



26th Sunday After Pentecost

St Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia

6 / 19 December

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 1: When the stone had been sealed by the Jews; / while the soldiers were guarding Thy Most Pure Body; / Thou didst rise on the third day, O Saviour, / granting life to the world. / The Powers of Heaven therefore cried to Thee O Giver of Life: / glory to Thy Resurrection O Christ! / Glory to Thy Kingdom; / Glory to Thy Dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind.

Troparion tone 4: The truth of things revealed thee to thy flock as a rule of faith, / a model of meekness, and a teacher of temperance. / Therefore thou hast won the heights by humility, / riches by poverty. / Holy Father Nicholas, intercede with Christ our God that our souls may be saved.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 1: As God, Thou didst rise from the tomb in glory, / Raising the world with Thyself. / Human nature praises Thee as God, for death has vanished. / Adam exults O Master, Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage, and cries to Thee; / Thou art the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ.

Kontakion tone 3: Thou wast a faithful minister of God in Myra, / O Saint Nicholas. / For having fulfilled the Gospel of Christ, / thou didst die for the people and save the innocent. / Therefore thou wast sanctified as a great initiator of the grace of God.

Matins Gospel IV

EPISTLE: Ephesians 5: 9-19

Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), Finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

NOT AS FOOLS, BUT AS WISE, REDEEMING THE TIME, BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL

The acquisition of God's Spirit is also capital, but grace-given and eternal, and it is gained in very similar ways, almost the same ways as monetary, social and temporal capital. God the Word, the God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, likens our life to a market, and the work of our life on earth He calls buying, and says to us all: Buy till I come, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. That is to say, economize the time for receiving heavenly blessings through earthly goods. Earthly goods are virtuous acts performed for Christ's sake and conferring on us the grace of the Holy Spirit, without whom there is not and cannot be any salvation; for it is written: 'By the Holy Spirit is every soul quickened and by purity exalted, yea, is made bright by the Three in One in holy mystery' [from Orthodox Matins hymn]. The Holy Spirit Itself enters our souls, and this entrance into our souls of Him the Almighty ...is only granted to us through our own assiduous acquisition of the Holy Spirit, which prepares in our soul and body a throne for the all-creative presence of God with our spirit according to His irrevocable word: I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people (Lev. 26:12) ...Most of all it is given through prayer; for prayer is somehow always in our hands as an instrument for acquiring the grace of the Spirit ...prayer is always possible for everyone, rich and poor, noble and simple. strong and weak. healthy and suffering, righteous and sinful ...Trade thus spiritually in virtue. Distribute the gifts of the grace of the Holy Spirit to them that ask, as a candle, burning with earthly fire, lights other candles for the illumining of all in other places, but diminishes not its own light.

St. Seraphim of Sarov, Conversation with Nicholas Motovilov Concerning the Aim of the Christian Life. B#26, pp. 269-270.

for the Hierarchy: Heb . 13:17-21

GOSPEL: LUKE 17: 12-19

Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

THE BLIND MAN HEALED NEAR JERICHO

The lepers then having met the Saviour, earnestly besought Him to free them from their misery, and called Him Master, that is, Teacher. No one pitied them when suffering this malady: but He Who had appeared on earth for this very reason, and had become man that He might show pity unto all, He was moved with compassion for them, and had mercy upon them. And why did He not rather say, "I will, be ye cleansed;" as he did in the case of another leper; but commanded them rather to show themselves unto the priests? It was because the law gave directions to this effect to those who were delivered from leprosy: for it commanded them to show themselves to the priests, and to offer a sacrifice for their cleansing. He commanded them therefore to go, as being already healed, and, that they might, so to speak, bear witness to the priests, as the rulers of the Jews, and ever envious of His glory, that wonderfully, and beyond their hope, they had been delivered from their misfortune by Christ's willing that they should be healed. The nine then, as being Jews, falling into a thankless forgetfulness, did not return to give glory to God: by which He shows that Israel was hard of heart, and utterly unthankful: but the stranger, for as being a Samaritan he was of foreign race, having been brought thither from Assyria: for the phrase is not without meaning, in the middle of Samaria and Galilee: " returned with a loud voice to glorify God. It shows therefore that the Samaritans were grateful, but that the Jews, even when benefited, were ungrateful.

St. Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St Luke, Homilies 113-116. B#42, pp. 465-466.

for the Hierarch: Luke 6:17-23

Saints of the week

6 / 19 December — Nativity Fast — St Nicolas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia -- This saint, famed throughout the entire world today, was the only son of his eminent and wealthy parents, Theophanes and Nona, citizens of Patara in Lycia. They dedicated to God the only son He gave them. St Nicolas was instructed in the spiritual life by his uncle Nicolas, Bishop of Patara, and became a monk at 'New Sion', a monastery founded by his uncle. On the death of his parents, Nicolas distributed all the property he inherited to the poor and kept nothing back for himself. As a priest in Patara, he was known for his charitable works, fulfilling the Lord's words: 'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth' (Matt. 6:3). When he embraced a life of solitude and silence, thinking to live in that way until his death, a voice from on high came to him: 'Nicolas, set about your work among the people if you desire to receive a crown from Me.' Immediately after that, by God's wondrous providence, he was chosen as archbishop of the city of Myra in Lycia. Merciful, wise and fearless, Nicolas was a true shepherd to his flock. He was cast into prison during the persecutions of Diocletian and Maximian, but even there continued to instruct the people in the Law of God. He was present at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325, and, in his zeal, struck Arius with his hand. For this act, he was removed from the Council and from his episcopal duties, until some of the chief hierarchs had a vision of our Lord Christ and His most holy Mother showing their sympathy with Nicolas. This wonderful saint was a defender of the truth of God, and was ever a spirited champion of justice among the people. On two occasions, he saved three men from undeserved sentences of death. Merciful, trustworthy and loving right, he walked among the people like an angel of God. People considered him a saint even during his lifetime, and invoked his aid when in torment or distress. He would appear both in dreams and in reality to those who called upon him for help, responding speedily to them, whether close at hand or far away. His face would shine with light as Moses' did aforesaid, and his mere presence among people would bring solace, peace and goodwill. In old age, he sickened of a slight illness, and went to his rest in the Lord after a life full of labour and fruitful toil. He now enjoys eternal happiness in the Kingdom of heaven, continuing to help the faithful on earth by his miracles, and to spread the glory of God. He entered into rest on December 6th, 343. St Nicolas, Bishop of Patara - The uncle of the great St Nicolas, he set his nephew on the spiritual path and ordained him priest; The Holy Martyr Nicolas of Karamanos; St Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch; On icons of St. Nicolas, our Lord and Saviour will often be seen on one side with the Gospels in his hand, and the most holy Mother of God on the other with an episcopal stole in hers. This has a twofold historical significance: it denotes firstly, Nicolas's calling to episcopal office, and secondly his vindication and re-instatement following the punishment for his clash with Arius. That very night, several of the fathers had the selfsame vision: how the Lord stood on one side of Nicolas with the Gospels and the Mother of God on the other with a pallium, offering to the saint those marks of rank that had been stripped from him. Seeing this, the fathers were amazed, and quickly returned to Nicolas that which they had taken from him. They began from that time to respect him as a great man, and to interpret his action against Arius not as some senseless rage but as the expression of great zeal for God's truth. Name Day Tsar Nicholas II (1918).

