

30th Sunday After Pentecost

Sunday of the Holy Fathers, Forefeast of Nativity & Sunday Before Nativity

21 December / 3 January

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

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

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 wiltest, Thou canst do!

Vespers: Gen . 14:14-20; Deut . 1:8-11, 15-17; Deut . 10:14-21

Matins Gospel VIII

Epistle: 11: 9-10, 17-23, 32-40

By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," Concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- Of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

BY FAITH ABRAHAM OBEYED

Great indeed was the faith of Abraham ...It was necessary to go beyond human reasoning... to manifest also something more. For what was of God seemed to be opposed to what was of God; and faith opposed to faith, and command promise. I mean this: He had said, 'Get out of your country and from your kindred, and I will give you this land' (Gen. 12: 1-7) ...Do you see how what was done was opposed to the promise? Again He said, 'In Isaac shall your seed be called' (Gen. 21:12), and he believed: and again He says, Sacrifice to Me this one. who was to fill all the world from his seed. You see the opposition between the commands and the promise? He enjoined things that were in contradiction to the promises, and yet not even so did the righteous man stagger, nor say he had been deceived. For you indeed ...he promised rest and gave tribulation ...And he shows another thing too by saying 'God tempted Abraham' (Gen. 22:1). What then? Did not God know that the man was noble and approved? Why then did he tempt him? Not that He might Himself learn, but that He might show others, and make his fortitude manifest to all And here also He shows the cause of trials, that they may not suppose they suffer these things as being forsaken of God.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXV on Hebrews XI. 1, 2. B#58, pp. 477-478



Gospel: Matthew 1: 1-25

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

THE ANCESTRY OF CHRIST

The tribes of Judah and Levi were united by a fusion of their lines of descent, and that is why Matthew assigns Christ's family to the tribe of Judah. And the Apostle says, 'for our Lord has sprung out of Judah' (Heb. 7: 14). Thus, from the tribe of Levi may be counted a heritage that is priestly and filled with holiness, while from the tribe of Judah -to which David and Solomon and the rest of the kings belonged -there shines forth the splendour of a royal descent And so, by the testimony of the Scriptures, Christ is shown to be at once both king and priest

St. Ambrose of Milan. Seven Exegetical Works. B#11, Vol. 65,p.250

"Adam... where art thou?" (Gen. 3:9). This is the voice of God which resounded in Adam's conscience after the Fall and tormented him. As long as Adam was in obedience to God cultivated and kept Paradise, receiving strength for this by eating the fruits of the Tree of Life-he was in ceaseless communion with God. In his heart there was continuous quiet and joy. But after tasting of the forbidden fruits of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the thread of communion with God was broken in Adam's heart. Sin stood as a wall between God and man. From this very time began a new history of man's life on earth. Man now lived under a curse and in the sweat of his face obtained his bread. But in spite of all his labours, he did not obtain a joyful heart. His life went on in sin. This sin was washed away by the Flood, but sin continued to possess man; and the confusion of Babel filled the whole world. But in this darkness, in this inconsolable anguish, we find a man who sought spiritual joy. This is Abraham. To him was given the law of life, and as a promise, the coming to earth of the Saviour of the world, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

Centuries went by; people impatiently awaited the promised Messiah. People longed to be freed from sin, but without the Tree of Life, the promised Messiah, this was impossible. And finally the fulfilment of times is accomplished. The Saviour of the world from sin comes to earth. He fulfils the commandment. given to man, of love for God and neighbour. But above all, He restores that Tree of Life which was in Paradise, which helped Adam to be in communion with God. Here are the words with which the Lord Himself announced this New Testamental communion with God: "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him" (Jn. 6:56).

Today the holy Church in the Gospel reading lists the names of those men who were the righteous ones and prepared for the appearance of the Saviour. We call them the Fathers. By their lives they also give us the hope of receiving that joy of Paradise and peace of heart which Adam possessed in Paradise. And this is why we so reverently and prayerfully ask them today to help us to be partakers of this worldwide joy, the Nativity of Christ.

"Adam... where art thou?" So even now this eternal question resounds in our conscience. Of course, not in a geographical sense: God knows where each of us is. But in relation to Him -to God. O, let us not leave this question unanswered! Let us be able to say: I am here, Lord, at Thy manger, in Thy Church, before Thy Chalice- "I believe, O Lord, and I confess that Thou art truly the Christ. the Son of the Living God, Who came into the world to save sinners...."

