



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

### Sunday of the Holy Forefathers

11 / 24 December

*"This the second Sunday before Christmas - it calls to remembrance the ancestors of Christ according to the flesh, whether before or under the Law. The Sunday that follows is still broader in scope, commemorating all the righteous men and women who pleased God from the beginning of time, from the days of Adam the first man down to Joseph, the betrothed of the Mother of God. Approaching Christmas in this way, the worshipper is enabled to see the Incarnation, not as an abrupt and irrational intervention of the divine, but as the culmination of a long process extending over thousands of years." - the Festal Menaion.*

**Resurrection Tropar, Tone 4:** When the women disciples of the Lord / learned from the Angel the joyous message of Thy Resurrection / they cast away the ancestral curse / and elatedly told the Apostles / death is overcome / Christ God is risen / granting the world great mercy.

**Tropar of the Holy Fathers, Tone 4:** Daniel, the man of divine desires, seeing Thee, the Stone uncut by human hands, O Lord, prophetically called Thee a

babe born without seed, the Word incarnate of the Virgin, the immaculate God, the Saviour of our souls.

**Resurrection Kondak, Tone 4:** My Saviour and Redeemer / as God rose from the tomb and delivered the earth-born from their chains / He has shattered the gates of hell, / and as Master, / He has risen on the third day.

**Kondak of the Holy Fathers, Tone 6:** O thrice-blessed ones, who did not honour an image wrought by hands, but were defended by the indescribable Essence, ye were glorified in your ordeal by fire; and, standing in the midst of unbearable flame, ye called upon God, saying: Make speed and haste Thou to help us, O Compassionate One, in that Thou art merciful; who what Thou willest, Thou canst do!

#### Matins Gospel VII

#### Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

#### DO NOT LIE TO ONE ANOTHER, SINCE YOU HAVE PUT OFF THE OLD MAN WITH HIS DEEDS

You shall destroy all those who utter a lie (Ps. 5:7). The mouth that speaks a lie will slay the soul (Wis. 1:11). Forasmuch as all sins arise through a love of pleasure or avarice or vainglory, we can say that lying has its roots in these three vices: a man has to avoid blame and humiliation to fulfil his own desires or to gain something ...And in the end no one believes him when he speaks the truth ...A man whose very life is a lie is one who is licentious and pretends to be temperate, or a miser and speaks of almsgiving and compassion, or ostentatious and goes in raptures over poverty, not wanting to acquire the virtue he praises ...'the devil changes himself into an angel of light' (II Cor.11:14) ...the man whose very life is a lie: he is not a simple but a two-faced man; he is one thing on the inside and another on the outside.

*St. Dorotheos of Gaza. Discourses, IX. On Falsehood. B#45, pp. 160-162.*

## GOSPEL: ST. LUKE 14: 16-24

Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, And sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.' "

### Sunday of the Forefathers.

'Many are called but few are chosen'. So says Christ in today's Gospel. If we think of the knowledge of God conserved among different peoples in the world before Christ, these words have a special significance.

Some peoples conserved a dim memory of events of the human past. In Australia the Aborigines kept a vague memory of how God created the world perfect, which they call the 'Dreamtime'.

All over the world, from Asia to South America, some 120 different peoples and cultures have kept the memory of a great, universal flood, which is known to us in detail through Noah.

In India the Hindus long ago kept an intuition of a Trinitarian God, but among them their knowledge of God became so twisted that their trinity is a trinity of destructive gods.

Other peoples fell even further and began worshipping stones and trees, rivers and mountains, mistaking creation for the Creator. For instance, in this country, thousands of years before Christ, the 'cleverest' people, not unlike some today, worshipped the stars, as we can see from the great astronomical monument that they built and called Stonehenge. At that time in Egypt too the cleverest people built huge Pyramids to worship the Sun, and through which they believed that their leaders, the Pharaohs, would become stars.

Other peoples altogether gave up on ever knowing God and declared that the way ahead consisted in following the wisest men of their cultures, Buddha in India, or Confucius in China.

