

32nd Sunday After Pentecost

Venerable and Godbearing Father Anthony the Great

17 / 30 January



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

Troparion of St Anthony the Great tone 4: Thou didst follow the ways of zealous Elijah, and the straight path of the Baptist, O Father Anthony./ Thou didst become a desert dweller/ and support the world by thy prayers./ Intercede with Christ our God that our souls may be saved.

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

Kontakion of St Anthony the Great tone 2: Thou didst abandon the world's tumult and live in silence, and emulate the Baptist, O Anthony./ Wherefore we acclaim thee with him,/ thou summit of the Fathers.

Matins Gospel X

Epistle: I Timothy 1: 15-17

¹⁵ This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. ¹⁶ However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to ^[a] God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

The favors of God so far exceed human hope and expectation, that often they are not believed. For God has bestowed upon us such things as the mind of man never looked for, never thought of. It is for this reason that the Apostles spend much discourse in securing a belief of the gifts that are granted us of God. For as men, upon receiving some great good, ask themselves if it is not a dream, as not believing it; so it is with respect to the gifts of God. What then was it that was thought incredible? That those who were enemies, and sinners, neither justified by the law, nor by works, should immediately through faith alone be advanced to the highest favor. Upon this head accordingly Paul has discoursed at length in his Epistle to the Romans, and here again at length. This is a faithful saying, he says, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

As the Jews were chiefly attracted by this, he persuades them not to give heed to the law, since they could not attain salvation by it without faith. Against this he contends; for it seemed to them incredible, that a man who had mis-spent all his former life in vain and wicked actions, should afterwards be saved by his faith alone. On this account he says, It is a saying to be believed. But some not only disbelieved but even objected, as the Greeks do now. Let us then do evil, that good may come. This was the consequence they drew in derision of our faith, from his words, Where sin abounded grace did much more abound. Romans 3:8, and 5:20 So when we discourse to them of Hell they say, How can this be worthy of God? When man has found his servant offending, he forgives it, and thinks him worthy of pardon and does God punish eternally? And when we speak of the Laver, and of the remission of sins through it, this too they say is unworthy of God, that he who has committed offenses without number should have his sins remitted. What perverseness of mind is this, what a spirit of contention does it manifest! Surely if forgiveness is an evil, punishment is a good; but if punishment is an evil, remission of it is a good. I speak according to their notions, for according to ours, both are good. This I shall show at another time, for the present would not suffice for a matter so deep, and which requires to be elaborately argued. I must lay it before your Charity at a fitting season. At present let us proceed with our proposed subject. This is a faithful saying, he says. But why is it to be believed?

This appears both from what precedes and from what follows. Observe how he prepares us for this assertion, and how he then dwells upon it. For he has previously declared that He showed mercy to me a blasphemer and a persecutor; this was in the way of preparation. And not only did He show mercy, but He accounted me faithful. So far should we be, he means, from disbelieving that He showed mercy. For no one, who should see a prisoner admitted into a palace, could doubt whether he obtained mercy. And this was visibly the situation of Paul, for he makes himself the example. Nor is he ashamed to call himself a sinner, but rather delights in it, as he thus can best demonstrate the miracle of God's regard for him, and that He had thought him worthy of such extraordinary kindness.

But how is it, that he here calls himself a sinner, nay, the chief of sinners, whereas he elsewhere asserts that he was touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless? Philippians 3:6 Because with respect to the righteousness which God has wrought, the justification which is really sought, even those who are righteous in the law are sinners, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23 Therefore he does not say righteousness simply, but the righteousness which is in the law. As a man that has acquired wealth, with respect to himself appears rich, but upon a comparison with the treasures of kings is very poor and the chief of the poor; so it is in this case. Compared with Angels, even righteous men are sinners; and if Paul, who wrought the righteousness that is in the law, was the chief of sinners, what other man can be called righteous? For he says not this to condemn his own life as impure, let not this be imagined; but comparing his own legal righteousness with the righteousness of God, he shows it to be nothing worth, and not only so, but he proves those who possess it to be sinners.

Ver. 16. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe in Him to life everlasting.

See how he further humbles and depreciates himself, by naming a fresh and less creditable reason. For that he obtained mercy on account of his ignorance, does not so much imply that he who obtained mercy was a sinner, or under deep condemnation; but to say that he obtained mercy in order that no sinner hereafter might despair of finding mercy, but that each might feel sure of obtaining the like favor, this is an excess of humiliation, such that even in calling himself the chief of sinners, a blasphemer and a persecutor, and one not meet to be called an Apostle, he had said nothing like it. This will appear by an example. Suppose a populous city, all whose inhabitants were wicked, some more so, and some less, but all deserving of condemnation; and let one among that multitude be more deserving of punishment than all the rest, and guilty of every kind of wickedness. If it were declared that the king was willing to pardon all, it would not be so readily believed, as if they were to see this most wicked wretch actually pardoned. There could then be no longer any doubt. This is what Paul says, that God, willing to give men full assurance that He pardons all their transgressions, chose, as the object of His mercy, him who was more a sinner than any; for when I obtained mercy, he argues, there could be no doubt of others: as familiarly speaking we might say, If God pardons such an one, he will never punish anybody; and thus he shows that he himself, though unworthy of pardon, for the sake of others' salvation, first obtained that pardon. Therefore, he says, since I am saved, let no one doubt of salvation. And observe the humility of this blessed man; he says not, that in me he might show forth His longsuffering, but all longsuffering; as if he had said, greater longsuffering He could not show in any case than in mine, nor find a sinner that so required all His pardon, all His long-suffering; not a part only, like those who are only partially sinners, but all His longsuffering.

