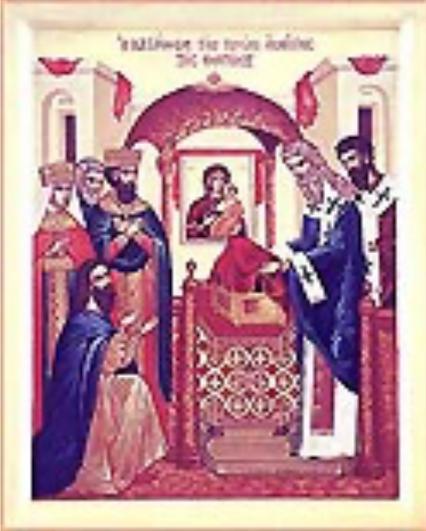


## 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

### Placing of the Venerable Sash of the Most Holy Mother of God in Constantinople

31 August / 13 September



**Resurrection Tropar, Tone 5:** Let us, the faithful; praise and worship the Word, / Co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, / born for our salvation from the Virgin; / for He willed to be lifted up on the cross in the flesh, / to endure death, / and to raise the dead / by His glorious Resurrection!

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

**Resurrection Kondak, Tone 5:** Thou didst descend into hell, O my Saviour, / shattering its gates as Almighty, / resurrecting the dead as Creator, / and destroying the sting of death. / Thou hadst delivered Adam from the curse, O Lover of Man, / and we cry to Thee, O Lord, save us.

**Kontakion of the Mother of God tone 2:** Thy precious girdle, O Mother of God, which encircled the womb that held God / is an invincible strength for thy flock / and an unfailing treasury of grace, O Ever-Virgin Mother.

#### Matins Gospel 3

#### Epistle: II Cor . 1:21-2:4

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, Who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand. But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow. For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad but the one who is made sorrowful by me? And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.

#### WHO ALSO HAS SEALED US AND GIVEN US THE SPIRIT IN OUR HEARTS AS A DEPOSIT

Again, from the past He establishes the future. For it is He Who establishes us in Christ (that is, who does not suffer us to be shaken from the faith which is in Christ) and He Who anointed us and gave the Spirit in our hearts. How will He not give us the future things? For He gave the principles and the foundations, and the root and the fount (to wit the true knowledge of Him, the partaking of the Spirit) how will He not give the things that come of these? ...And what is 'anointed,' and 'sealed?' He gave the Spirit, by Whom He did both these things, making at the same time prophets and priests and king, for in old times these three ranks were anointed ...For we are both to enjoy a kingdom and to be made priests by offering our bodies for a sacrifice (for he says 'present your members a living sacrifice to God') and moreover we are constituted prophets too: for 'the things eye has not seen, nor ear heard,' (I Cor. 2:9) these have been revealed to us. And in another way, too, we become kings: if we have the mind to get dominion over our unruly thoughts, for such a one is a king and more than one who wears a diadem.

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily III on II Corinthians I, 4, 5. B#56, pp. 289-290.*

for the Theotokos: Heb . 9:1-7

## **Gospel: St. Matthew 22: 1-14**

The Lord said this parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, And sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding." ' But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

### **THE WEDDING FEAST**

Such a Gospel the Holy Church offers today for our attention: the Gospel about the wedding feast. And in verses 10 to 13 is the section which refers to both the good and the evil ones who gathered at the meal. And when the lord entered, he found one man who was not dressed in a wedding garment. And just for this, that he was not wearing a wedding garment, such a terrible punishment followed. He was thrown out, bound, and was cast into a place of fire. For us this may even be incomprehensible. What is this actually? God is merciful, compassionate, and suddenly such a terrible punishment. Here is something we must understand. Let us look at it. If you remember, brothers, the Gospel which was read Sunday before last, you will recall also the pious young man who approached the Lord and asked Him what to do in order to enter the Kingdom of God. The Lord said, Fulfil the commandments. He said that he had fulfilled them. But seeing his heart, the Lord said: Give away everything you possess and follow me (Mt. 19:16-21).

