



24th Sunday After Pentecost

Apostle Philemon and those with him &

Afterfeast of the Entry

22 November / 5 December

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 7: By Thy Cross, Thou didst destroy death / to the Thief, Thou didst open Paradise / for the myrrh-bearers, Thou didst change weeping into joy! / and Thou didst command Thy disciples, O Christ God / to proclaim that Thou art risen / granting the world great mercy.

Troparion of the Feast: Today is the prelude of God's goodwill/ and the prophecy of the salvation of men./ The Virgin appears openly in the temple of God and foretells Christ to all./ So let us cry to her with loud voices:/ Rejoice, thou who art the fulfilment of the Creator's providence.

Troparion of the Holy Apostles tone 4: The four Apostles of Christ who were chosen by God,/ Philemon and Archippus with Apphia and Onesimus,/ shone with the light of knowledge on those in darkness;/ they contested and destroyed error/ and now pray to the Lord for us all.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 7: The dominion of death can no longer hold men captive, / for Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers. / Hell is bound, while the prophets rejoice and cry: / The Saviour has come to those in faith, / enter, you faithful to the Resurrection.

Kontakion of the Feast: The most pure Temple of the Saviour,/ the most precious bridal chamber and Virgin,/ the sacred treasury of the glory of God,/ today enters into the house of the Lord,/ bringing with her the grace that is the Divine Spirit./ And the angels of God sing of her:/ This is the heavenly tabernacle.

Kontakion of the Holy Apostles tone 2: We praise Philemon, Onesimus, Archippus and Apphian/ as bright stars illuming the world;/ and we cry: Pray unceasingly for us all.

Matins Gospel II

EPISTLE: Ephesians 2: 14-22

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, And that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, In whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

YOU ARE NO LONGER STRANGERS AND FOREIGNERS, BUT FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

Is this then the great privilege, it may be said, that we are admitted into the commonwealth of the Jews? ...What is this, 'both one?' He does not mean that He has raised us to that high heritage of theirs, but that he has raised both us and them to a yet higher. However, the blessing to us is greater, because to the Jews it had been promised, and they were nearer than we ...For this reason he says, 'And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy' (Rom. 15:9). The promise He gave indeed to the Israelites, but they were unworthy; to us He gave no promise, no, we were even strangers. We had nothing in common with them, yet He has made us oneHe calls 'the enmity in the flesh,' a middle wall, in that it is a common barrier, cutting us off alike from God. As the Prophet says, 'Your iniquities separate between you and Me' (Isa. 54:2) ...And this, while the law existed, was not only not abolished, but rather was strengthened; 'for the law,' says the Apostle, 'works wrath' (Rom. 4:15) ...The law was a hedge ...Listen again to the Prophet, where he says, 'I made a trench about it' (Isa. 5:2). And again, 'You have broken down her hedges, so that all who pass by the way pluck her fruit' (Ps. 80:12) ...It became a middle wall, no longer establishing them in security, but cutting them off from God ...His death, says the Apostle, has 'slain' the enmity ...How then is it that it does rise again? From our exceeding depravity. For as long as we abide in the body of Christ, as long as we are united, it does not rise again, but lies dead ...He calls those acts which the soul performs of herself 'natural,' and those which the body performs of itself 'carnal' ...The virtue of the flesh is her subjection to the soul. It is her vice to govern the soul ...He did not send Angels or Archangels on the mission, because to repair so many and such vast mischiefs and to declare what had been wrought was in the power of none other, but required His own coming. The Lord then took upon Himself the rank of a servant, no, almost of a minister.

St. John Chrysostom. Homilies V and VI on Ephesians II. B#57, pp. 71-74.

THE GOSPEL - LUKE 12: 16-21

Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.' " But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

The Harvest of a Rich Man.

We read a very short parable about the harvest of a rich man and like so much of scripture it has deep theology in very few words. It appears simple on the outside. But, truly it has much more than just the external message that we know of that is obvious from it that we should not only care about ourselves and be stingy and care only and think of life as the acquiring of goods.

