to his monastery on the Isle of Iona, was caught in a great storm. He called upon Christ and His saint Brigit to calm the storm, and his prayers were answered. After that, he wrote an ode to the saint, from which the following troparion is composed: Pure virgin and flame of the Lord, / O Brigit, guide to the Eternal Kingdom, / deliver us, by thy prayers, from the throngs of demons and the storms of life, / and pray to Christ God that our souls be saved.



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

But in the meantime the holy family had already escaped from the city and set out for Egypt, under the direction of an angel of God. This day has been celebrated from the very earliest times, but its solemn celebration dates from 544, in the time of the Emperor Justinian. The Holy New Martyr Jordan — Candlemas — Blessing of Fruit

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

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

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

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

4 / 17 February — Fish Allowed - Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — Our Holy Father Isidore of Pelusium - He was an Egyptian, the son of eminent parents and a kinsman of the Patriarchs of Alexandria Theophilus and Cyril. Completing his secular studies, he renounced his riches and worldly standing and gave himself wholly to the spiritual life for the love of Christ. He was a great and ardent interpreter and defender of the Orthodox faith. The historian Nicephorus states that St Isidore wrote more than 10,000 letters to various people, in which he reprimanded one, advised another, consoled a third, instructed a fourth. 'It is more important to be proficient in good works than in golden-tongued preaching', he writes in one letter. In another, he says: 'If a man wishes his virtues to appear great, let him regard them as small and then they will be truly shown to be great.' The first and fundamental rule for Isidore was first do and then teach, after the example of the Lord Jesus. At a time when St John Chrysostom was undergoing persecution and the whole world was divided into two camps, one for and one against this great pillar of Orthodoxy, St Isidore stood on the side of Chrysostom. He wrote to Patriarch Theophilus, saying what a great light Chrysostom was in the Church and begging that the hatred of him should cease. He lived long and laboured greatly, glorifying Christ the Lord in his life and his writings, and entered into the Kingdom of Christ in about 450; Our Holy Father Nicolas the Confessor; The Holy New Martyr Joseph; St. Aldate, hieromartyr of Gloucester, England (6th c), ; in Scotland, St. Modan, ab of Melrose.

5 / 18 February — Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — The Holy Martyr Agatha - This glorious virgin and martyr for Christ was born in the Sicilian town of Palermo of noble and prosperous parents. When the Emperor Decius launched a persecution of Christians, St Agatha was arrested and brought to judgement before Quintian the judge. He saw Agatha's beauty and desired her for his wife. When he suggested this to her, she replied that she was the bride of Christ and could not be faithless to her Betrothed. The judge condemned her to cruel torture: Agatha was flogged, mocked, bound to a tree and beaten till the blood flowed. After that, the judge again urged her to deny Christ and so escape further torture, to which Christ's bride replied: 'These tortures are of great help to me. As wheat cannot come to the granary until it is cleansed of its chaff, so my soul cannot enter Paradise unless my body has first been broken by torture.' Then the torturer ordered that her breasts be cut off and then she be thrown into prison. The holy Apostle Peter appeared to her in the prison and restored her to physical wholeness and health. She was once again taken out for torture and again cast back into prison, where she gave her

soul to God in the town of Catania in the year 251. After her death, her torturer Quintian set out to appropriate her lands, but on the way the horses became maddened under him and his soldiers. They were savaged on the face, thrown onto the ground and trampled to death. Thus God's punishment came swiftly upon him for his ferocious crime against St Agatha; The Holy Martyr Theodula; St Polyeuctus, Patriarch of Constantinople; in England at Glastonbury, St. Indractus, hermit, his sister Dominica and 9 others, Martyrs.

HYMN OF PRAISE

SAINT SIMEON, THE GOD-RECEIVER

When winter encounters spring,

The aged Simeon was of good fortune:
He encountered the long-awaited One,

Who, by the prophets, was foretold,

Him, the mine of all heavenly riches -

As naked, he [Simeon] the young child saw,

And in this manner, Simeon prophesied:

The evening has descended upon my life;

This One, lay down to conquer many

Or to raise many. Thus the spirit speaks -

The Prophecy of old was fulfilled:

Jesus became the measure and the standard,

The source of happiness, peace and joy,

But also the target of disputes and maliciousness.

One He uplifts, the other He overturns

And Paradise and Hades He opens to men.

Let everyone choose whatever their hearts speak,

In Paradise with Christ! Our heart desires.