For a pattern to those who should hereafter believe. This is said for comfort, for encouragement. But because he had spoken highly of the Son, and of the great love which He has manifested, lest he should be thought to exclude the Father from this, he ascribes the glory to Him also.

Ver. 17. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

For these things, then, we glorify not the Son only, but the Father. Here let us argue with the heretics. Speaking of the Father, he says, To the only God. Is the Son then not God? The only immortal. Is the Son then not immortal? Or does He not possess that Himself, which hereafter He will give to us? Yes, they say, He is God and immortal, but not such as the Father. What then? Is He of inferior essence, and therefore of inferior immortality? What then is a greater and a less immortality? For immortality is nothing else than the not being subject to destruction. For there is a greater and a less glory; but immortality does not admit of being greater or less: as neither is there a greater and a less health. For a thing must either be destructible, or altogether indestructible. Are we men then immortal even as He? God forbid! Surely not! Why? Because He has it by nature, but we adventitiously. Why then do you make the difference? Because the Father, he says, is made such as He is by no other: but the Son is what He is, from the Father. This we also confess, not denying that the Son is generated from the Father incorruptibly. And we glorify the Father, he means, for having generated the Son, such as He is. Thus you see the Father is most glorified, when the Son has done great things. For the glory of the Son is referred again to Him. And since He generated Him omnipotent and such as He is in Himself, it is not more the glory of the Son than of the Father, that He is self-sufficient, and self-maintained, and free from infirmity. It has been said of the Son, By whom He made the worlds. Hebrews 1:2 Now there is a distinction observed among us between creation and workmanship. For one works and toils and executes, another rules; and why? Because he that executes is the inferior. But it is not so there; nor is the sovereignty with One, the workmanship with the Other. For when we hear, By whom He made the worlds, we do not exclude the Father from creation. Nor when we say, To the King immortal, do we deny dominion to the Son. For these are common to the One and the Other, and each belongs to Both. The Father created, in that He begot the creating Son; the Son rules, as being Lord of all things created. For He does not work for hire, nor in obedience to others, as workmen do among us, but from His own goodness and love for mankind. But has the Son ever been seen? No one can affirm this. What means then, To the King immortal, invisible, the only wise God? Or when it is said, There is no other name whereby we must be saved: and again, There is salvation in no other? Acts 4:12

To Him be honor and glory forever. Amen.

Now honor and glory are not mere words; and since He has honored us not by words only, but by what He has done for us, so let us honor Him by works and deeds. Yet this honor touches us, while that reaches not Him, for He needs not the honor that comes from us, we do need that which is from Him.

In honoring Him, therefore, we do honor to ourselves. He who opens his eyes to gaze on the light of the sun, receives delight himself, as he admires the beauty of the star, but does no favor to that luminary, nor increases its splendor, for it continues what it was; much more is this true with respect to God. He who admires and honors God does so to his own salvation, and highest benefit; and how? Because he follows after virtue, and is honored by Him. For them that honor Me, He says, I will honor. 1 Samuel 4:30 How then is He honored, if He enjoys no advantage from our honor? Just as He is said to hunger and thirst. For He assumes everything that is ours, that He may in anywise attract us to Him. He is said to receive honors, and even insults, that we may be afraid. But with all this we are not attracted towards Him!

Moral. Let us then glorify God, and bear God both in our body and in our spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:20 And how is one to glorify Him in the body? Says one, and how in the spirit? The soul is here called the spirit to distinguish it from the body. But how may we glorify Him in the body and in the spirit? He glorifies Him in the body, who does not commit adultery or fornication, who avoids gluttony and drunkenness, who does not affect a showy exterior, who makes such provision for himself as is sufficient for health only: and so the woman, who does not perfume nor paint her person, but is satisfied to be such as God made her, and adds no device of her own. For why do you add your own embellishments to the work which God made? Is not His workmanship sufficient for you? Or do you endeavor to add grace to it, as if forsooth you were the better artist? It is not for yourself, but to attract crowds of lovers, that you thus adornest your person, and insultest your Creator. And do not say, What can I do? It is no wish of my own, but I must do it for my husband. I cannot win his love except I consent to this. God made you beautiful, that He might be admired even in your beauty, and not that He might be insulted. Do not therefore make Him so ill a return, but requite Him with modesty and chastity. God made you beautiful, that He might increase the trials of your modesty. For it is much harder for one that is lovely to be modest, than for one who has no such attractions, for which to be courted. Why does the Scripture tell us, that Joseph was a goodly person, and well favored Genesis 39:6, but that we might the more admire his modesty coupled with beauty? Has God made you beautiful? Why do you make yourself otherwise? For as though one should overlay a golden statue with a daubing of mire, so it is with those women that use paints. Thou besmearest yourself with red and white earth! But the homely, you say, may fairly have recourse to this. And why? To hide their ugliness? It is a vain attempt. For when was the natural appearance improved upon by that which is studied and artificial? And why should you be troubled at your want of beauty, since it is no reproach? For hear the saying of the Wise Man, Commend not a man for his beauty, neither abhor a man for his outward appearance. Sirach 11:2 Let God be rather admired, the best Artificer, and not man, who has no merit in being made such as he is. What are the advantages, tell me, of beauty? None. It exposes its possessor to greater trials, mishaps, perils, and suspicions. She that wants it escapes suspicion; she that possesses it, except she practice a great and extraordinary reserve, incurs an evil report, and what is worse than all, the suspicion of her husband, who takes less pleasure in beholding her beauty, than he suffers pain from jealousy. And her beauty fades in his sight from familiarity, while she suffers in her character from the imputation of weakness, dissipation, and wantonness, and her very soul becomes degraded and full of haughtiness. To these evils personal beauty is exposed. But she who has not this attraction, escapes unmolested. The dogs do not assail her; she is like a lamb, reposing in a secure pasture, where no wolf intrudes to harass her, because the shepherd is at hand to protect her.