Our Lord said this parable because he had just been part of or been brought into a dispute between brothers two about an inheritance. So He was trying to show how silly it is, how foolish it is to be concerned about riches.

So He begins His parable by saying "the ground of a certain rich man" — he doesn't even name the man. If you notice sometimes in parables those who are great sinners don't even have a name: such as the rich man and Lazarus, and the rich man who had this plentiful harvest. They don't even mention his name. His name is blotted out of the book of the Living. It's unimportant. Perhaps, when he dies, there would be great fanfare, and people playing bugles, and paid mourners wailing and gnashing their teeth and tearing at their hair and a huge retinue of people to bury him and maybe even those from the towns people, who say, "What a great man he was..." and everything. And yet God doesn't know his name, the angels don't know his name, the saints don't know who he is.

This is not how we want to be referred to, as a certain person, a certain rich man, a certain sinner, a certain non-entity in the Kingdom of God. Indeed we want to be named. So this nameless, foolish man has many many crops and it is a bountiful year. And he makes a great mistake. Instead of thanking God, he thinks before he's even brought his crop in, "What shall I do?"

This is a question that all of us ask all the time: "What shall I do?" The poor man asks, "What shall I do? I'm destitute. I have no funds. I have no food in the cupboard. Winter is coming and my children do not have shoes. What shall I do?" and the rich man, who is not rich toward God, who has all this bounty, says "What shall I do?" The one who has nothing and the one who has everything in a temporal sense, they both ask the same question. So what good is riches? What good is abundance unless we understand from Whom that abundance comes and what is the significance of that abundance and how we can use it for the Kingdom of God?

So he says, "I have no room in my barns so I'm going to tear down perfectly good barns and I'm going to build greater barns." And then he makes an even bigger error and that's an error that we make often so you should take note of it. He says, "My soul, soul that has much goods laid up for many years take thine ease. Eat, drink, and be merry." He speaks to his soul. What does the soul need of food? What does the soul need of raiment? What does the soul need of great barns? The soul is incorporeal. The soul communicates with God. It doesn't need food. He speaks to his soul and mistakes it for his body. This, indeed, is a great error and this is what happens in our life. People define life in terms of the pleasure that they have, or in terms of the comfort that they have, or the security that they have. It is always about taking care of their bodies. Or more than taking care of their bodies, sometimes giving their body pleasure that is illicit and unclean. But, it's always about their bodies.

This rich man makes the mistake that is very typical of those who do not have their eye on God and don't understand what the purpose of their life is all about. His soul and his body to him, he doesn't understand what his soul is. His soul is the body as far as he is concerned. Everything is the here and now, everything is the next dinner, the next dance, the next bit of entertainment. That is for him what his soul is. And we will see later in only a moment what this really means. The implications of not understanding about your soul and your body and the purpose in your life are tremendous and terrible.

So God says unto him, "Thou fool. This very night thy soul shall be required of thee." A more proper way to put it is: "This very night, they shall require thy soul." "They" are the demons. They will take the soul and cast it where it belongs: in the pit of hell. God doesn't refer to the death of a righteous man in this way. The angels take the soul which is light and ascends to God. It is not "required," that is, against the will of a man. It is natural. In this case, the rich man, his soul is required. It is torn away because everything that he had in this life was temporal, was false, and was fleeting. And when he died, he had nothing. No good works, no good thoughts. Nothing. And so his soul clung to his body. His soul became fleshly in the words of Blessed Theophylact. And so his soul was torn away for him.

I tell you, there will be no greater pain experienced by any man than when a fleshly soul is torn away from a corrupt body at the time of death. Nothing can compare. No torture, no torment. It is a moment of great tragedy that a man who has so much provided to him would have not understood it for all of his years.