7 / 20 December — Nativity Fast — St Ambrose, Bishop of Mediolanum (Milan) - This great Father of the Orthodox Church was of eminent parentage. His father was the imperial governor of Gaul and Spain, and a pagan, while his mother was a Christian. While he was still in his cradle, a swarm of bees once settled on him, left some honey on his lips and flew off; and, while still a child, he thrust out his hand and said prophetically: 'Kiss it, for I shall be a bishop!' On the death of his father, the Emperor made him governor of Liguria, of which province Milan was the chief city. When the bishop of Milan died, there was great dissention between the Orthodox Christians and the heretical Arians about the choice of a new bishop. Ambrose went into the church to keep order, this being his responsibility. Thereupon, a child at its mother's breast cried out: 'Ambrose for bishop!' All the people took this to be the voice of God, and unanimously elected Ambrose as their bishop, although it was against his will. Ambrose was baptised, and passed through all the necessary ranks in one week, and was consecrated bishop. In this capacity, he strengthened the faith of the Orthodox, restrained heretics, adorned churches, spread the Faith among the pagans, wrote many instructive books and was an example of a true Christian and a true shepherd. He also composed the Te Deum, the great hymn of thanksgiving. This renowned hierarch, who was visited by people from distant lands for his wisdom and gracious words, was very austere in his personal life, being no stranger to toil and full of good works. He slept little, worked and prayed constantly and fasted every day except Saturday and Sunday. God therefore permitted him to witness many of His wonders, and to perform many himself. He discovered the relics of Ss Protasius, Gervasius, Nazarius and Celsus. Humble before lesser men, he was fearless before the great. He reproached the Empress Justina for heresy, cursed Maximus for tyranny and murder and forbade the Emperor Theodosius to enter a church until he had repented of his sin. He refused to meet the powerful Eugenius, the self-styled Emperor. God granted this man, who was so pleasing to Him, such grace that he could raise the dead, drive demons from men, heal the sick of every ailment and see into the future. He died peacefully at daybreak on Easter Day in the year 397; Our Holy Father Gregory the Hesychast ; Our Holy Father Nilus of Stolobnoye.

8 / 21 December — Nativity Fast — Our Holy Father Patapius - born and brought up in the Faith and in the fear of God by pious parents in the Egyptian city of Thebes he early perceived and rejected the empty vanity of the world and went into the Egyptian desert, where he devoted himself to cleansing his heart from every worldly thought and desire for the sake of divine love. When his virtues became known among the people, they began to come to him and seek relief from their troubles. Afraid of human glory, which darkens a man's mind and separates it from God, Patapius fled from the desert to Constantinople, for this wonderful saint thought that he could more easily hide himself from men in the heart of a city than in the desert. He built himself a hut close to the Blachernae church and there, enclosed and unknown, took up again his interrupted life of asceticism. But the light cannot be hidden. A child, blind from birth, was led by divine Providence to St Patapius and begged him to offer a prayer that he might be given his sight and look upon God's creation, and praise God all the more. Patapius had pity on the suffering child and prayed to God, and the child saw. Through this miracle, Patapius's godly life became known throughout the entire capital, and people began to turn to him for healing, comfort and teaching. Patapius healed one eminent man of dropsy after blessing him with a cross and anointing him with oil. Making the sign of the Cross in the air, he freed a youth from an unclean spirit which had cruelly tormented him, and the evil spirit went out of God's creature like smoke, uttering a great cry. He made the sign of the Cross over a woman who had sores on her breasts all filled with worms, and she was healed. St Patapius worked many other miracles, all through prayer in the name of Christ and by the power of the Cross. He entered into rest in great old age, going to the Kingdom of God in the seventh century; The Holy Apostles Sosthenes, Apollos, Tychicus, Epaphroditus, Onesiphorus, Cephas and Caesar; The Holy Martyrs in Africa; **St.**

Budoc, bishop of Plourin - from an early age resolved to embrace the religious life, and was in due course made a monk by the Abbot of Youghal. His mother died, and on the death of the Abbot of Youghal he was elected to rule the monastery. Later, upon the death of the King of Ireland, the natives raised Budoc to the temporal and spiritual thrones making him King of Ireland and Bishop of Armagh. After two years he wished to retire from these honours, but the people were "wild with despair" at the tidings, and surrounded the palace lest he should escape. One night, while praying in his metropolitan church, an angel appeared to him, bidding him betake himself to Brittany. Going down to the seashore, it was indicated to him that he must make the voyage in a stone trough. On entering this it began to move, and he was borne across to Brittany, landing at Porspoder, in the diocese of Léon. The people of that district drew the stone coffer out of the water, and built a hermitage and a chapel for the Saint's convenience. Budoc dwelt for one year at Porspoder, but, "disliking the roar of the waves," he had his stone trough mounted on a cart, and yoking two oxen to it he set forth, resolved to follow them wherever they might go and establish himself at whatever place they might halt. The cart broke down at Plourin, and there Budoc settled for a short time; but trouble with disorderly nobles forced him to depart, and this time he went to Dol, where he was well received by St Malglorious, then its bishop, who soon after resigned his see to Budoc. The Saint ruled at Dol for twenty years, and died early in the seventh century.