The real superiority is, not that one is fair, and the other homely, but it is a superiority that one, even if she is not fair, is unchaste, and the other is not wicked. Tell me wherein is the perfection of eyes? Is it in their being soft, and rolling, and round, and dark, or in their clearness and quicksightedness. Is it the perfection of a lamp to be elegantly formed, and finely turned, or to shine brightly, and to enlighten the whole house? We cannot say it is not this, for the other is indifferent, and this the real object. Accordingly we often say to the maid whose charge it is, You have made a bad lamp of it. So entirely is it the use of a lamp to give light. So it matters not what is the appearance of the eye, while it performs its office with full efficiency. We call the eye bad, which is dim or disordered, and which, when open, does not see. For that is bad, which does not perform its proper office — and this is the fault of eyes. And for a nose, tell me, when is it a good one? When it is straight, and polished on either side, and finely proportioned? Or when it is quick to receive odors, and transmit them to the brain? Any one can answer this.

Come now, let us illustrate this by an example — as of grippers, I mean the instruments so called; we say those are well-made, which are able to take up and hold things, not those which are only handsomely and elegantly shaped. So those are good teeth which are fit for the service of dividing and chewing our food, not those which are beautifully set. And applying the same reasoning to other parts of the body, we shall call those members beautiful, which are sound, and perform their proper functions aright. So we think any instrument, or plant, or animal good, not because of its form or color, but because it answers its purpose. And he is thought a good servant, who is useful and ready for our service, not one who is comely but dissolute. I trust you now understand how it is in your power to be beautiful.

And since the greatest and most important benefits are equally enjoyed by all, we are under no disadvantage. Whether we are beautiful or not, we alike behold this universe, the sun, the moon, and the stars; we breathe the same air, we partake alike of water, and the fruits of the earth. And if we may say what will sound strange, the homely are more healthy than the beautiful. For these, to preserve their beauty, engage in no labor, but give themselves up to indolence and delicate living, by which their bodily energies are impaired; while the others, having no such care, spend all their attention simply and entirely on active pursuits.

Let us then glorify God, and take and bear Him in our body. 1 Corinthians 6:20 Let us not affect a beautiful appearance; that care is vain and unprofitable. Let us not teach our husbands to admire the mere outward form; for if such be your adornment, his very habit of viewing your face will make him easy to be captivated by a harlot. But if you teach him to love good manners, and modesty, he will not be ready to wander, for he will see no attractions in a harlot, in whom those qualities are not found, but the reverse. Neither teach him to be captivated by laughter, nor by a loose dress, lest you prepare a poison against yourself. Accustom him to delight in modesty, and this you will do, if your attire be modest. But if you have a

flaunting air, an unsteady manner, how can you address him in a serious strain? And who will not hold you in contempt and derision?

But how is it possible to glorify God in our spirit? By practicing virtue, by adorning the soul. For such embellishment is not forbidden. Thus we glorify God, when we are good in every respect, and we shall be glorified by Him in a much higher degree in that great day. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. Romans 8:18 Of which that we may all be partakers, God grant, by the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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For the Saint: Heb. 13:17-21

Gospel: St Luke 18: 35-43

³⁵ Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. ³⁶ And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. ³⁷ So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. ³⁸ And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ³⁹ Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁰ So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, ⁴¹ saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." ⁴² Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." ⁴³ And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw *it*, gave praise to God.

On Spiritual Sight

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! In Holy Scripture there is often mention made of the blind and blindness. The Holy Gospel tells us of the healing of the blind man by the Lord (Luke 18:35-43), the restoration of sight to the man who was *blind from birth* (John 9:1-41), and about the healing of the blind man who was *demon-possessed* (Matt. 12:22-23). St. Luke the Apostle and Evangelist tells us that *to many who were blind He gave sight* (Luke 7:21).