There are other things in this parable that are important to understand. Perhaps, more side issues. One is that when he says, "I'm going to pull down my barns and build greater." He had barns that he could've put his foodstuffs into: the bellies

of the poor. If a man has more than another, he is obligated to give to one who needs. The bellies of the poor are storehouses, abundant storehouses, infinite storehouses. And the wonder of these storehouses is that when food is put into them, it does not perish. It endures forever and every single cup of water that is given to one of these store houses, the bellies of the poor, will be remembered according to the words of our Savior, in the last day. So, this food does not perish. Where as normally, we eat food, it goes into the belly, and it goes out, and as the Lord says "into the drop." It becomes waste in a matter of hours. But not food that is given to the poor. Not abundance that God gives to us that we distribute to others.

But you have to understand this is not just a moral teaching saying we should give to others. There is depth here as far as why we give to others. It's all God's anyway. That's another mistake the rich man made when he said, "Thou hast many goods..." Oh, rich man, thou hast no goods! Everything is of God's. And God has given some of it to you. He has given you an abundance in order so that you could give unto others. So we must understand everything is of God's. But much more critical, if we are truly to be benevolent people, is that we must understand "What is the purpose of our life?" The rich man definitely didn't understand. He called his body his soul. He didn't understand at all. In the end of the parable, the Lord said, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God."

The purpose of our life is to become rich towards God. Our Lord wishes us to have everything in abundance. And in the second, there was speaking of, "All of His goods will be given to the good man of the house that watches and waits and will be seen to be so doing when his Lord comes" So there's a perfect tie in with the two gospels. All of the Lord's goods will be given, but they are not silver and gold and food and dancing, and merriment. By the way, Blessed Theophylact, says that when the rich man says "take thine eat, drink, and be merry" this word "merry" is a euphemism. When people are indulged in great excess of drinking and eating, merriment is something that you wouldn't want to see. That would be unclean and immoral. All manner of fornication, and all manner even of murders, and all kinds of infidelities and all that sort of thing. That's the merriment for a person who's glutting himself on pleasure.

The purpose of our life is to know God. God gives us things so that we can know Him. God sometimes gives us abundance so that we can know Him. Everything is of God. Therefore, we are only His stewards. We are His servants. We must have that attitude about ourselves. And then we must understand what is really treasure? God has given us many things of a physical nature and we can enjoy them. We can certainly enjoy the taste of fine and succulent food on the days when it is allowed and it is totally lawful thing to do this. And all of the other things God has given. But, we must understand where our treasure is. Our treasure is in being rich towards God, in having full faith in Him. And then He will bestow His goods to us. We can't even imagine what those goods really are. We can only speak of them in a poor way. Language can't communicate what God wants to give us. He will give it to a man who is open to Him, who is rich toward Him. Who hears of the commandments and says, "I wish to do this."

Even if a man can not do a certain commandment or can not in every way change his life, in his heart, if he is a Christian, he says, "I want to change. I want to direct my life according to that which is true, that which is perfect, that which is holy." Then a man, not matter what state he's in, is rich toward God. This is the purpose of our life: to know God, to become like Him in moral attributes, to become pure and holy. And this rich man, this nameless, wanton sinner, did not understand that. He did not understand anything of what God had given him and what the purpose of his life is.

So here we have before us, brothers and sisters, a bad example. We must learn from bad examples as much as we learn from good examples. This is an example of how not to live, how not to think. We should not live according to the flesh. We should not acquaint the flesh with our life. There are necessities of the flesh and we take care of those. There are pleasures of the flesh and when they are lawful, may it be blessed. But if we ever acquaint any pleasure of the flesh with our life, we have ceased to be a Christian. No longer are we a Christian if we think of the flesh as our life. May God help you. May God enlighten you. There is much depth here. I can't begin to plum the depths of it because I don't have the purity to see it all or the eloquence to express it all. But, there is depth here. There is in this parable a teaching trying to teach you how to live, what kind of attitude to have. That's the depth of it. May God help you and enlighten you to live according to God, to be rich toward God. Amen.