9 / 22 December — Nativity Fast — The Conception by St Anna of the Most Holy Mother of God - St Joachim was of the tribe of Judah, and a descendant of King David. Anna was the daughter of Matthan the priest, of the tribe of Levi as was Aaron the High Priest. This Matthan had three daughters: Mary, Zoia and Anna. Mary was married in Bethlehem and bore Salome; Zoia was also married in Bethlehem and bore Elisabeth, the mother of St John the Forerunner; and Anna was married in Nazareth to Joachim, and in old age gave birth to Mary, the most holy Mother of God. Joachim and Anna had been married for fifty years, and were barren. They lived devoutly and quietly, using only a third of their income for themselves and giving a third to the poor and a third to the Temple, and they were well provided for. Once, when they were already old and were in Jerusalem to offer sacrifice to God, the High Priest, Issachar, upbraided Joachim: 'You are not worthy to offer sacrifice with those childless hands.' Others who had children jostled Joachim, thrusting him back as unworthy. This caused great grief to the two aged souls, and they went home with very heavy hearts. Then the two of them gave themselves to prayer to God that He would work in them the wonder that He had worked in Abraham and Sarah, and give them a child to comfort their old age. God sent them His angel, Gabriel, who appeared to each of them separately and told them that God had heard their prayer and

that a daughter would be born to them. St. Anna conceived at once, and in the ninth month gave birth to the holy Virgin Mary who was blessed by God and all generations of men.

Tropar of the Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos, Tone 4: Today, the bonds of barrenness are loosed, / for God, hearkening unto Joachim and Anna, / doth manifestly promise them that they will, / beyond all expectation, / give birth to the divine Maiden, / from whom The Infinite One Himself, / becoming man, shall be born. / And He commandeth the angels to cry unto her: / Rejoice thou who art full of grace, // the Lord is with thee!

Kondak of the Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos, Tone 4 (Special Melody): Today the whole world doth celebrate / Anna's conceiving, / which was brought about by God; / for she gave birth unto her // who ineffably gave birth unto The Word.

St Hannah, Mother of the Prophet Samuel; Our Holy Father Stephen the New Light; St Sophronius, Archbishop of Cyprus; St. Diuma, bishop of the Mercians and Middle Angles – an Irishman and companion of St. Cedd

10 / 23 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Martyrs Menas, Hermogenes and Eucraphus - Both Menas and Hermogenes were born in Athens. They both lived in Constantinople, where they enjoyed the high favour of the Emperor and the honour of the people. Menas was known for his great learning and gift of speech and, although he acted outwardly as a pagan, he was in his heart a convinced Christian. Hermogenes was Eparch of Constantinople, and was a pagan through and through. He was, however, a merciful man and performed many good deeds. When dissention broke out between the Christians and the pagans in the city of Alexandria, the Emperor Maximian (285- 305) sent Menas to calm the turmoil and drive the Christians from the city. Menas went and restored peace, but he also declared himself to be a Christian and brought many of the pagans to the true Faith by the power of his words and the witness of his many miracles. When the Emperor heard this, he sent Hermogenes to punish Menas and to liquidate the Christians. Hermogenes brought Menas to trial, and he cut off his feet and his tongue, gouged out his eyes and then threw him into prison. The Lord Jesus himself appeared to him there, to heal and console His suffering servant. When he saw Menas miraculously healed, Hermogenes was baptised and began to preach the mighty Faith of Christ, being made Bishop of Alexandria. Then the furious Emperor Maximian came himself to Alexandria and put Menas and Hermogenes to harsh torture, which they endured courageously with the help of God's grace. Beholding the fortitude of these soldiers of Christ and the miracles God wrought upon them, Eucraphus, Menas's secretary, went into the judgement-hall and shouted to the Emperor's face: 'I too am a Christian!' The Emperor flew into a rage, took a sword and beheaded Eucraphus himself, and then he commanded the executioner to behead Menas and Hermogenes. Their holy relics, thrown into the sea, floated in a miraculous way to Constantinople, where the bishop, forewarned in a dream, met them with great ceremony and buried them with honour; Our Holy Mother Angelina and St John the Despot; The Holy Martyr Gemellus; Our Holy Father Thomas of Bithynia.