There is another kind of blindness, however, which the Lord often denounced and of which He often spoke. Thus He calls the Pharisees blind leaders because they themselves did not perceive the Truth and prevented others from knowing it (Matt. 15:14). The Holy Apostle Peter calling the believers to Christian fervor regarding salvation and the virtues, which elevate man to Heaven, concludes: *For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins* (2 Pet. 1:8-9).

Man—God's creature—is composed of body and spirit; consequently, he has both physical and spiritual sight. Not to possess physical sight means not to be able to see the light of the sun, the beauty of the world, one's dear ones, and oneself. But more grievous is lack of spiritual eyes, which are given to contemplate God and the mysteries of the spiritual world. Spiritual sight is a gift of God and one who does not possess it is blind in his soul.

Those Christians suffer from such blindness, who know from the Word of God that through righteousness they may win Eternal Life and have communion with God and the Holy Angels, yet they are drawn with their whole being to sin, and forget Penance and the cleansing of their souls in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Such blind men affirm that they believe and confess Christ our Lord, but in deeds they reject Him.

The Holy Apostle, St. John the Divine, teaches: God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7).

What must we do? How can we find the path to perception? For if a man, during his lifetime, does not rid himself of this pernicious blindness and does not concern himself about illumining his soul with the Light of Divine Grace, he will get into a disastrous state. Tormented, he will repent bitterly of his sinful and spiritually fruitless life. But will not repentance be belated?

According to the teaching of the Orthodox Church, spiritual sight does not necessarily mean visions, appearances of angels and saints. One who strives after these, thinking that spiritual sight means precisely this, is in danger of falling into enchantment. One must remember that the Enemy of mankind often takes on the appearance of an angel of Light in order to destroy man's soul.

It is a matter for wonder that some do not notice their own spiritual blindness. In order to be free from this, it is necessary to become aware that we are living in darkness, that such a state is disastrous, and we must learn to hate sin with all our heart. Reading and listening to the Word of God will help to disperse the darkness, to open our spiritual eyes, to overcome enchantment and sin, to expose self-love and the vices of our soul, so that we may be illumined by grace and be moved to fulfil Christ's commandments.

True spiritual sight, according to the teaching of the Holy Fathers of the Church, consists in the ability to perceive one's sins and in recognizing Christ our Savior. The way to perceive our weakness and spiritual poverty is to turn for help to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

If we desire to cleanse our heart we must follow Christ Who is *the Light of the world* (John 9:5), Who came into the world that any who believe in Him would not remain in darkness. The Lord tells us: *he who follows Me shall...have the light of life* (John 8:12). And in order to follow Christ, and learn from Him meekness and humility, for He is *meek and lowly in heart* (Matt. 11:29), we must bear without murmuring the cross of life's trials and temptations, hate the darkness of sin and draw away from it.

In order to draw nearer to Christ and be illumined by Him, a Christian must be like the Lord in everything. He must be holy in his lifetime as St. Paul teaches: *Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord* (Heb. 12:14).

Many of us may ask: "Is this possible in our days?" If we stand firmly on the saving path of cleansing our soul, if we study diligently and observe the Word of God, zealously fulfilling His commandments and struggle against sin, then we shall come to know that there are such things as spiritual poverty and blindness and yearn to be free of them. We, just as the blind man in the Gospel, will come to believe and understand that without Christ we cannot receive sight. Such a spiritual attitude promotes heartfelt and ardent prayer, like that of the blind man of Jericho: *Son of David, have mercy on me* (Luke 18:39)!

Likewise sins and vices will destroy our prayer and therefore we must turn to the Savior with greater fervor and say: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me. Open my eyes, Christ God, and let me not someday sleep in death." Only when we have acquired this state of awareness will the Lord heal us. This cry, with ardent tearful prayer, will draw down on us the mercy of our Merciful God, and He, as the Physician of our soul and body, will heal the suffering soul, illumine it with the light of knowledge, and grant it the ability to see Him, the Unwaning Light in His Eternal Kingdom. Amen.

A.E.