Fr Seraphim Holland

for the Apostles: Luke. 10:1-15

Saints of the week

22 November / 5 December — Afterfeast of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos — **Nativity Fast — **The Holy Martyr Cecilia**** — Born in Rome of rich and eminent parents, she had a firm faith in Christ the Lord and a great zeal for the Faith. Vowing life-long virginity to God, holy Cecilia wore a rough hair-shirt underneath the costly raiment that her parents gave her. When they forced her into marriage with a pagan, Valerian, she spent the first night urging her new-wedded bridegroom to go to Bishop Urban for baptism, and then himself to live a life of virginity. Embracing the Christian faith, Valerian also brought his brother Tibertius to it. Both brothers were very soon condemned to death for their faith, but their zeal did not falter in the face of death itself. Taken to the scaffold, these two brothers succeeded in bringing the captain of the guard, Maximus, to the Faith, and they all three suffered together for Christ the Lord. St Cecilia buried their bodies together and was then herself taken for trial, having unwearyingly won over many pagans to the Christian faith. In one evening, she had won over four hundred souls. When the judge asked her whence came her daring, she answered: 'From a pure conscience and an unquestioning faith'. After harsh torture, she was condemned to be beheaded with the sword. The executioner brought the

sword down on her neck three times, but failed to kill her; he only wounded her and the blood ran down from her wounds, being caught in kerchiefs and bowls by the faithful to use for healing. Three days later, Christ's martyr and virgin gave her spirit into the hands of her Lord, to rejoice with him in eternity. St Cecilia suffered with the others in about the year 230. Her relics are preserved in the church dedicated to her name in Rome. In the Western Church, St Cecilia is regarded as the patron of Church Music. St Kallistos, Patriarch of Constantinople; The Holy Martyr Menignus; Holy and Righteous Michael the Soldier; The Holy Apostles Philemon, Archippus and Apphia.

23 November / 6 December — Afterfeast of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos — **Nativity Fast — St Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium** — A fellow-countryman and friend of St Basil the Great and other great saints of the

fourth century, Amphilochius early forsook the bustle of the world and withdrew to a cave where, as the solitary, he lived in asceticism for forty years. The episcopal throne in Iconium then fell empty, and Amphilochius was chosen in a wonderful way and consecrated as Bishop of Iconium. He was a marvellous shepherd and a great defender of the purity of the Orthodox faith, and took part in the Second Ecumenical Council in 381. He fought zealously against Macedonius, and against the Arians and the Eunomians. He personally begged Theodosius the Great to drive the Arians out of every city in the Empire, but the Emperor did not comply with his request. After a few days, Amphilochius came before the Emperor again. When the bishop was taken into the presence-chamber, the Emperor was sitting on his throne with his son Arcadius, whom he had taken as co-Emperor, sitting at his right hand. Entering the room, Amphilochius did reverence to Theodosius, but ignored Arcadius as though he were not there. Infuriated by this, the Emperor Theodosius commanded that Amphilochius be instantly driven from court. The saint then said to the Emperor: 'Do you see, O Emperor, how you do not tolerate a slight paid to your son? In the same way, God the Father does not tolerate dishonour paid to His Son, turning with loathing from those who blaspheme against Him, and being angered at that accursed Arian heresy.' Hearing this, the Emperor understood the reason for Amphilochius's seeming disrespect towards his son, and marvelled at his wisdom and daring. Among many other works, Amphilochius wrote several books on the Faith. He entered into rest in 395 in great old age, and went to immortal life.