11 / 24 December — Nativity Fast — Our Holy Father Daniel the Stylite - Born in the village of Maroutha, near the city of Samosata in Mesopotamia, of Christian parents, Elias and Martha, he was a gift of God through the tearful prayers of his mother, who was barren, and was dedicated to God in his youth. He embraced the monastic state at the age of twelve and visited Simeon Stylites, receiving his blessing. Desirous of solitude, Daniel left his monastery and withdrew to an abandoned pagan temple on the shore of the Black Sea. He endured many assaults from demons, but overcame them all by prayer, endurance and the sign of the Cross. After that, he climbed up onto a pillar, where he remained till his death, enduring with equanimity both heat and cold, and attacks from both men and demons. Many disciples gathered around his pillar, and he led them towards eternal life by his example and his words. God rewarded His devoted servant with great grace in this life, and he worked many miracles of help to men, and foretold future events. People came to his pillar from all parts, seeking help and advice from the saint of God. Kings and patriarchs came to him, as well as simple folk. The Emperor Leo the Great used to bring his foreign guests, princes and nobles, and show them Daniel on his pillar: 'Here is the wonder of my empire!' Daniel foretold the day of his own death, taught his disciples as a father would his children, and took leave of them. At the time of his death, his disciples saw angels, prophets, apostles and martyrs around the pillar. Having lived in asceticism for eighty years, this angelic man entered into rest, and into the Kingdom of Christ in 489; Our Holy Father Luke the Stylite; Our Holy Father Nikon the Withered; The Holy Martyr Meirax.

12 / 25 December — Nativity Fast — St Herman, Wonderworker of Alaska - at an early age entered the Holy Trinity Sergius Hermitage near the Gulf of Finland, where he was miraculously healed of a dangerous carbuncle by the Mother of God. He later moved to Valaam Monastery, which he greatly loved all his life. He was one of the ten monks selected by Abbot Nazarius for missionary travel to the far reaches of Russia - that part which is now Alaska. A church and school were founded and many adults and children baptised. Over the years the mission was reduced to St. Herman alone. He then chose Spruce Island as the place for his seclusion and monastic labour, naming it 'New Valaam'. He travelled at times to speak to others of Christ's boundless love for man and how one should love God. Before his repose in 1836, he attained such a degree of holiness that he was granted the gifts of miracle working and prophecy. He is a great benefactor to all those who thirst for their eternal heavenly homeland.

St Spiridon the Wonderworker, Bishop of Tremithus - The island of Cyprus was both the birthplace of this famous saint, and the place in which he spent his life in the service of the Church. He was of simple farming stock, and remained simple and humble to the end of his days. He married young and had children, but, when his wife died, he devoted himself entirely to the service of God. He was chosen for his devotion as Bishop of Tremithus, and even as a bishop did not change his simple style of life, taking charge of his cattle himself and tilling his own land. He consumed very little of his own produce, giving the greater part to the poor. He performed great wonders by God's power, making rain fall in a drought, stopping the course of a river, raising several of the dead, healing the Emperor Constans of a grave sickness, seeing and hearing angels, foreseeing future

events and penetrating the secrets of the human heart. He turned many to the true Faith, and did much else. He was present at the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325, and, by his simple and clear expositions of the Faith, as well as by convincing miracles, brought back many heretics to Orthodoxy. He dressed so simply that once, when he was invited by the Emperor to the imperial court, a soldier took him for a beggar and struck him a blow. The meek and guileless Spiridon turned him the other cheek. He glorified God with many miracles, and was of great aid both to individuals and to the whole Church of God. He entered into rest in the Lord in 348, and his wonderworking relics now lie on the island of Corfu and continue to glorify God with many wonders; Synaxis of the first martyrs of the American land: Hieromartyr Juvenal, Peter the Aleut, and Russian New Martyrs Anatole (Kamensky) of Irkutsk and Seraphim (Samoilovich) of Uglich and priest John (Kochurov) of Chicago and Alexander (Khotovitsky) of New York;