In Ancient Greece, the wisest men declared that men could never know God unless God first revealed Himself to man and in Athens they set up an altar to 'the Unknown God'.

Many were called but few were chosen, for among all these peoples and cultures, there were representatives of one people who conserved the true history of mankind. This people were the Jews, the ancient Hebrews, the chosen people, and today we commemorate all the righteous among them, our forefathers and foremothers in the Faith. From Adam and Eve on, there were among that people righteous and holy men and women. In their lives they prefigured the life of Christ and foresaw Christ.

Abel, who was murdered by his brother Cain, is a prefiguration of Christ, who was also murdered by men.

Melchizedek the priest is the prefiguration of Christ the High Priest.

Enoch and Elijah, who were taken up to heaven, prefigure Christ Who was also taken up to heaven.

Noah, whose family alone survived the Flood, is a prefiguration of the baptism of purification given to us by Christ.

Job the long-suffering prefigures the long suffering of Christ.

Abraham, who was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac, prefigures the sacrifice that God the Father made with His Son.

Jacob prefigures Christ, for he saw the ladder that connects earth to heaven, enabling heaven to come down to earth and earth to rise up to heaven.

Joseph, who was betrayed by his twelve brothers, prefigures Christ who was betrayed by His disciples.

Moses, the leader of his people, who was given the great revelation of the Ten Commandments, unsurpassed until Christ gave us the Beatitudes, prefigures Christ, for Moses saw the burning bush unconsumed, which is the Virgin's womb, which was unconsumed by the fire of Christ.

Joshua, whose name is the same as Christ's, that is Jesus, the Saviour, prefigures Jesus the Deliverer of His people.

David, related by blood to Christ, saw Christ in the Psalms which he wrote down.

Solomon expressed the Wisdom of God in his Books of Wisdom.

The Prophet Daniel saw the Holy Trinity through the Three Holy Youths in the furnace of Babylon.

The Prophet Isaiah saw Christ the suffering Servant.

The Prophet Jonah prefigures the three-day burial of Christ through his three-day stay in the belly of the whale.

All these holy forefathers together with our holy foremothers, Sarah, Rebecca, Ruth, Deborah and many, many more, whose icons are all on the back wall of our church, which is devoted to the righteous of the Old Testament, all these we commemorate today. All these are in fact our spiritual family, for they saw, long before we were born, the One Whom we confess, Christ our true God Who is Risen from the dead.

Let us in these last few days before the celebration of the Birth of the Saviour on earth, read one, or at least one part, of their writings, for example, in the Book of Genesis, the Book of Exodus, the Book of Proverbs, or simply the Psalms, and let us renew our links with our ancestors in the Orthodox Faith.

Holy Forefathers and Foremothers of Christ, pray to God for us!

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From this Sunday of the Holy Forefathers begins a new cycle of preparation for the Birth of Christ. This is the beginning of a new life. From the manger, the light of Christ will shine on us. And in this light will be the warmth of our adoption by God. At the manger we will feel like one family.

Something wonderful happens every year at the manger of Christ. We all begin to feel like brothers and sisters, children of one Father. And these are not just words, but reality. Love becomes manifest. There is a desire to gladden one another, to help, and to love.

And again this year, from the manger of Christ our new ways will begin: family, monastic, social, domestic, business. But all of them will guide us to one goal—to the Kingdom of God, to communion with God, to the Lord's Feast.

So let us not forget our dignity, our calling, that we are invited to the Lord's Feast. And let us spend our temporary life as pilgrims, proceeding on the paths that will bring us to the Heavenly Jerusalem, where there will be "the ceaseless sound of those keeping festival." And then we will become not only those who are called, but those who are chosen. (Mt. 22:14)

*Archbishop Alexei - The One Thing  
Needful,*

### Saints of the week

**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 (Fish allowed) — 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.