St Alexander of the Neva (Nevsky) - The son of Prince Yaroslav, his heart was drawn to God from his youth. He overcame the Swedes on the river Neva on July 15th, 1240, whence he took the name 'of the Neva'. On that occasion, Ss Boris and Gleb appeared to one of Alexander's generals and promised their aid to the great prince, their kinsman. Among the Golden Horde of the Tartars, he refused to sacrifice to idols or pass through fire. The Tartar Khan valued him for his wisdom, and his physical strength and beauty. He built many churches, and performed innumerable works of mercy. He entered into rest at the age of forty-three, on November 14th, 1263, today being the commemoration of the translation of his relics to the city of Vladimir; St Gregory, Bishop of Agrigentum; St Mitrophan, Bishop of Voronezh' St. Trudo, Abbot.

24 November / 7 December — Afterfeast of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos — **Nativity Fast — The Holy and Great Martyr Catherine** — The daughter of King Constus, she lived with her mother in Alexandria after her

father's death. Her mother was secretly a Christian and, through her spiritual father, brought Catherine to the Christian faith. In a vision, St Catherine received a ring from the Lord Jesus Himself as a sign of her betrothal to Him. This ring remains on her finger to this day. Catherine was greatly gifted by God, exceptionally well-educated in Greek philosophy, medicine, rhetoric and logic, and added great physical beauty to this. When the wicked Emperor Maxentius offered sacrifice to idols and ordered everyone to do the same, St Catherine came with daring before him and denounced his idolatrous errors. The Emperor, seeing that she surpassed him in wisdom and learning, summoned fifty of the wisest men, to dispute with her about faith and put her to shame, but Catherine was wiser than they, and put them to shame. The furious Emperor commanded that all fifty wise men be burned. These wise men, at St Catherine's prayers, all confessed the name of Christ at the moment of death, and proclaimed themselves Christians. When the martyr was in prison, she brought Porphyrius the general, with two hundred of his soldiers, to the Faith, and also the Empress, Augusta-Vasilissa. They all suffered for Christ. At St Catherine's martyrdom, an angel of God appeared to her, stopping and breaking the wheel on which she was being tortured, and after that the Lord Christ Himself appeared to her, strengthening her. After many tortures, Catherine was beheaded with the sword at the age of eighteen, on November 24th, 310. Milk flowed from her body in place of blood. Her wonderworking relics are preserved on Sinai. St. Minver, virgin of Cornwall, St. Romanus of Bordeaux (d.382) The Holy and Great Martyr Mercurius; The Holy Maiden Mastridia.

25 November / 8 December — Apodosis of the Entry into the Temple — **Nativity Fast - The Hieromartyr Clement Bishop of Rome** - Born in Rome and of royal blood, he was a contemporary of the apostles. His mother and two brothers were

caught by a storm on a voyage and driven to different places. His father then went off to find his wife and sons, and himself disappeared. Clement, being then twenty-four years old, set off eastwards to look for his parents and brothers. In Alexandria, he made the acquaintance of the Apostle Barnabas, and afterwards became a friend of the Apostle Peter, who was already being followed by his two brothers, Faustinus and Faustinian. By God's providence, the Apostle Peter found Clement's aged mother, who was living as a beggar-woman, and then his father also. Thus the whole family was reunited, and they all returned to Rome as Christians. Clement remained linked with the great apostles, who made him bishop before their death. After Peter's death by martyrdom, Linus was bishop in Rome, then Cletus—both of them only for a short time—and then Clement. He governed the Church of God with burning zeal and, from day to day, brought large numbers of unbelievers to the Faith. He set seven scribes to record the lives of the Christian martyrs who were at that time suffering for their Lord. The Emperor Trajan drove him out to Cherson, where Clement found about two thousand exiled Christians, who were all put to the hard toil of cutting stone in an arid region. The Christians welcomed Clement with great joy, and he was to them a living source of comfort. By his prayers, he brought water from the dry ground and converted so many of the pagan inhabitants to Christianity that there were seventy-five churches built in that place in one year. To prevent the further spreading of the Christian faith, Clement was condemned to death, and drowned in the sea with a stone round his neck in the year 101. His

wonderworking relics were taken out of the sea only in the time of Ss Cyril and Methodius; The Hieromartyr Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria; Our Holy Father Paphnutius.