Saints of the week

21 December / 3 January — Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ - Nativity Fast – The Holy Martyr Juliana and the 630 martyrs with her - This glorious virgin martyr was born in Nicomedia of pagan parents. Hearing the Gospel preached, she turned to Christ with all her heart and began to live in exact observance of the Lord's commandments. A certain senator, Eleusius, was her betrothed. In order to free herself from him, Juliana told him that she would not marry him unless he became eparch of that city. She said this thinking that the young man would not be in the least likely to attain to such a high position, but Eleusius worked at it, and, by flattery and bribes, gained the post of Eparch of Nicomedia. Juliana then revealed to him that she was a Christian, and could not enter into marriage with him unless he accepted her faith, saying: 'What would it profit us to be united physically but divided in spirit?' Eleusius was exasperated, and denounced her to her father. Her furious father poured scorn on her and whipped her, and then handed her over to the eparch for torture. The eparch ordered that she be harshly beaten, then she was thrown into prison all torn and bleeding. But the Lord healed her in the prison, and she appeared before the eparch whole and unharmed. He then put her into a glowing furnace, but the fire did not burn her. Seeing this wonder, many came to believe in Christ the Lord. Five hundred men and a hundred and thirty women were converted. The eparch condemned them all to death, and ordered that they be beheaded with the sword, and their souls entered into Paradise. Then the wicked judge condemned holy Juliana to be beheaded with the sword. Rejoicing in spirit, Juliana went out to the scaffold, prayed on her knees to God and laid her head on the block. Her head was cut off, and her soul went to Christ's eternal Kingdom of light, in the year 304. God's punishment quickly fell on Eleusius: sailing over the sea, his ship broke up and he fell into the water. He did not find death in the waves, but swam to an island, where the dogs tore him to pieces and devoured him. St Peter the Wonderworker, Metropolitan of Russia; The Holy Martyr Themistocles; In England near Oxford at the village of Bampton, St. Berenwald, priest, m. and at Shaftesbury, St. Elgiva, queen, nun.

22 December / 4 January — Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ - Nativity Fast — The Holy and Great Martyr Anastasia, the Deliverer from Bonds, and those with her - This great heroine of the Christian faith was born in Rome into a wealthy senatorial family, her father being a pagan and her mother a Christian. From her early youth, she claved in love to the Lord Jesus, guided in Christian teaching by a devout teacher, Chrysogonus. Under pressure from her father, Anastasia married a pagan landowner, Publius, but, using the pretext of woman's weakness, she never had physical relations with him. For this, her husband tortured her harshly by imprisonment and starvation, and laid even heavier tortures on her when he discovered that she went secretly to the prisons of the Christian martyrs, ministering to their needs, washing their wounds and loosening their bonds. But, by God's providence, she was freed from her wicked husband. Publius was sent to Persia by the Emperor, and was drowned on the voyage. Then St Anastasia began to minister openly to the Christian martyrs and, from her great inheritance, helped the poor with alms. The Emperor Diocletian was once in the town of Aquileia, and commanded that Chrysogonus, the confessor of Christ, be brought to him. As he was being brought, Anastasia followed him on the way. Holy Chrysogonus was beheaded at the Emperor's command, and then three sisters, Agapia, Chionia and Irene (April 16th) suffered, the first two being cast into fire and the third shot through with arrows. St Anastasia took their bodies, wrapped them in white linen and, anointing them with aromatic spices, gave them burial. Then Anastasia went to Macedonia, where she ministered to those who were suffering for Christ. There, she became widely-known as a Christian, for which she was seized and taken for interrogation before various judges. Desiring to die for her beloved Christ, Anastasia constantly clung to Him in her heart. A certain pagan high priest, Ulphian, tried to touch St Anastasia's body out of lust, but he was suddenly blinded and gave up the ghost. Condemned to death by starvation, St Anastasia lay in prison for thirty days, nourishing herself only with tears and prayers. After that she was put in a boat with several other Christians to be drowned, but God saved her from this death. She was finally tied hand and foot to four wheels over a fire, and thus gave her holy soul into God's hands. She suffered and entered into Christ's Kingdom in 304. The Holy Martyr Theodota with her three Children; In Wales, St. Amaethlu, founder of Llanfaethlu in Anglesey.