for the Saint: Luke 6:17-21

Saints of the week

17 / 30 January — Our Holy Father Antony the Great - He was an Egyptian, born about 250 in a village called Quemene-el-Arons near Heracleopolis. After the death of his rich and noble parents, he shared his inherited possessions with his sister, who was still in her minority, made sure that she was cared for, gave away his half of the inheritance to the poor and, at the age of twenty, consecrated himself to the life of asceticism that he had desired from childhood. At first he lived near his own village but then, in order to escape the disturbance of men, went off into the desert, on the shores of the Red Sea, where he spent twenty years as a hermit in company with no-one but God, in unceasing prayer, pondering and contemplation, patiently undergoing inexpressible demonic temptations. His fame spread through the whole world and around him gathered many disciples whom he, by word and example, placed on the path of salvation. In eighty-five years of ascetic life, he went only twice to Alexandria: the first time to seek martyrdom during a time of persecution of the Church, and the second at the invitation of St Athanasius, to refute the Arians' slanderous allegations that he too was a follower of the Arian heresy. He departed this life at the age of 105, leaving behind a whole army of disciples and followers. And, although Antony was unlettered he was, as a counsellor and teacher, one of the most learned men of his age, as also was St Athanasius the Great. When some Hellenic philosophers tried to test him with literary learning, Antony shamed them with the question: 'Which is older, the understanding or the book? And which of these is the source of the other?' The shamed philosophers dispersed, for they saw that they had only book-learning without understanding, while Antony had understanding. Here was a man who had attained perfection insofar as man is able on earth. Here was an educator of educators and teacher of teachers, who for a whole eighty-five years perfected himself, and only thus was able to perfect many others. Full of years and great works, Antony entered into rest in the Lord in the year 356. St. Anthony teaches: "Learn to love humility, for it will cover all your sins. All sins are repugnant before God but the most repugnant of all is pride of the heart. Do not consider yourself learned and wise; otherwise, all your effort will be destroyed and your boat will reach the harbour empty. If you have great authority, do not threaten anyone with death. Know, that according to nature, you too are susceptible to death and that every soul sheds its body from itself as the final garment." In Byzantium there existed an unusual and instructive custom during the crowning of the emperors in the Church of the Divine Wisdom [St. Sophia]. The custom was that when the patriarch placed the crown on the emperor's head, at the same time, he handed him a silk purse filled with dirt from the grave. Then, even the emperor would recall death and to avoid all pride and become humble. The Holy Emperor Theodosius the Great; The Holy Martyr George the New of Ioannina;

St. Nennius - One of the Twelve Apostles of Ireland, he was a disciple of St. Finian. The only other thing known about him is that he was born in Ireland..

18 / 31 January — St Athanasius the Great, Archbishop of Alexandria - Born in Alexandria in 296, he had from childhood an inclination to the spiritual life. He was a deacon with Archbishop Alexander and accompanied him to Nicaea, to the First Ecumenical Council in 325. At this Council, Athanasius became famed for his learning, his devotion and his zeal for Orthodoxy, and contributed very greatly to the containing of the Arian heresy and the strengthening of Orthodoxy. After the death of Alexander, Athanasius was chosen as Archbishop of Alexandria. He remained in his archiepiscopal calling for more

than forty years, although he was not on the archiepiscopal throne the whole time. He was persecuted by heretics through almost the whole of his life, particularly by the Emperors Constantius, Julian and Valens, by Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia and many others, and by the heretic Arius and his followers. He was forced to hide from his persecutors in a well, a grave, private houses and the deserts. Twice he was forced to flee to Rome. Only just before his death did he have a peaceful period as a good shepherd with his flock, which truly loved him. There are few saints who have been so callously slandered and so criminally persecuted as St Athanasius. But his great soul endured all with patience for the love of Christ and at last emerged victorious from all these terrible and lengthy struggles. He often went to St Antony for advice and moral support, revering him as his spiritual father. He suffered greatly for the truth, until the Lord gave him rest in His kingdom as His faithful servant, in the year 373; St Maxim, Archbishop of Wallachia; Saint Leobardus of Marmoutier (Gaul), hermit.

St. Dermot, abbot - (also known as Diarmaid) - 6th century. Ruins of six churches can be seen on Inchcleraun (Innis Clothran) in Louch Ree, where Saint Dermot founded a monastery. His burial site there became a pilgrimage centre. It is believed that Dermot was a native of Connaught and of royal blood.

19 January / 1 February — Our Holy Father Macarius the Great - He was an Egyptian and one of the contemporaries of St Antony the Great. His father was a priest. He married in obedience to his parents' wishes, but his wife died very soon and he went off into the desert of Scetis, where he spent sixty years in toil and struggle, both physical and spiritual, for the Kingdom of heaven. When he was asked why he was so thin, both when he ate and when he fasted, he replied: 'From fear of God!' He succeeded so greatly in purifying his mind from evil thoughts and his heart from evil desires that God endowed him with abundant wonderworking gifts, such that he even raised the dead from the grave. His humility made men and demons marvel. A demon once said to him: 'There is only one thing in which I cannot excel you: that is not in fasting, for I never eat, nor in vigils, for I never sleep.' 'Then what is it?' asked Macarius. 'Your humility', replied the demon. Macarius often said to his disciple, Paphnutius: 'Condemn no man, and you will be saved.' He lived for ninety years. Before his death, St Antony and St Pachomius appeared to him from the other world and told him that he would die in nine days' time. And so it came to pass. Cherubim also appeared to him before his death and revealed the heavenly, blessed world to him in a vision, praised his labours and virtues and told him that they had been sent to take his soul to the heavenly Kingdom. He entered into rest in the year 390; Our Holy Father Macarius of Alexandria; St Arsenius, Bishop of Corfu; St Mark, Archbishop of Ephesus; Blessed Theodore, the Fool for Christ of Novgorod;

St. Branwallader (Breward) of Cornwall and the Channel Islands, bishop of Jersey, (6th C.) - the day of the translation of his relics. Saint Branwallader was a Celtic or Welsh monk, who is said to have been a bishop in Jersey. It is believed that Branwallader worked with Saint Samson (f.d. July 28) in Cornwall and the Channel Islands, where he is remembered at Jersey in St. Brelade. He may also have travelled with Samson to Brittany in northern France. In the Exeter Martyrology, Branwallader is described as the son of the Cornish king, Kenen.