The Lord called the young man to follow Him, but this young man was rich. And he trusted in these earthly riches, in the things that surround us. He somehow didn't understand that this very night his soul might be taken away and pass into eternal life. And what did he go away with? The Lord called him for renewal, to remove from his heart all the scabs, which are human passions. The Lord called. But he had riches which made him think that this earth is ours and is the purpose of our life. This is all we have: our houses, our villas, our cars, our relationships with each other. And we don't notice that one after another we depart. So this means that the Gospel of the Sunday before last is pointing out: do not trust, do not persist in your strivings for possession of earthly things, because this very night eternity may open for us. The earth is given to us only as a means of receiving those things which should be in a man's soul. And our soul should be suffused, as if saturated with the Beatitudes.

And this past Sunday. In the Gospel reading it told about the vineyard workers. The lord created the vineyard, gave them livelihood for their work. This livelihood consisted of everything that was needed for their life. But they, like the young man, accepted in their heart that this vineyard was their riches, that it belonged to them. This very vineyard, which was serving only as a means of acquiring goodness of heart, became for them an object of temptation. They decided to use it as their own. And therefore, they drove off all symptoms that were telling them that, after all, this was not theirs, that it belonged to the Lord; and you have to do what the Lord requires of you: cultivate the vineyard. Then you will receive in your heart that goodness with which you can depart from this vineyard and go to something much better and greater, to something which God has prepared for you. But they did not pay attention to these symptoms. The vineyard became for them such a temptation, as the earth is for us, in which we seem to have everything we need. On it we build our villas, and close by are lying Lazaruses—beggars, widows, unfortunate children who have to be raised. But we do not concern ourselves with them. We are busy with our fine clothes, our meals, with such matters that will remain here. And the person departs into eternal life hungry, without good deeds.

Now that we have analysed these two Gospels, we ask: Why did the Lord tell this parable, and why does the Holy Church offer it today for our attention? Everyone who knows the Gospel knows also that, in addition to the Evangelist Matthew whose Gospel was read today, the Evangelist Luke also refers to this parable in some detail (Lk. 14:15-24). It tells there how Christ was invited to the meal of Simon the Pharisee. At this meal Christ saw what the Jews did who accepted the law of Moses, how they changed the law of Moses into a means of their own greatness and pride. And Christ, seeing this and feeling sorry for Simon who had invited Him, started to teach him. This was heard by all who were present at the meal. And they were supposedly right-believing Jews, Pharisees of Pharisees. And when Christ began to speak, He was for them...who was He? Just a rabbi. Here one of the Jews could not contain himself. And when Christ said that people will receive for their good deeds the Kingdom of God, he exclaimed, "Blessed is He that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God!" (Lk.14: 15). Blessed! Because this blessedness belongs to the children of Abraham; what you are talking about belongs to us. Why bother with good deeds? The promise which was given to Moses is ours and we are using it—we, the Jews. This is our kingdom.

Then Christ, answering about this "kingdom," gave them this parable. Here He pointed out that the Jews were called by God for such a long time to receive blessedness, were called to a pure life; but they did not come. They were busy in the same way as that young man, as the workers in the vineyard—with earthly things. Apparently they were building for themselves palaces, buying unfortunate slaves, living in comfort, and they had no concern for anything else. And therefore, why bother with a king's feast? So their response to this feast was such that almost everyone refused to come. Then the Lord called his soldiers and through the soldiers called everyone, both evil and good, without discrimination: everyone had to come.

In the East when a feast was given, not only was food presented but also raiment. In this way, when garments were given to those who came—harlots, tax collectors, and other sinners—everyone was given an equal garment. But among them was also a Pharisee who entered. What he saw seemed horrible to him. Among those who were invited were great sinners, harlots, and tax collectors. He did not want to be on a level with them. His own garment, as it appeared to him, was much better. And he remained in it. The king entered to look at the guests and said to him: "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless" (Mt. 22:12). But in his soul one could imagine that he was rebelling. Rebelling, because those present at the wedding feast were all sinners. And he, as it seemed a righteous man, a son of Abraham, here he had to sit together with them. And the most degrading thing of all was that they wanted him to exchange his rich garment for the garment in which all the sinners were dressed, for this wedding garment. No...never.