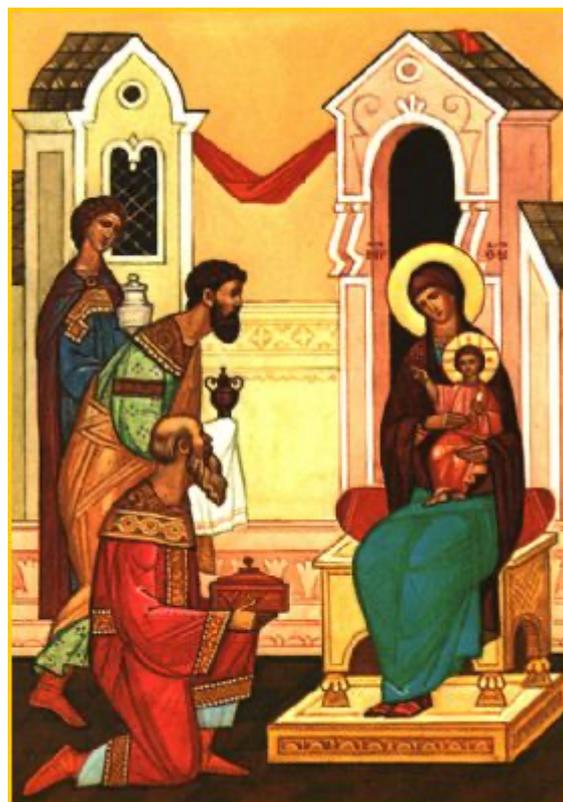
23 December / 5 January — Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ - Nativity Fast — The Ten Holy Martyrs of Crete - They suffered for Christ the Lord during Decius's persecution, in the year 250. Their names were: Theodulus, Saturninus, Euporus, Gelasius, Eunician, Zoticus, Pompey, Agathopous, Basilides and Evaristus. They were all honoured and eminent citizens, the cream of the cream. When they were taken to the scaffold, they were filled with joy and discussed among themselves who would be the first to be beheaded, because each wanted to be the first to go to his beloved Christ. Then they prayed: 'O Lord, forgive Thy servants and accept our outpoured blood on our own behalf and that of our kinsfolk and friends and all our fatherland, that all may be released from the darkness of ignorance and come to know Thee, the true light, O eternal King!' They were beheaded and entered into the Kingdom of glory, to eternal rejoicing. St Niphon the Wonderworker; Our Holy Father Nahum, the Wonderworker of Ochrid; At Hexham, St. Frithbert, b. At Abernethy. St. Mazota, virgin

24 December / 6 January — The Eve of the Nativity of Christ - Nativity Fast - Our Holy Mother, the Martyr Eugenia, and those with her - the daughter of Philip, Eparch of all Egypt, she was born in Rome. At that time, the Christians had been driven out of Alexandria and were living outside the town. The maiden Eugenia visited the Christians and received their Faith with all her heart. She fled from her parents with her two faithful eunuchs, was baptised by Bishop Elias and, wearing man's clothing, went to a men's monastery where she received the monastic habit. She so purified her heart by voluntary asceticism that she received from God the gift of healing the sick, and thus healed a rich woman, Melanthia. After this, though, the woman conceived a physical passion for her, not suspecting that she was a woman. Being firmly repulsed by Eugenia, this wicked woman, out of revenge, went to the Eparch and slandered her just as Potiphar's wife had slandered chaste Joseph. The eparch ordered that all the monks be bound and thrown into prison together with Eugenia. When they were brought out for trial, Eugenia revealed herself to her father as his daughter. The overjoyed Philip was baptised, with his whole household, and Philip was chosen as Bishop of Alexandria. Hearing of this, the Roman Emperor sent a wicked general, Terence, who, coming

to Alexandria, secretly killed Philip. Then St Eugenia moved to Rome with her mother and brothers. In Rome, she fearlessly and zealously brought pagans to the true Faith, especially maidens, and thus brought a beautiful maiden, Vassilia, to the Faith. Vassilia was quickly beheaded for Christ, as Eugenia had foretold to her, and then her two eunuchs, Protus and Hyacinthus, were beheaded. Finally, martyrdom came to Eugenia, whose presence had caused the Temple of Diana to fall in ruins. The torturers first threw her into water and then into fire, but God preserved her. The Lord Jesus Himself appeared to her in the prison and told her that she would suffer on the day of His Nativity. And so it came about. She was beheaded with the sword on December 25th, 262, in Rome. After her death, Eugenia appeared to her mother in great glory, and comforted her. Our Holy Father Nicolas the Soldier; In E. Scotland, St. Caranus, bishop.