‡ **Scripture Readings - Hebrews 8:7-13; Mark 8:11-21; Hebrews 13:17-21 (St. Spyridon); Luke 6:17-23 (St. Spyridon)** ‡

**13 / 26 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Martyrs Eustratius, Auxentius, Eugene, Mardarius and Orestes** - These five courageous men shone like five resplendent stars in the dark days of the anti-Christian Emperors Diocletian and Maximian. St Eustratius was a Roman general in the city of Satalios, Eugene was one of his comrades in arms and Orestes likewise a respected soldier. Auxentius was a priest and Mardarius a simple citizen who came, like Eustratius, from the town of Aravraca. The imperial governors, Lysias and Agricola, tortured Auxentius first as he was a priest. Beholding the innocent suffering of the Christians, Eustratius presented himself before Lycias and declared that he also was a Christian. While Eustratius was being tortured, Eugene stood up before the judge and cried out: 'I

am a Christian too, Lycias!' When they were driving Eustratius and the other martyrs through the town, Mardarius saw them from the roof of his house, and he took leave of his wife and two frail daughters and hastened after them, shouting into the faces of their tormentors: 'I am a Christian too, like the Lord Eustratius!' Orestes was a young and handsome soldier, who stood head and shoulders above all the other soldiers. One day, when he was at target practice in Lycias's presence, the Cross he was wearing fell from his breast, and Lycias realised that he was a Christian. Orestes openly confessed his faith, and was martyred with the others. Auxentius was beheaded, Eugene and Mardarius died under torture, Orestes was exposed on a red-hot iron grid and Eustratius died in a flaming furnace. St Blaise gave Communion to St Eustratius in prison before his death. Their relics were later taken to Constantinople, and are preserved in the church dedicated to them—The Holy Five Companions. They were seen alive in that church, and St Orestes appeared to St Dimitri of Rostov. A beautiful prayer by St Eustratius is extant, which is read at the Midnight Service on Saturdays: 'I glorify Thy majesty, O Lord for Thou hast regarded my lowliness and hast not shut me up in the hands of my enemies, but hast saved my soul from want ...'. The Holy Martyr Lucy the Virgin; The Hieromartyr Gavrilo, Patriarch of Serbia; St. Odilia, virgin of Alsace, France (720);

**St. Judoc, hermit of Ponthieu** - (Died AD 675) (*Welsh: Iudog; Latin: Iudocus; English: Joyce*). Prince Judoc (or Josse, as he was commonly called) was educated at the monastery of San Maelmon. On the abdication of his brother, Prince Judicael of Domnonee, around 636, Judoc immediately ascended the Domnonian throne. He asked for eight days to consider his position, but decided he too preferred the religious life and fled to Ponthieu where he became chaplain to the local Count. Judoc later retired from the World to Ray where he set up a small hermitage. Unfortunately, the locals took to worrying him for miracle cures and he was forced to move to Caer-Runiac (Saint-Josse-sur-Mer) to escape them. He lived there thirteen years, and then in the Valley of Pidrague before travelling on a pilgrimage to Rome. Judoc died some time after his return, on 13th December 675. St. Judoc's bones were enshrined at Saint-Josse, before being taken to Winchester New Minster in 902 by some refugee monks. Hence his popularity in England.

**The Holy Martyr Lucy the Virgin** - With her mother, Lucy visited the grave of St. Agatha in Catania, where St. Agatha appeared to her. Her mother, who had dropsy, was then miraculously healed in the church. Lucy distributed all her goods to the poor, and this embittered her betrothed, who accused her of being a Christian before Paschasius the judge. The wicked judge ordered that she be taken to a brothel in order to defile her. However, by the power of God she remained immovable, as if rooted to the earth, and not even a multitude of people was able to move her from that spot. Then an enraged pagan pierced her throat with a sword and she gave up her soul to God and took up her habitation in the Kingdom of Eternity. Lucy suffered in the year 304.