So what happened—happened! The Lord ordered him to be bound for disrupting unity. What unity? The unity of the Church of Christ. See, brothers and sisters, how important this unity is, how precious the Church of Christ is in the eyes of the Lord. So let us obey the voice of the Church; let us fulfil with our whole soul whatever she requires of us; let us keep the garment which she has given us. And may it never happen to us what happened to him, who was not wearing a wedding garment.

*The One Thing Needful – Archbishop Andrei*

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

### Saints of the Week

**31 August / 13 September - The Feast of the Girdle of the Most Holy Mother of God** - At her Dormition, the most holy Mother of God left her girdle to the holy Apostle Thomas. This girdle was later taken to Constantinople and kept there in a sealed casket in the church of the Mother of God at Blachernae, founded by the Empress Pulcheria. This casket was never opened until the time of the Emperor Leo the Wise (886-912). Leo's wife, the Empress Zoe, was taken sick in soul and, as the result of a mysterious vision, desired that the girdle of the holy Mother of God be placed upon her. The Emperor asked the Patriarch, and the casket was opened. The girdle was taken out and placed upon the sick Empress, who immediately recovered. This feast was instituted as a memorial of this wonder. One part of this girdle is to be found in Georgia, in Zugdid. This came about as follows: The daughter of the Emperor Romanus was healed by the aid of this girdle and, later, when her father gave her to King Abuchaz of Georgia, she took a part of this girdle with her. By order of the Russian Tsar Alexander I, a special church was built in Mingrelia in Zugdid, where this piece of the wonderworking raiment of the holy Mother of God is kept.; St Gennadius, Patriarch of Constantinople; The Hieromartyr Cyprian' St John, Metropolitan of Kiev; at Glastonbury, **St. Aidan, bishop of Lindisfarne, apostle of N. England who taught the Wednesday and Friday fasts (651)** - An Irish monk who had studied under St. Senan, at Iniscathay (Scattery Island). He is placed as Bishop of Clogher by Ware and Lynch, but he resigned that see and became a monk at Iona about 630. His virtues, however, shone so resplendently that he was selected (635) as first Bishop of Lindisfarne, and in time became apostle of Northumbria. St. Bede is lavish in praise of the episcopal rule of St. Aidan, and of his Irish co-workers in the ministry. Oswald, king of Northumbria, who had studied in Ireland, was a firm friend of St. Aidan, and did all he could for the Irish missionaries until his sad death at Maserfield near Oswestry, 5 August, 642. St. Aidan died at Bamborough on the last day of August, 651, and his remains were borne to Lindisfarne. Bede tells us that "he was a pontiff inspired with a passionate love of virtue, but at the same time full of a surpassing mildness and gentleness."

**St. Eanswythe, abbess of Folkestone, grand-daughter of king St. Ethelbert of England, (c.640)** - is remembered for the simple life in which she gave up all the pleasures of the World. Once, the King of Northumbria asked to marry Eanswythe. At that time her father was building an oratory for her and one of the beams to be used was three feet too short. Eanswythe set the King a task to complete in order to win her hand in marriage. If the Kings gods could, by his prayers, lengthen the beam then she would marry him. The King failed and went away filled with shame. Eanswythe however, approached the beam, made a prayer, and the beam lengthened to the required size. This was the first miracle. The nearest water to the oratory was a good distance away and had to be brought by hand. Eanswythe therefore went to the spring a mile or so away in the village of Sweeten. Using a stick she made the water follow her, up and down over cliffs and rocky summits, to her Oratory, where it delivered abundant water for men and animals. In the third miracle the young virgin placed an interdict that the birds should stop settling on the nearby fields and consuming the produce. So it was - the birds obeyed. She performed still further miracles. She restored a blind woman's sight, made a mad man sane and restored health in others from various diseases. King Eadbald consented to allowing her to found a monastery where she served as its abbess. Hers was the first convent in England. The Abbey was destroyed by the Danes; the church built in its place became an "alien" Priory of Lonlay l' Abbeye(Orne) in 1095; then about 1838 the Monks were moved by William de Avaranches to the site of the present church. Less than a century later a great rebuilding took place. It was finally rebuilt as we see it today between 1856 and 1874. In art, Saint Eanswythe is portrayed as a crowned abbess with a book and two fish.