St. Nathalan - Born near Aberdeen, Scotland; died 678. Nathalan was a nobleman, who possessed a large estate which he gave to the poor in order to become an anchorite. Nathalan is especially praised for having earned his living by farming, "which approaches nearest to divine contemplation." He fed his neighbours from his produce during times of famine, and found that farming served him as a type of penance. During his pilgrimage to Rome, Nathalan was consecrated bishop by the pope, because of his holiness and proficiency in profane and sacred learning. He took up residence at Tullicht (now in the diocese of Aberdeen), where he built a church, but he continued to use all his revenues for the relief of the poor as he had previously. He continued to earn his livelihood by the work of his hands, while living austerely, and preaching the Gospel. He is also credited with founding the churches at Bothelim and Colle.

St. Catellus of Castellamar E.

20 January / 2 February — Our Holy Father Euthymius the Great - Born in the Armenian town of Melitene near the River Euphrates in 377, of noble and eminent parents, he was their only son. His mother Dionysia had prayed for a child, and had a heavenly vision concerning his birth. He lived in asceticism from his youth, at first in the vicinity of his town, but then, after a visit to Jerusalem at the age of 29, in the Wilderness of Pharan, between Jerusalem and Jericho. He filled his days and nights with prayer and meditation, contemplation and physical toil. Many disciples gathered round him, such as Cyriac the Hermit, Sava the Sanctified, Theoctistus and others. He was, by God's gift, a great worker of wonders: he drove out demons, healed grave illnesses, brought forth water in the desert, multiplied bread and prophesied. He taught his monks the love of hardship, saying: 'If you eat bread that comes not from your own labours, that means that you eat the labour of another'. When one of the younger brethren desired to fast more than others, he forbade him and ordered him to come to the common table, so that he should not become proud through his too-great fasting. He also said that it is not good for a monk to move from place to place, for, he said: 'A tree that is frequently transplanted does not bear fruit.' Whoever desires to do good can do it in the place where he is. On love, he said: 'As salt is to bread, so is love to the other virtues.' He went off into the desert in the first week of the Great Fast and remained there in silence and meditation on God until before Easter. During his lifetime, a great monastery grew up near his cave, which was for centuries as full of monks as a hive of bees. His last command was that there should be loving hospitality to guests in the monastery, and that its gate should never be closed. He entered into rest at the age of 97. Patriarch Anastasius of Jerusalem was at his funeral. The Patriarch waited the entire day while a great mass of people gave the saint the last kiss, and only in the evening was he able to finish the funeral. On the seventh day after his death, Euthymius appeared to his disciple Domitian in light and joy. St Euthymius was a true 'son of light'. He entered into rest in the year 473. The Holy Martyrs Innas, Nirras and Pinnas;

St. Fechin, abbot - was probably born at Luighne (Leyney), Ireland. He was trained by St. Nathy, was founding Abbot of Fobhar, or Fore, in Westmeath, and died of the plague that devastated Ireland in the year 665..

21 January / 3 February — Our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor - By birth a citizen of Constantinople and at first a high-ranking courtier at the court of the Emperor Heraclius, he then became a monk and the abbot of a monastery not far from the capital. He was the greatest defender of Orthodoxy against the so-called Monothelite heresy, which developed from the heresy of Eutyches. That is to say: as Eutyches asserted that there is in Christ only one nature, so the Monothelites asserted that there is in Him only one will. Maximus resisted this assertion and found himself in opposition to both the Emperor and the Patriarch. But he was unafraid, and persevered to the end in proving that there are in the Lord two wills and also two natures. By his efforts, one Council in Carthage and one in Rome stood firm, and both these Councils anathematised the Monothelite teaching. Maximus's sufferings for Orthodoxy cannot be described: tortured by hierarchs, spat upon by the mass of the people, beaten by soldiers, persecuted, imprisoned; until finally, with his tongue cut out and one hand cut off, he was condemned to exile for life in Skhimaris, where he gave his soul into God's hands in the year 662. Blessed Maximus the Greek; The Holy Martyr Neophytus; The Holy Martyr Agnes; in Wales, St. Laudog, confessor; in Scotland, **St. Vimin (6th C)** - the founder of the monastery of Holywood at Nithsdale. It is related that St. Vimin was an abbot in Fifeshire when he was consecrated bishop. He actively evangelized the region. In order to avoid the temptations to pride that accompanied his many miracles, he moved to a deserted place and founded Holywood (Sacrumboscum), which later became famous for producing many holy and learned men

22 January / 4 February —The Holy Apostle Timothy - One of the Seventy, he was born in Lystra of Lycaonia of a Greek father and a Jewish mother. His mother and grandmother were praised by the Apostle Paul for their sincere faith (2 Tim. 1:4-5). He met the great Apostle for the first time in Lystra, and was the only witness of Paul's healing of the man lame from birth. Later, Timothy was an almost constant travelling-companion of Paul's, visiting Achaia, Macedonia, Italy and Spain with him. A great zealot for the Faith, a superb preacher and of a gentle spirit, Timothy contributed greatly to the spreading and establishing of the Christian faith. Paul called him his own son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2). After Paul's martyrdom, Timothy had St John the Evangelist as his teacher. But when the Emperor Domitian exiled John from Ephesus to the island of Patmos, Timothy remained in Ephesus as bishop. At the time of an idolatrous feast called Katagogium, the pagans, resentful of the Christians, made a merciless, masked attack on Timothy and killed him, in about the year 93. His honoured relics were later taken to Constantinople and buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles by the graves of St Luke the Evangelist and St Andrew the First-Called. Our Holy Father, the Martyr Anastasius; St. Brithwald, monk of Glastonbury, bishop of Sarum who removed his see from Ramsbury to Sarum.