‡ **Scripture Readings - Matthew 10:16-22 (Matins Gospel); Hebrews 9:8-10, 15-23; Mark 8:22-26; Ephesians 6:10-17 (Martyrs); Luke 21:12-19 (Martyrs) ‡**

**14 / 27 December — Nativity Fast - The Holy Martyrs Thyrsus, Leucius and Callinicus** - Saints Thyrsus and Leucius were eminent citizens of Bithynian Caesarea; the latter being baptised and the former still a catechumen. Callinicus, however, was a pagan priest who offered sacrifice to idols. When Cumbricius, heir to the Emperor Decius, began to torture and murder the Christians, the intrepid Leucius stood before him and reproached him: 'Why have you begun to make war on your own soul, Cumbricius?' The enraged judge ordered that he be flogged and tortured, and then beheaded with the sword. In terrible torment, Leucius went to his execution as joyfully as if he were going to a wedding. When he beheld Leucius's courageous death, blessed Thyrsus was inflamed with divine zeal and, like Leucius, went before the judge and rebuked him for his crimes and his lack of belief in the one, true God. He was therefore beaten and cast into prison. He was healed of his wounds by the invisible hand of God, which also opened the prison doors and led him forth. Thyrsus went at once to Phileas, the Bishop of Caesarea, to be baptised by him. After his baptism, he was again seized and tortured, but he endured all the torments as if in a dream and not in reality. Many idols fell down through the power of his prayer. When he saw this, Callinicus, a pagan priest, was converted to the Christian faith, so both he and Thyrsus were condemned to death. Callinicus was beheaded with the sword, and Thyrsus was placed in a wooden coffin to be sawn asunder, but God's power prevented this and the saw could not penetrate the wood. Then Thyrsus arose from the coffin, praying and thanking God for his sufferings, and he peacefully gave his soul into the Lord's hands. At the end of the fourth century, the Emperor Flavian built a church to St Thyrsus near Constantinople, and placed his holy relics in it. The saint appeared in a vision to the Empress Pulcheria, and suggested that she bury the relics of the Forty Martyrs beside his own. The Holy Martyrs Philemon, Apollonius, Arrian and others; St. Hybald, Abbot in Lincolnshire, England (7th c.) - Benedictine abbot at Bardney, Lincolnshire, England. Mentioned by the Venerable Bede as an acquaintance of Saint Chad. Hermit in later life. Some churches, the village of Hibaldstowe, and other locations are named in his honour. Died c.690 of natural causes; relics at Hibaldstowe, Lincolnshire, England

‡ **Scripture Readings - Hebrews 10:1-8; Mark 8:30-34 ‡**

**15 / 28 December — Nativity Fast — The Hieromartyr Eleutherius** - A good fruit of a good tree, this wonderful saint had noble and eminent parents. He was born in Rome, where his father was in imperial service. His mother, Anthea, heard the Gospel from the great Apostle Paul himself, and was baptised by him. Being early left a widow, she entrusted her only son to the education and service of the Bishop of Rome, Anacletus. Seeing how greatly Eleutherius was gifted and illumined by the grace of God, the bishop ordained him deacon at the age of fifteen, priest at eighteen and bishop at twenty. Endowed by God with wisdom, he made up for what he lacked in years. This godly man was made bishop in Illyria, with his seat at Valona in Albania. He kept his flock like a good shepherd, adding to their number from day to day. The Emperor Hadrian, a persecutor of Christians, sent a commander, Felix, with soldiers, to seize Eleutherius and take him to Rome. When the furious Felix arrived in Valona and went into the church, and heard and saw God's holy hierarch, his heart was suddenly changed and he became a Christian. Eleutherius baptised him and set off with him for Rome, as merrily as though he were going to a feast, not to trial and torture. The Emperor put the gently-born Eleutherius to harsh torture, flogging him, burning him on an iron grid, boiling him in pitch and burning him in a fiery furnace. But, by God's power, Eleutherius was delivered from all these deadly torments. Seeing all this, Choribus the governor proclaimed that he himself was a Christian. Choribus was tortured and then beheaded, and so also blessed Felix. Finally, the imperial executioners cut off the honoured head of St Eleutherius. When his mother, holy Anthea, came and stood over the dead body of her son, she was also beheaded. Their bodies were taken to Valona, where St Eleutherius glorifies the name of Christ to this day by many wonders. He suffered in the time of Hadrian, in the year 120. St Stephen the Confessor of Sourozh; Our Holy Father Paul of Latros; Our Holy Father Pardus the Solitary.