**1 / 14 September – The Beginning of the Church's Year** - The First Ecumenical Council decreed that the Church's year should begin on September 1st. The month of September was, for the Jews, the beginning of the civil year (see Exodus 12:2), the month of the gathering of fruits and the bringing to God of sacrifices of thanksgiving. It was at the time of this feast that the Lord Jesus went into the synagogue in Nazareth, opened the Book of the Prophet Isaiah and read the words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; because He hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance" (Is. 61:1-2; cf. Luke 4:16-21). This month of September is also noted in the history of Christianity because it was during September that Constantine the Great was victorious over Maxentius, the enemy of the

Christian faith, a victory followed by the granting of freedom of confession of the Christian faith through- out the whole Roman Empire. For a long time, the civil year in the Christian world was reckoned in the same way as the Church's year, from September 1st, but it was later changed to January 1st, first in western Europe and then also in Russia in the time of Peter the Great;

**Our Holy Father Simeon Stylites (the Elder) and his mother St. Martha** - born in Syria of peasant parents, he fled from them at the age of eighteen and became a monk. He gave himself to the strictest asceticism, sometimes fasting for forty days. After that, he followed a particular ascesis, until then unknown: standing day and night on a pillar in unceasing prayer. His pillar was at first three metres high, then one of six metres was built for him, then eleven, eighteen and finally twenty. His mother, Martha, came to see him twice, but he would not receive her, saying to her from his pillar: 'Don't disturb me now, Mother dear, if we are to be worthy to meet in the next world.' St Simeon endured innumerable assaults from demons, overcoming them all by prayer. He worked great miracles, healing the sick by his prayers and his words. People from all sides gathered around his pillar: rich and poor, kings and slaves. He helped them all, restoring bodily health to some, giving comfort and instruction to others and denouncing some for their heretical faith. The Empress Eudocia was thus turned from the Eutychian heresy back to Orthodoxy. Simeon lived in asceticism during the reigns of the Emperors Theodosius the Younger, Marcian and Leo the Great. This first Christian stylite and great wonderworker, St Simeon, lived for seventy years, and entered into rest in the Lord on September 1st, 459. His relics were taken to Antioch, to the church dedicated to his name; St. Joshua the Son of Nun.

**2 / 15 September - The Holy Martyr Mamas** — He was born in Paphlagonia of eminent Christian parents, Theodotus and Rufina, who were thrown into prison for the name of Christ. In the prison, Theodotus was the first to die, and Rufina, after giving birth to a son, soon followed her husband, and the new-born child was left in the prison beside the bodies of his parents. God the Provider sent His holy angel to a noble widow, Ammia, whom the angel told in a dream to go to the prison and take the child. Ammia asked the city governor's permission to bury the dead and take the child into her own home. The child was dumb until the age of five, and then his first word was 'Mama', because of which he was given the name Mamas. At school, he showed an unusual brightness, and, being brought up at home in a Christian spirit, did not conceal his faith but confessed it before his contemporaries, mocking at the idols. In the time of the Emperor Aurelian, there was a vicious persecution of Christians, and the pagans did not spare even Christian children. Mamas was fifteen years old when he was taken before the Emperor. The Emperor told him to deny Christ only with his lips. To this Mamas replied: 'I shall not deny my God and King Jesus Christ either in my heart or with my lips.' The Emperor ordered that he be beaten, burned with torches and finally thrown into the sea, but an angel of God saved him and took him to a high mountain near Caesarea. There he lived in solitude and prayer, and fierce wild beasts were tamed by his holiness. He was eventually found there by the persecutors and put again to torture. Overcoming both the power of fire and the fierceness of wild beasts, holy Mamas was stabbed with a trident by a pagan priest. He thus gave his holy soul to the God to whom he had remained faithful in all his sufferings. Many of the sick have been healed by his relics. St John the Faster, Patriarch of Constantinople; St Eleazar; The Feast of the Kaluga Icon of the Mother of God.