26 November / 9 December — Nativity Fast— St Innocent of Irkutsk - Saint Innocent was born John Veniaminov in 1797 in the village of Anginskoye in Irkutsk province. The son of a church server, he entered the Irkutsk theological seminary at the age of 20. He married, was ordained a deacon of the Church of the Annunciation in Irkutsk, and became a teacher before being ordained at the age of 24. At 26 he volunteered to travel to the distant island of Unalaska in the Aleutians as a mission priest, accompanied by his aging mother, his wife, his son, and his brother. It took them more than a year to travel from Irkutsk to the island of Unalaska. He built churches, learned the local languages, translated the gospels and hymns, and expanded his mission to the surrounding islands. In Unalaska he wrote his famous "Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven." We went on to Sitka Island, to minister to the Tlingits (or Kolushchans), who had not heard the Gospel and served there for fifteen years before returning to St. Petersburg to report on the mission. In St. Petersburg he received news of the death of his wife, and he was tonsured a monk and given the rank of archimandrite, then bishop and then archbishop of Irkutsk. In 1865, the Holy Synod issued a decree appointing Archbishop Innocent a member of the Holy Governing Synod. In 1867, after the repose of Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow, he was appointed Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna and Archimandrite of the Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra. Both in Moscow and in the Holy Synod, Metropolitan Innocent achieved, under the guidance of Divine Providence, a great deal for the missionary cause. His administration of his diocese brought fruitful results: many members of the Moscow and village clergy were provided with houses by their communities, and their standard of living improved, thanks to funds raised by Metropolitan Innocent; a home for retired clergymen was opened in 1871; a diocesan school of icon painting and other arts was opened for poor children and orphans of the clergy who were not able to attend ordinary schools (1873); a school for daughters of the clergy; and a church dedicated to the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God was built for the Moscow Theological Academy. He reposed in 1879. One of his contemporaries wrote of St. Innocent, "His Eminence, Innocent stands out magnificently among all our Orthodox hierarchs, ancient and new, for his remarkable and unique qualities. Having grown up and worked up to the age of seventy in the midst of nature, surrounded by simple children of nature, he was himself approachable, kind and welcoming, straightforward and free of partiality, caring not for show or finery, nor prone to flaunt either his knowledge or his accomplishments, and his behavior at all times was simple and humble. His great natural intelligence was enriched with a wealth of knowledge that few possess. His heart had no place for envy and cunning, ambition and vanity, desire for riches or for earthly comforts. Since early childhood he had to wage a constant struggle with severe natural conditions and people, resisting need and privation, and he taught himself patience and industry, courage and perseverance, self-control and resourcefulness, restraint and the ability to be content with little, and implicit submission to the holy will of God in all circumstances." Preaching the Gospel was St. Innocent's main task in life, accomplished at great personal sacrifice and hardship, but with great joy. He wrote to his bishop in Irkutsk about his missionary expedition to the island of Unga in 1828: "Words cannot describe the zeal with which the Aleuts received my teaching, the gratitude with which they honored me for having instructed them, or the spiritual pleasure which teaching them brought me. Thanks be to God the Word, for granting me His Word, and for enlightening and comforting them with the Word."