‡ **Scripture Readings - Hebrews 10:35-11:7; Mark 9:10-16** ‡

**16 / 29 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Prophet Haggai** - Born in Babylon in the time of the captivity of Israel, he was of the tribe of Levi. He prophesied in 520 B.C., and visited Jerusalem as a young man. He urged Zerubbabel and Joshua the priest to restore the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, prophesying for this Temple greater glory than the former Temple of Solomon: 'The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts' (2:9), for the Lord, the Saviour, would appear in the new Temple. He lived to see the first half of the new Temple completed by Zerubbabel. and died in old age, and rested with his fathers. St Nicolas Chrysoverges, Patriarch of Constantinople; St Theophano the Empress.

‡ **Scripture Readings - Hebrews 11:8, 11:16; Mark 9:33-41** ‡

**17 / 30 December — Nativity Fast — The Holy Prophet Daniel, and the Three Children: Ananias, Azarias and Misael** - All four of them were of the royal tribe of Judah. When Nebuchadnezzar destroyed and plundered Jerusalem, Daniel, as a boy, was taken off into slavery together with Jehoiachin, King of Judah, and many other Israelites. The account of his life, sufferings and prophecies can be found in detail in his book. Utterly given to God, Daniel from his early youth received from God the gift of great discernment. His fame among the Jews in Babylon began when he denounced two lecherous and unrighteous elders, and saved the chaste Susannah from an unjust death. But his fame among the Babylonians stemmed from the day when he solved and interpreted the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar. For this, the king made him a prince at his court. When the king made a golden idol in the Plain of Dura, the Three Children refused to worship it, for which they were cast into the burning fiery furnace. But an angel of God appeared in the furnace and soothed the flames, so that the Children walked in the furnace untouched by the fire, and sang: 'Blessed art Thou, Lord God of our fathers!' The king saw this marvel, and was amazed. He then brought the Children out of the furnace and did them great honour. In the time of King Belshazzar, when the king was eating and drinking with his guests at a feast out of consecrated vessels taken from the Temple in Jerusalem, an invisible hand wrote these three words on the wall: 'Mene, Tekel, Upharsin'. No-one could interpret these words but Daniel. That night, King Belshazzar was killed. Daniel was thrice thrown into a den of lions for his faith in the one, living God, and both times God preserved him alive. Daniel saw God on His throne with the angelic powers, often saw angels, had insight into the future of certain people, of kingdoms and of the whole human race, and prophesied the time of the coming of the Saviour on earth. According to St Cyril of Alexandria, Daniel and the Three Children lived to great old age in Babylon, and were beheaded with the sword for the true Faith. When Ananias was beheaded, Azarias held out his robe and caught his head, then Misael caught Azarias's head and Daniel Misael's. An angel of God carried their bodies to Judea, to Mount Gebal, and placed them under a rock. According to tradition, these four men arose at the time of the death of the Lord Jesus and appeared to many, then fell asleep again. Daniel is counted as one of the four Great Prophets (with Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel). He lived and prophesied half-way through the thousand years before Christ. Our Holy Father Daniel; Our Holy Fathers, the New Martyrs Paisius and Habakkuk; In Wales, in Merionethshire,

**St. Tydecho, brother of St. Cadfan.** Whose tropar in Tone 8 is: By thy labours for Christ, O Father Tydecho,/ thou didst win the crown of eternal glory/ and didst light the way into the Ark of Salvation./

Wherefore, O Saint, intercede for us that in following thee we may be found worthy of Christ's great mercy. Born in Wales. Several Welsh churches are named for him. No other information has survived.