23 January / 5 February — The Hieromartyr Clement, Bishop of Ancyra - He was born in 258 in the town of Ancyra of a pagan father and a Christian mother. His devout mother, Euphrosyne, prophesied a martyr's death for her son, and left this world when Clement was twelve years old. Her friend Sophia took Clement into her own home as her son and saw that he was brought up a Christian. Clement became so famed for his virtuous life that he was chosen as bishop of Ancyra at the age of twenty. He acquired a mature wisdom in his early years, and harnessed and conquered his body by great restraint. He ate only bread and vegetables, and never anything slaughtered or with blood. In the reign of Diocletian, he was tortured as terribly 'as anyone has ever been since the foundation of the world'. He spent twenty-eight years under torture and imprisonment. Eleven different torturers tormented him. When, at one time, they were smiting him on the face, spitting on him and breaking his teeth, he cried out to Domitian the torturer: 'You are doing me honour, O Domitian, not torturing me, for the mouth of my Lord Jesus Christ was struck in like manner, and His cheeks slapped; and lo, I, unworthy as I am, am now made worthy of this!' When he was brought before the Emperor Diocletian in Rome, the Emperor placed on one side various instruments of torture, and on the other side gifts—medals, clothing, money—whatever the Emperor was able to bestow, and then told Clement to choose. Christ's martyr, with a scornful glance at all the Emperor's gifts, chose the instruments of torture. And he was terribly tortured; piece by piece the flesh was flayed from his body until the bones showed white beneath. He was healed of these wounds, and was finally beheaded by a soldier in 312, while he was presiding at the Liturgy as bishop in the church in Ancyra. St Clement's miracles are without number. The Sixth Ecumenical Council; St Paulinus the Merciful; **St. Colman** - Died c. 702. Saint Colman succeeded Saint Hierlug (Zailug) as abbot-bishop of Lismore in 698. During his rule the fame of Lismore monastery, Ireland reached its peak

Blessed Xenia of St Petersburg (transferred from 24th) - Saint Xenia lived during the eighteenth century, but little is known of her life or of her family. She passed most of her life in Petersburg during the reigns of the empresses Elizabeth and Catherine II. Xenia Grigorievna Petrova was the wife of an army officer, Major Andrew Petrov. After the wedding, the couple lived in St Petersburg. St Xenia became a widow at the age of twenty-six when her husband suddenly died at a party. She grieved for the loss of her husband, and especially because he died without Confession or Holy Communion. Once her earthly happiness ended, she did not look for it again. From that time forward, Xenia lost interest in the things of this world, and followed the difficult path of foolishness for the sake of Christ. The basis for this strange way of life is to be found in the first Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:18-24, 1 Cor. 2:14, 1 Cor. 3:18-19). The Lord strengthened her and helped her to bear sorrow and misfortune patiently for the next forty-five years. She started wearing her husband's clothing, and insisted that she be addressed as "Andrew Feodorovich." She told people that it was she, and not her husband, who had died. In a certain sense, this was perfectly true. She abandoned her former way of life and experienced a spiritual rebirth. When she gave away her house and possessions to the poor, her relatives complained to the authorities. After speaking to Xenia, the officials were convinced that she was in her right mind and was entitled to dispose of her property as she saw fit. Soon she had nothing left for herself, so she wandered through the poor section of Petersburg with no place to lay her head. She refused all assistance from her relatives, happy to be free of worldly attachments. When her late husband's red and green uniform wore out, she clothed herself in rags of those colors. After a while, Xenia left Petersburg for eight years. It is believed that she visited holy Elders and ascetics throughout Russia seeking instruction in the spiritual life. She may have visited St Theodore of Sanaxar (February 19), who had been a military man himself. His life changed dramatically when a young officer died at a drinking