Our Holy Father Alypius the Stylite - Born in Hadrianopolis, a city in Paphlagonia, he was from his youth dedicated to the service of God. As a deacon, he served in the church in that city with Bishop Theodore. But, desiring a solitary life of prayer and meditation, Alypius withdrew to a Greek cemetery outside the city, from which people fled as from a place of terror, as demonic visions had been seen there. Here he erected a Cross, and built a church in honour of St Euphemia, who had appeared to him in a dream. Near the church, he built a high pillar, climbed up onto it and spent fifty-three years there in fasting and prayer. Neither the mockery of men nor the evil demons could drive him away or shake his purpose. This saint endured endless assaults from the demons. They not only tried to terrify him with demonic apparitions, but also stoned him and gave him no peace day nor night for a long time. But Alypius courageously defended himself against this diabolical power with the sign of the Cross and the name of Jesus. Finally, the vanquished demons left him and fled, and men began to revere him and to come to him for his prayers, comfort, teaching and healing. Two monasteries were built beside his pillar, on one side for men and on the other for women. His mother and sisters lived in the women's monastery. St Alypius guided the monks and nuns from his pillar by word and example, and shone like the sun in the sky for them all, showing them the way of salvation. This man of God had such grace that he was often bathed in heavenly light, and a pillar of this light stretched above him to heaven. Alypius was a great and mighty wonderworker, both in his lifetime and after his death. Living for a hundred years, he entered into rest in the year 640, in the time of Emperor Heraclius. Of his holy relics, the head is preserved in the monastery of Koutloumousiou on the Holy Mountain. Our Holy Father James the Solitary; Our Holy Father Stylianus; Our Holy Father Nikon the Preacher of Repentance; St Innocent of Irkutsk.



27 November / 10 December — Nativity Fast –Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God, Protectress of the Russian Diaspora. On 8 September, 1295, on the day of the Nativity of the Most-Holy Mother of God, a small force of hunters from Rylsk came to hunt at the Tuskora river, 27 versts from Kursk. One of the hunters, an honorable and pious man, seeking prey in the woods, found a small icon lying face down on the root of a tree. He had barely lifted it to inspect it when the spot upon which the icon lay burst out with a strong spring of pure water. The icon turned out to be of the type referred to as the "Sign" of the Mother of God. The hunter who found the icon knew that this was no ordinary occurrence. He called his companions and together they built a small wooden chapel, into which they placed this icon. The residents of Rylsk, hearing of the newly-appeared icon of the Mother of God, began to visit it for veneration, and many miracles began to appear from it.

In 1385 the Kursk region was again swept by the Tatars. They tried to burn down the chapel and its Icon, but the wooden structure would not burn. The priest who lived by the chapel, Fr. Bogolep, explained to them that the reason for this miracle was the Icon itself. The incensed Tatars hacked the Icon in half and tossed the pieces in different directions, then burned the chapel.

They took the priest prisoner and was forced to tend to Tatar flocks. Some time later he was ransomed by emissaries of the Muscovite Grand Duke who were on their way to the Golden Horde, and he returned to the place where the chapel had stood. After a long search, while praying and fasting, he found both halves of the holy Icon, placed them side by side, and they grew together seamlessly, exhibiting only something "like dew".

In 1676 the holy Icon traveled to the Don River for blessing the Don Cossack troops. In 1684 Tsars Ivan and Petr Alekseevich sent a copy of this Icon with the order that it accompany Orthodox troops into battle. In 1687 the holy Icon was sent to the "Great Army." In 1689 copies of the holy Icon were given to the armies in the Crimean campaign. In 1812 a copy of the holy Icon was sent to Prince Kutuzov and the battling troops. Before his icon St. Seraphim of Sarov prayed and was healed.

On the night of 7-8 March, 1898, conspirator revolutionaries-atheists tried to blow up the Miracle-working Icon with a hellish bomb, but the Lord Jesus Christ glorified His Most-Pure Mother yet more, for despite the terrifying destruction in the cathedral surrounding the Icon, it remained untouched.

On 12 April 1918, the holy Icon was stolen from the cathedral of the Monastery of the Sign of the Mother of God and stripped of its ornamentation, but on 2 May it was found and returned to its place.