**3 / 16 September - Fast Day - The Hieromartyr Anthimus** - Born in Nicomedia, he was brought up from childhood as a true Christian. 'His body was mortified, his spirit humble; jealousy was uprooted, anger tamed, sloth banished.... he had love for all and was at peace with all, had a good understanding with all, was filled with zeal for the glory of God and was open to all.' It is not surprising that a man of such virtues was made a bishop. St Anthimus worked as a bishop in Nicomedia at the time of a harsh persecution of Christians under the two wicked Emperors Diocletian and Maximian. Streams of Christian blood were spilled, especially in Nicomedia. One year, on the feast of the Nativity of Christ, twenty thousand martyrs were burned in one church (see Dec. 28th). This happened during Anthimus's episcopate. The persecution did not end with this, but continued, and many Christians were thrown into prison and kept there for torture and death. St Anthimus withdrew to a village, Omana, not to escape death but to be able thence to strengthen his flock in the path of martyrdom, that none should draw back through fear. One of his letters to the Christians in prison was seized and taken to the Emperor Maximian. The Emperor sent twenty soldiers to find Anthimus and take him. The grey-beard, discerning this, went out to meet the soldiers, brought them into his house as his guests and only then revealed that he was Anthimus. The soldiers, amazed at his kindness, urged him to hide, and said that they would tell the Emperor that they had been unable to find him, but Anthimus replied that he dared not allow God's Law to be violated by a lie in order to save his life. So he set out with the soldiers. On the way, all the soldiers came to faith in Christ and were baptised by Anthimus. Brought before the Emperor, Anthimus was submitted to harsh and long-drawn-out torture, and was finally beheaded with an axe. He glorified God and entered into rest in the Lord at the beginning of the fourth century. The Holy Martyr Vasilissa; St Joannicius, Archbishop and first Patriarch of Serbia; Our Holy Father Theoctistus.

**4 / 17 September - The Hieromartyr Babylas** - This 'great and wonderful man, if one can call him a man', as St John Chrysostom expresses it, was archbishop in Antioch in the time of the wicked Emperor Numerian. This Numerian made a peace-treaty with some barbarian king, who was of better character and a greater lover of peace than himself. As a sign of his sincere desire for a lasting peace, the king gave his little son to be brought up at Numerian's court. One day, Numerian butchered the boy and offered him as a sacrifice to the idols. Still hot from his wicked shedding of innocent blood, this evildoer went to a Christian church to see what was happening there. Holy Babylas was at prayer with the people. He heard that the Emperor was coming with his retinue and intended to enter the church. Babylas stopped the service, went out in front of the church and told the Emperor that, as an idolater, he was not permitted entry to the holy church where the one, true God was worshipped. Speaking of Babylas, Chrysostom says: 'Who else in the world would he fear, having with such authority withstood the Emperor? By this he taught kings not to spread their power further than the measure given them by God, and

also showed the clergy how to use their authority. ' The shamed Emperor turned back, but planned revenge. The following day, the Emperor summoned Babylas, and began to berate him and bid him offer sacrifice to idols, which the saint, naturally, steadfastly refused to do. The Emperor then bound him with chains and threw him into prison. He also tortured three children: Urban, aged twelve, Prilidian, aged nine and Hippolinus, aged seven. Babylas was their spiritual father and teacher, and they had stayed near him out of love for him. They were the sons of a Christian woman, Christodoula, who herself suffered for Christ. The Emperor first ordered that each child be beaten with the number of blows that totalled his age, and then had them thrown into prison. Babylas, in bonds, was present at the beheading of the children, giving them courage, and then laid his honoured head under the sword. He was buried by Christians in the chains in which he was bound at his death, in one grave with the three children. Their holy souls flew off to the company of heaven, and their wonderworking relics remained to be of support to the faithful, along with the enduring witness of their heroism in the Faith. They suffered in about 283. The Holy Prophet Moses; The Holy Martyrs Marcellus and Cassian; Translation of the relics of Ss. Cuthbert & Birinus, bb, to Durham, England

**Icon of the Unburnt Bush** - This beautiful Icon calls to mind the burning Bush which Moses saw, but which was not consumed by the flames. The Prophet Moses is also commemorated on this day. On the Icon is a representation of the Mother of God with Her Child. She holds a ladder on which is sometimes represented St John of the Ladder, the ascetic who wrote a great spiritual treatise called "The Ladder." This richly meaningful Icon depicts the Mother of God Who contained within Her Womb the Eternal God Who is Fire, and yet was unconsumed, like the Unburnt Bush. She is a true Ladder by which we ascend to Heaven, as the Son of God took His Body from Her. The Prophet David is also depicted in the Icon, as the Ancestor of the Most Holy Theotokos and of Christ. He foretold the coming of the Messiah, especially through his Psalms. Many Icons of the Feasts of the Orthodox Church have depictions of David for the fact that his Psalms are used throughout to celebrate the events of our salvation. This icon has been known for its miracles of preservation from fires in Churches and homes.