party. Perhaps this officer was St Xenia's husband. In any case, she knew St Theodore and profited from his instructions. St Xenia eventually returned to the poor section of Petersburg, where she was mocked and insulted because of her strange behavior. When she did accept money from people it was only small amounts, which she used to help the poor. She spent her nights praying without sleep in a field outside the city. Prayer strengthened her, and in her heart's conversation with the Lord she found the support she needed on her difficult path. When a new church was being built in the Smolensk cemetery, St Xenia brought bricks to the site. She did this in secret, during the night, so that no one would know. Soon her great virtue and spiritual gifts began to be noticed. She prophesied future events affecting the citizens of Petersburg, and even the royal family. Against her will, she became known as someone pleasing to God, and nearly everyone loved her. They said, "Xenia does not belong to this world, she belongs to God." People regarded her visits to their homes or shops as a great blessing. St Xenia loved children, and mothers rejoiced when the childless widow would stand and pray over a baby's crib, or kiss a child. They believed that the blessed one's kiss would bring that child good fortune. St Xenia lived about forty-five years after the death of her husband, and departed to the Lord at the age of seventy-one. The exact date and circumstances of her death are not known, but it probably took place at the end of the eighteenth century. She was buried in the Smolensk cemetery. By the 1820s, people flocked to her grave to pray for her soul, and to ask her to intercede with God for them. So many visitors took earth from her grave that it had to be replaced every year. Later, a chapel was built over her grave. Those who turn to St Xenia in prayer receive healing from illness, and deliverance from their afflictions. She is also known for helping people who seek jobs.

HYMN OF PRAISE

SAINT XENIA [KSENIA]

The virgin Xenia, as well as Agnes

Or the all-glorious Thecla or Anastasia,

Did not want to be tied to a physical man

But found a Bridegroom in the Immortal Christ.

With all her soul, she loved His beauty

And mercy and tenderness and radiant purity.

And even the senator's house and wealth, she left

When the Sun of Righteousness shown in her soul.

Soul! Soul ! Soul! is the true bride;

And the body is miserable like the transient grass.

And the bride [her soul] Xenia began to adorn

And by many prayers to wash and nourish it

That the bride [her soul], to be a heavenly apparition,

Pleasant and worthy of the Heavenly Bridegroom.

The labors of Holy Xenia were pleasing to the Bridegroom,

And many wondrous gifts, upon her, He bestowed.

When her pure soul, the flesh, overcame,

Peaceful as a king over a vanquished city,

With the wreath of immortality, the Lord crowned her,

Into the mansion of eternal joy, led her.

There, where the angels hymn the Creator in song,

There, the Lord receives His bride.

REFLECTION

In our day, you usually hear these words from parents: "We want to secure the life of our child." That is why they work very hard to amass wealth, often unjustly, to educate their child in the calling [vocation] which brings the greatest physical security and material benefit. This is done by so-called Christians! They do this because their concept of a real life and the real security of life is erroneous. See, how a true Christian mother prepares her son for a real life. At the time of her death, Blessed Euphrosyne spoke to her son Clement of Ancyra: "Do me the honor, O my son, and bravely stand up for Christ and confess Him strongly and without hesitation! I hope, in my heart, that the crown of martyrdom will blossom on you in my honor and for the salvation of many. Do not be afraid of threats, nor swords, nor pains, nor wounds, nor fire. Let nothing separate you from Christ, but look up to heaven and from there await your great, eternal and rich reward from God. Fear God's majesty; be afraid of

His awesome judgment, tremble at His all-seeing Eye, for all those who deny Him will receive the punishment of unquenchable fire and eternally vigilant worm. Let this be my reward from you, my sweet son, for my pain in child-bearing and effort surrounding your education that I may be called a mother of a martyr. The blood that you received from me, do not spare but shed it that, from that, I can also receive honor. Submit your body to torture that I, too, may rejoice at that before our Lord as though I myself had suffered for Him."

CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the Lord Jesus as Teacher:

1. As a Teacher Who teaches how man should think in order to be saved;
2. As a Teacher Who teaches how man should talk in order to be saved;
3. As a Teacher Who teaches how a man should act in order to be saved.

HOMILY

About the most all-discerning Prophet [Jesus]

"Why do you harbour evil thoughts in your hearts" (St. Matthew 9:4).

When our Lord deigned to direct a rebuke to the Pharisees and Scribes, at that time, they had not killed anyone, nor had they deceived anyone, nor had they looted anyone and, not only that, at that time, they had not even offended anyone by their words. Why then, did our Lord admonish them when they had not committed any sin neither in works nor in words? Why? Because, at that time, their thoughts were evil.

An evil thought is sin! That is the great news which Christ brought into the world. In truth, an evil thought is the sinful source of all sin because, before a man says something or does something sinful, he thinks sinfully. Thought is the causative sin. All other sins are only subsequent sins. Whoever wishes to annihilate those evil actions must uproot those evil thoughts first. Whoever desires to stem the flow of water must first dry up the source. Therefore, let no one justify himself: I am not a sinner, for I have not killed anyone nor looted from anyone nor profaned anyone nor lied to anyone! Behold, we are full of deadly looting, profaning and deceiving thoughts! If we have not committed sin by our own deeds, that is simply a matter of the mercy of God and external circumstances. But, if God had yielded and if the circumstances were favourable, we would have committed all those sins that we had thought. The serpent is not only venomous when it bites but also when it does not bite, because it carries the venom in itself.

Therefore, not only is thought a sin, but also it is the source of sin: the beginning of sin and the seed and root of sin. That is why the All-seeing and All-knowing Lord rebuked those who had evil thoughts. "Why do you harbour evil thoughts in your hearts."

O Lord, All-seeing and All-knowing, help us to cleanse our hearts and minds from evil thoughts so that our words and deeds may be pure.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.