Finally, in 1919, while accompanying Bishop Feofan of Kursk and Oboyan' and some monks of the Monastery of the Sign, the holy Icon crossed the border to the neighborly Serbia. In 1920 it again, at the behest of General Wrangel, visited Russia at the Crimea and remained there until the final evacuation of the Russian Army in the first days of November, 1920. The holy Icon returned to Serbia, where it remained until 1944, when, together with the Synod of Bishops, it went abroad, to Munich (Bavaria) with Metropolitan Anastassy. In 1951 Metropolitan Anastassy moved from Munich to America. Since 1957 the Icon had resided in the main cathedral dedicated to it in the Synod of Bishops in New York. The holy Icon regularly travels to all the dioceses of the Russian diaspora

The Holy Martyr James the Persian - Born in the Persian town of Elapa, or Vilat, of Christian parents, he was brought up in the Christian faith and married a Christian wife. The Persian king, Yezdegerd, loved James for his gifts and for his skill, and made him a noble at his court. Flattered by the king, James was deluded and offered sacrifice to idols, which the king also worshipped. His mother and wife, hearing of this, wrote him a reproachful letter in which they grieved over him as an apostate and one spiritually dead, begging him at the end of the letter to repent and return to Christ. Moved by this letter, James repented bitterly, and courageously confessed his faith in Christ the Lord before the king. The furious king condemned him to death, and added that his body was to be cut to pieces, little by little, until he breathed his last. The executioners fulfilled this command of the accursed king to the letter, and first cut off James's fingers, then his toes, his legs and arms, his shoulders and finally his head. During the entire process, the repentant martyr gave thanks to God. A fragrance came from his wounds as of cypress. Thus this wonderful man repented of his sin, and his soul went to Christ his God in the heavenly Kingdom. He suffered in about 400. His head is to be found in Rome, and a part of his relics in Portugal, where he is commemorated on May 22nd. St. Congar, bishop of Somerset; St. Fergus, bishop of Glamis; The Seventeen Holy Fathers Martyred in India; Our Holy Father Romanus the Wonderworker; Our Holy Father Pinuphrius; Our Holy Father Nathanael.

28 November / 11 December — Nativity Fast — Our Holy Father, the Martyr Stephen the New - As aforesaid Hannah the mother of Samuel, so Anna the mother of Stephen prayed God to give her a son. Praying thus at one time in the Blachernae church in front of the icon of the most holy Mother of God, a light sleep fell on her, in which she saw the holy Virgin, radiant like the sun, and heard her voice: 'Woman, go in peace; in fulfilment of your prayer, you have a son in your womb.' Anna indeed conceived and bore a son, this holy Stephen. He received the monastic habit at the age of sixteen on Mount St Auxentius near Constantinople, at the hands of the elder John, from whom he learned divine wisdom and asceticism. When John entered into rest in the Lord, Stephen remained on that mountain in strict asceticism, taking on himself labour upon labour. His holiness drew many disciples to him. When the Emperor Constantine Copronymos began to persecute the icons even more ferociously than his foul father, Leo the Isaurian, Stephen showed himself to be a zealous defender of the veneration of the holy icons. The demented Emperor listened to various slanders against Stephen, and himself devised a number of intrigues, solely to break Stephen and get him out of the way. Stephen was exiled to the island of Proconnesus, and then taken to Constantinople, put in chains and cast into prison. There he met three hundred and forty-two captive monks, brought from all sides and thrown into prison for their veneration of icons. In the prison, they followed the whole order of church services as in a monastery. The wicked Emperor condemned Stephen to death. The saint foresaw his death forty days before, and took his leave of the brethren. The Emperor's servants took him from the prison and, beating and buffeting him, dragged him through the streets of Constantinople, calling on all who were on the Emperor's side to stone this 'enemy of the Emperor'. One of the heretics aimed a blow at the saint's head with a piece of wood, and the saint breathed his last. As Stephen the Protomartyr suffered at the hands of the Jews, so this Stephen suffered at the hands of the iconoclast heretics. This glorious soldier of Christ suffered in the year 767, at the age of fifty- three, and was crowned with unfading glory. The Holy New Martyr Christos; Our Holy Mother Anna; The Holy and Devout Emperor Maurice.