25 December / 7 January — The Nativity according to the Flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ — Fast-free period — 'And when the fullness of time was come, God sent His only-begotten Son' (Gal. 4:4), to save the human race. And when the ninth month had come after the archangel Gabriel appeared to the most holy Virgin in Nazareth, saying: 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured... thou shalt conceive and bear a son'—at that time a decree went forth from Caesar Augustus that all the inhabitants of the Roman Empire be taxed. In accordance with this decree, everyone had to go to his own town and there be inscribed. Therefore righteous Joseph came with the most holy Virgin to Bethlehem, the city of David, for they were both of the royal House of David. But, there being a great many people in that small city for the census, Joseph and Mary could not find a lodging in any house, and found shelter in a cave which the shepherds used as a sheepfold. In this cave the most holy Virgin gave birth to the Saviour of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. Bearing Him without pain, as He was conceived without sin of the Holy Spirit and not of man, she herself wrapped Him in swaddling bands, worshipped Him as God and laid Him in a manger. Then righteous Joseph drew near and worshipped Him as the divine Fruit of a virgin womb. Then the shepherds came in from the fields, directed by an angel of God, and worshipped Him as Messiah and Saviour. The shepherds had heard a multitude of angels singing: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among men' (Luke 2:14). At that time there also came wise men from the East, led by a wonderful star, bearing their gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh, and worshipped Him as King of kings, offering Him their gifts (Matt. 2:11). Thus He came into the world Whose coming had been foretold by the prophets and Who was born in the way that they had prophesied: of the most holy Virgin, in the city of Bethlehem, of the lineage of David according to the flesh, at the time when there was no longer in Jerusalem a king of the tribe of Judah, but Herod the stranger was on the throne. After many types and prefigurings, messengers and heralds, prophets and righteous men, wise men and kings, finally He appeared, the Lord of the world and King of kings, to perform the work of the salvation of mankind that could not be performed by His servants. May His be eternal glory and praise! Amen

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Tropar of the Nativity according to the Flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ (Tone 4): Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath shined upon the world the light of knowledge; for thereby, they that worshipped the stars were taught by a star to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. O Lord, glory be to Thee.

Kondak of the Nativity according to the Flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ (Tone 3): Today the Virgin giveth birth to Him Who is transcendent in essence; and the earth offereth a cave to Him Who is unapproachable. Angels with shepherds give glory; with a star the Magi do journey; for our sake a young Child is born, Who is pre-eternal God.

26 December / 8 January— Second Day of the Feast of the Nativity - Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos - On the second day of Christmas, the Christian Church gives glory and praise to the most holy Mother of God, who bore our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. This feast is called a 'general commemoration' because, on this day, all the faithful come together to glorify her, the Mother of God, and to celebrate a triumphant, common feast in her honour. In Ochrid, it has been the custom from time immemorial that, on the eve of the second day of Christmas, Vespers has been celebrated only in the church of the Mother of God, the Chieftain. All the clergy and people there together glorify the most pure Mother of God - Fast-free period - Commemoration of the Flight into Egypt- The wise men, astrologers, from the East, having worshipped the Lord in Bethlehem, returned home, at the command of an angel, another way. Herod, that wicked King, planned to slaughter all the children in Bethlehem, but God saw Herod's intention and sent His angel to Joseph. The angel of God spoke to Joseph in a dream and commanded him to take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt. Joseph did this. Taking the divine Child and His most pure Mother, he travelled first to Nazareth (Lk. 2:39), where he set his household affairs in order and then, taking his son James with them, went off to Egypt (Matt. 2:14). And so the words of the prophet: 'The Lord, riding upon a swift cloud, shall come into Egypt' (Is. 19:1), were fulfilled. In old Cairo today the cave where the holy family lived can be seen, and in the village of Matarea near Cairo, the tree under which the Mother of God rested with the Lord Jesus, where a miraculous spring of water sprang up under the tree. They lived in Egypt for several years, and then the holy family returned to Palestine in response to a command by an angel of God. And so a second prophecy was fulfilled: 'Out of Egypt have I called My Son' (Hosea 11:1). Herod

was dead, and on his bloodstained throne sat a worthy successor in his wicked son Archelaus. Joseph, hearing that Archelaus was reigning in Jerusalem, returned to Galilee, to his town of Nazareth, where he settled in his own home. Galilee was at that time ruled by another of Herod's sons, Herod the Younger, who was somewhat better than his wicked brother, Archelaus. Our Holy Father Evarestus; St Euthymius the Confessor, Bishop of Sardis; Our Holy Father Constantine of Synnada
St. Tathai (Athán) - nephew of Saint Samson of Dol. Hermit in Glamorgan, Wales. Founded the monastery at Llantathan (Saint Athan), Gwent. Founded the monastery school at Caerwent. Reputed miracle worker, he was noted for gentleness, love of the country, and for his generosity to travellers and the poor. Born in 5th century, Irish. Died in 6th century at Caerwent or Llantathan, Wales of natural causes.