The Hieromartyr Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem; The Holy Martyr Synesius;

St. Finnian of Clonard, founder of Skelling Michael, Ireland (549) whose tropar in Tone 8 is: Truly thou art the "Tutor of the Saints of Ireland",/ O Founder of Clonard, great Father Finnian./ As thou didst tirelessly teach the faith in thy native land,/ so teach us to follow thy example that many may come to know Christ/ and be led into the Way of Salvation; Born c.470 at Myshall, County Carlow, Ireland A pious youth, he founded three churches in Ireland while still a layman. Studied in Wales under Saint Cadoc and Saint Gildas. Monk. Great admirer of Saint Patrick. Considered one of the great founders of Irish monasticism. Founded the monastery at Clonard, Meath, Ireland c.520 which lasted a thousand years, and was a training centre for great Irish saints. Spiritual teacher of Saint Columba of Iona, Saint Columba of Terryglass, Saint Ciaran of Clommacnois, Saint Brendan the Voyager, Saint Nathy, Saint Nennius and others. Maintained close relations with the British Church. Often referred to as a bishop, there is no evidence he was ever so consecrated. Many miracles are attributed to him. Birds would gather around him because of his gentle holiness. Reported to have cleared parasitic insects, worms and vermin from the island of Flathlom and the regions of Nantcarfan. One report says that he fended off a party of Saxon raiders by causing an earthquake to swallow their camp. Died c.549-552 at Clonard, Meath, Ireland of plague; relics originally enshrined in Clonard, but were destroyed in the 9th century

St. Colman of Glendalough, Ireland (659) whose Tropar in Tone 8 is: Giving thy life to Christ in monastic poverty,/ thou didst teach us a God-pleasing set of values, O Father Colman./ Wherefore intercede with Christ our God that He will instil in us constancy of faith, patience in trials and freedom from worldliness/ that we may be found worthy of His great mercy.

St. Columba of Leinster whose Tropar in Tone 8 is: O pious Columba, as a disciple of our Father Finnian and a renowned struggler,/ thou didst shine forth in the ascetic life./ O Ireland's treasure, cease not to pray for those who labour,/ weeping and repenting, for the salvation of their souls.

REFLECTION

In icons of St. Nicholas, the Lord Savior is usually depicted on one side with a Gospel in His hands, and the Most-holy Virgin Theotokos is depicted on the other side with an episcopal omophorion in her hands. This has a twofold historical significance: first, it signifies the calling of Nicholas to the hierarchical office, and second, it signifies his exoneration from the condemnation that followed his confrontation with Arius. St. Methodius, Patriarch of Constantinople, writes: "One night St. Nicholas saw our Savior in glory, standing by him and extending to him the Gospel, adorned with gold and pearls. On his other side, he saw the Theotokos, who was placing the episcopal pallium on his shoulders." Shortly after this vision, John the Archbishop of Myra died and St. Nicholas was appointed archbishop of that city. That was the first incident. The second incident occurred at the time of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea. Unable to stop Arius through reason from espousing the irrational blasphemy against the Son of God and His Most-holy Mother, St. Nicholas struck Arius on the face with his hand. The Holy Fathers at the Council, protesting such an action, banned Nicholas from the Council and deprived him of all emblems of the episcopal rank. That same night, several of the Holy Fathers saw an identical vision: how the Lord Savior and the Most-holy Theotokos were standing around St. Nicholas-on one side the Lord Savior with the Gospel, and on the other side the Most-holy Theotokos with a pallium, presenting the saint with the episcopal emblems that had been removed from him. Seeing this, the fathers were awestruck and quickly returned to Nicholas that which had been removed. They began to respect him as a great chosen one of God, and they interpreted his actions against Arius not as an act of unreasonable anger, but rather an expression of great zeal for God's truth.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the sinful fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3): 1. How God cursed the serpent; 2. How He imposed upon Eve the pain of child-bearing and on Adam the burden of toil; 3. How He cursed the ground in the works of man; 4. How He did not curse ground as ground but rather *in thy works* i.e., in the works of man.