‡ **Scripture Readings - Ephesians 5:1-8; Luke 14:1-11; Hebrews 11:33-12:2 (Prophet); Luke 11:47-12:1 (Prophet)** ‡

### REFLECTION

*The Lord preserveth all them that love him* (Psalm 145:20). The lives of the saints confirm this as clearly as the sun. Certain envious priests complained to Patriarch Anatolius about St. Daniel, slandering him and saying that he was a magician. In essence, they were envious of the exceedingly young ascetic, who surpassed them in all the virtues and attracted many people to himself by his way of life. The patriarch summoned Daniel and examined him regarding his faith and his way of life. When Daniel told him everything, the patriarch rose from his seat, embraced him, praised him, and dismissed him in peace. Several days later, Patriarch Anatolius became ill, summoned Daniel and asked him to pray to God for his recovery. Daniel prayed to God, and the patriarch was immediately restored to health. Since the patriarch wanted to reward Daniel somehow, the young saint begged him to forgive his slanderers as his reward. To this the patriarch replied: ``How can I not forgive them when they are the authors of so much good, namely, that I now know you and have received healing through you?" Truly, *the Lord preserves all who love Him*, and He turns to their good the evil that men conceive against them.

While St. Nikon the Dry was a slave among the Tartars, his master became sick and was at the point of death. Seeing that he would soon die, he ordered his sons to crucify Nikon at the head of his grave after his death. St. Nikon, discerning the future, saw that his cruel master would be baptized and prayed to God for his restoration to health. Contrary to all expectations, the Tartar recovered. Thus, by prayer, Nikon saved himself from physical death and his master from spiritual death.

### CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the covenant that God made with the righteous Noah (Genesis 9): 1. How God blessed Noah and his sons after the flood; 2. How He promised that there would never again be a universal flood; 3. How He established the rainbow as a sign of that covenant.

### HOMILY on Lot

*And Lot ... said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly* (Genesis 19:7).

Lot, a righteous man among the unrighteous, lived in Sodom with his wife and two daughters. The faithful Abraham asked God: *Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?* (Genesis 18:23). God answered the faithful Abraham that not only would He not destroy the righteous, but if there were to be found ten righteous in that city, he would spare the entire city because of those ten. However, only one righteous man was found in Sodom-Lot-and he was a stranger. Just as before the flood there was only one righteous man in the world, Noah, so before the destruction of Sodom there was only one righteous man in that city, Lot. Lot was similar to his uncle Abraham in every virtue, notably in his obedience to God and his hospitality. The Sodomites hated him as a stranger and even more as a righteous man. *Brethren, do not so wickedly*, Lot exhorted them. He called the corrupt people his brethren in order to calm them and to remind them not to commit evil, in order to save them. But his brotherly words provoked them to even greater wrath. Lot was found worthy to have the angels of God visit him and deliver him from that corrupt city whose sins cried out to God. And the reprobates attacked the home of Lot to defile the sanctity of hospitality. *Brethren, do not so wickedly*, Lot implored them. But why would these brutes listen to a man if they did not fear God? That is why the angels of God punished them with blindness: *And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great* (Genesis 19:11). Then the angels led Lot from the city of the unrighteous and let loose a storm of brimstone and fire upon the city. Thus, the evil city perished, and the one righteous man in the city was saved. *Better is one righteous man than a thousand sinners* (Sirach 16:3).

O righteous God, Who never abandonest the righteous man, correct our unrighteousness and save us.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

### Words of Wisdom

While you are reflecting upon this thought, meditate upon the mystery that is hidden within it. If we lift up our hands, Jesus triumphs. If we lift up our hands in good works, through our good works, Christ overcomes the devil. Hands, moreover, connote good works, whereupon it is written: "The word of the

Lord came by the hand of Haggai"; "the word that came by the hand of Jeremiah the prophet." To be sure, the word of the Lord does not come by the hand but by the mouth, but grasp the mysticism of the Scripture. God does not come because of words but because of good works. *St. Jerome*

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