Tropar of St. Tathai Tone 8: Teacher of true piety and blessed adornment of Christ's Church, O Father Tathai:/ as thou didst serve Wales with thy tireless endeavours,/ teach us, O Saint, the virtues of unshakable stability and loyalty to the true Faith,/ that at the end Christ our God will grant great mercy to our souls.

27 December / 9 January — Third Day of the Feast of the Nativity - Fast-free period -St Stephen, Protomartyr and Archdeacon - He was a kinsman of the Apostle Paul and one of those Jews who lived in a Hellenic milieu. Stephen was the first of the seven deacons whom the holy apostles ordained for the service of the poor in Jerusalem. This is why he is called the Archdeacon—the first, or chief, of them. By the power of his faith, Stephen worked many wonders among the people. The wicked Jews disputed with him, but were always confounded by his wisdom and the power of the Spirit who acted through him. Then the shameful Jews, adept at calumny and slander, stirred up the people and leaders against this innocent man. They slandered Stephen, saying that he had blasphemed against God and against Moses, and quickly found false witnesses who supported their assertion. Then Stephen stood before the people, and all saw his face 'like the face of an angel': that is, his face was illumined by the light of grace as was the face of Moses when he talked with God. Stephen opened his mouth and spoke of God's manifold works and marvels, performed in the past for the People of Israel, and of the people's manifold transgressions and opposition to God. He especially denounced them for the slaying of Christ the Lord, calling them 'betrayers and murderers' (Acts 7:52). While they ground their teeth, Stephen looked and saw the heavens open and the glory of God, and spoke to the Jews of what he saw: 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God' (7:56). Then the malicious men took him out of the city and stoned him to death. Among his murderers was his kinsman Saul, later the Apostle Paul. At that time, the most holy Mother of God was standing on a rock at a distance with St John the Theologian, and witnessed the martyrdom of this first martyr for the truth of her Son and God, and she prayed for Stephen. This happened exactly a year after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. St Stephen's body was taken secretly and buried by Gamaliel in his own ground. He was a Jewish prince and a secret Christian. Thus this first of Christ's martyrs made a glorious end and entered into the Kingdom of Christ our God. Our Holy Fathers, the Martyrs Theodore and Theophanes the Branded.

REFLECTION

The Lord Jesus, born in Bethlehem, was first worshiped by shepherds and wise men (astrologers) from the east—the simplest and the wisest of this world. Even today, those who most sincerely worship the Lord Jesus as God and Savior are the simplest and the wisest of this world. Perverted simplicity and half-learned wisdom were always the enemies of Christ's divinity and His Gospel. But who were these wise men from the east?

This question was especially studied by St. Dimitri of Rostov. He claims that they were kings of certain smaller regions or individual towns in Persia, Arabia and Egypt. At the same time, they were erudite in the knowledge of astronomy. This wondrous star appeared to them, which announced the birth of the New King. According to St. Dimitri, this star appeared to them nine months before the birth of the Lord Jesus, i.e., at the time of His conception by the Most-holy Theotokos. They spent nine months in studying this star, in preparing for the journey and in travelling. They arrived in Bethlehem shortly after the birth of the Savior of the world. One of them was called Melchior. He was old, with long white hair and beard. He offered the Lord the gift of gold. The second was called Gaspar, of ruddy face, young and beardless. He offered the Lord the gift of frankincense. The third was called Balthasar, of dark complexion and a very heavy beard. He offered the Lord the gift of myrrh. After their deaths, their bodies were taken to Constantinople, from Constantinople to Milan, and from Milan to Cologne.

It can be added that these three wise men were representatives of the three main races of men that descended from Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. The Persian represented the Japhethites, the Arabian represented the Semites, and the Egyptian represented the Hamites. Thus it can be said that, through these three, the whole human race worshiped the Incarnate Lord and God.