**5/ 18 September - Fast Day - The Holy Prophet Zacharias** - He was the father of St. John the Forerunner. Zacharias was the son of Barachias, from the lineage of Abia, of the sons of Aaron. Zacharias was a high priest who held the eighth degree of service in the Temple at Jerusalem. His wife Elizabeth was the daughter of Sophia and sister of St. Anna, who was the mother of the Holy Theotokos. During the reign of King Herod the child-slayer, Zacharias was serving one day at the Temple of Jerusalem according to his turn. An angel of God appeared to him in the sanctuary, and Zacharias had great fear. The angel said to him: Fear not, Zacharias (Luke 1:13), and announced that Elizabeth would bear a son, in answer to their prayers. But both Zacharias and Elizabeth were old. When Zacharias doubted the words of the heavenly herald, the angel said: I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God (Luke 1:19). Zacharias was struck dumb from that hour, and could not speak until his son was born and he had written on a tablet: His name is John (Luke 1:63). Then his speech returned, and he magnified God. Some time later, when the Lord Jesus had been born and Herod began to slaughter the children of Bethlehem, he sent men to find and kill the son of Zacharias-for Herod had heard all that had happened to Zacharias, and how John had been born. Upon seeing the soldiers coming, Elizabeth took John into her arms-he was a year and a half old at that time-fled from the house with him, and ran to a rocky and desolate place. When she saw the soldiers following her, she cried out to the mountain: "O mountain of God, receive a mother with her child!" and the rock opened and hid the mother and child. Then Herod, enraged that the child John had not been slain, ordered that Zacharias be slain before the altar. The blood of Zacharias was spilled on the marble and dried solid as stone, and remained as a witness to Herod's evil deed. In the place where Elizabeth hid with John a cave opened, water flowed out of it, and a fruit-bearing palm grew, all by the power of God. Forty days after the death of Zacharias, the blessed Elizabeth died. The child John remained in the wilderness, fed by an angel and protected by God's providence, until the day he appeared at the Jordan; The Holy Martyrs Juventius and Maximinus; Seventy Holy Martyrs; Venerable Athanasius

**6 / 19 September - Commemoration of the Miracles of the Holy Archangel Michael** - There was in Phrygia a place called Chonae (plunging), not far from Hierapolis, and in that place there was a miraculous spring of water. When the Apostle John the Theologian, together with Philip, was preaching the Gospel in Hierapolis, he looked at this place and foretold that a spring would gush forth in it, a spring of healing water from which many would be restored to health, and that the place would be visited by Michael, the great archangel of God. This prophecy was very soon fulfilled: a spring of water appeared, which became known far and wide for its miraculous power. A pagan in Laodicea had a dumb daughter, which caused him great grief, but the Archangel Michael appeared to him in a dream and urged him to take his daughter to this spring, that she might be restored to health. The father immediately obeyed, took his daughter and there encountered many people who had come to seek deliverance from various ills. They were all Christians. The man asked how he should seek healing, and the Christians told him: 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, you must beg the Archangel Michael.' The father made his petition accordingly and dipped his daughter in the water, and the girl began to speak. Then this pagan was baptised along with his daughter and his whole household, and built a church to the Archangel Michael over the spring. Later, a young man called Archippus settled there. Pagans did him much malicious harm, for they did not want such power to be felt from a Christian holy place and many people be drawn to it. In their wickedness, they altered the course of a nearby river, so that it inundated the church and the spring. But, at the prayers of Archippus, the Archangel Michael appeared and opened a fissure in the rock at the end of the church, through which the flooding river plunged. So the place was saved, and became known as Chonae — plunging — from the river's plunge through the opened fissure. St Archippus lived there in asceticism till the age of seventy, and entered peacefully into rest in the Lord. The Holy Martyr Romulus and the 11,000 soldiers; St Eudoxius; Our Holy Father David;

**St. Bega, virgin, first abbess of Copeland in Cumbria** – of Irish royalty. Her family arranged her marriage to the Prince of Norway. Bega wanted to devote her life and virginity to the Lord, refused the arrangement, and fled. It is said that she was

carried across the sea to the coast of Cumberland by riding on a clod of earth. She lived as an anchoress in Cumberland for many years, being fed by the birds in the woods. Saint Oswald of Northumbria, on a raid to dispel some highwaymen, convinced her to enter a convent for her own safety. She agreed, and took the veil from Saint Aidan of Lindisfarne and founded a monastery which later was named after her. As Abbess she was known for her generosity to the poor and oppressed who came to the abbey for assistance.

### **HYMN OF PRAISE** **The Holy Archangel Michael**

Archangel of God Michael the Commander, The sword-bearing servant Of the Lord Most-high.

He stands before the Lord With the heavenly hosts, With the mighty angels And the holy souls.

The greatest commander Of the Greatest King, Wherever he goes, he conquers And works miracles.

He is the one whom Satan Fears like flame, For the commander of God Stands for truth.

He stands for truth, And upholds justice; Fast as sight He can be anywhere swiftly.

The commander of light, He drives the impure away, And with his wings Protects the faithful.

### **REFLECTION**

Christianity has uprooted many barbaric customs from the society of man. But some of those customs-praiseworthy from the pagan point of view, but shameful from the Christian point of view-are, even to the present day, like hidden corruption oozing from a supposedly healed wound. One of these customs is the unlawful kidnapping of maidens. St. Basil wrote powerfully to one of his priests, after one such incident: "Do all in your power to find and rescue this maiden. Then, return her to her parents and excommunicate the perpetrator. Also suspend those who abetted him-including their entire households-from participation in services for three years. Likewise, suspend everyone in the village to which the maiden was taken, where she was hidden or perhaps kept by force-so that all will know that a kidnapper should be driven away from them like a serpent or some other wild beast or common enemy, and that the abused should be protected."

### **HOMILY** **on the two births**

*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6).*

Brethren, these words are not the words of a prophet or an apostle, but are the words of the Lord Himself, uttered with His most pure mouth. As there is power and salvation in every one of the Lord's words, so is there power and salvation in these. That is why it is necessary to study these words with fear and great care and apply them in our lives. By these words the Lord emphasizes the precedence of the spirit over the flesh. And, as the flesh is born of the body, so the spirit must be born of the Spirit. The birth of our spirit is of the Spirit of God, according to the grace of God and not according to nature. It is the new birth that the Lord described to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. Nicodemus did not understand these words of Christ, just as, even today, he whose flesh is stronger than his spirit does not understand them. Men whose flesh has overcome their spirit think and judge everything according to the body. Men whose spirit has overcome their body think and judge everything according to the spirit. All those who think and judge according to the body make their spirits fleshly, while all who think and judge spiritually make their bodies spiritual. Just like someone exchanging gold for paper money, the former convert that which is immortal into that which is mortal. The latter are like someone exchanging paper money for pure gold-for they do not destroy that which is immortal, but convert that which is mortal into that which is immortal. The Jews interpreted the Law and the Prophets according to the flesh, and that is why they did not understand the Lord Jesus, but crucified the Lord of Glory. Those who were enlightened by the grace of the Spirit of God interpreted both the Law and the Prophets spiritually, and understood our Lord Jesus Christ. And through Him, they understood not only the Law and the Prophets, but all of created nature as well, and all of their life on earth. Brethren, although the body is necessarily born of the flesh, it would be unnatural for the spirit also to be born of the flesh. Let our spirit be born of the Spirit of God and then we will be natural, both in body and in spirit. This is that higher and sinless nature that Adam had in Paradise before he sinned. It is not possible or necessary for our body to be born again of the flesh. It is possible and necessary, and never too late, for our spirit to be born again of the Spirit of God. O Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God-help us, that before death we may become reborn of the Spirit of God, and that our spirits, in truth, be born of the Spirit.

**To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.**