

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

### Heiromartyr Methodius

20 June / 3 July

**Resurrection Tropar, Tone 2:** When Thou didst descend to death, O Life Immortal, Thou didst slay hell with the splendour of Thy Godhead! And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead, all the powers of Heaven cried out: O Giver of Life, Christ our God, Glory to Thee!

**Troparion of St Methodius tone 1:** Thy blood, O wise Methodius,/ cries to God from the earth like the blood of Abel./ O holy Martyr, thou didst preach Christ's incarnation/ and defeat the false doctrines of Origen./ Thou hast entered the heavenly bridal chamber:/ Pray to Christ our God that our souls may be saved.

**Resurrection Kondak, Tone 2:** Hell became afraid, O Almighty Saviour, seeing the miracle of Thy resurrection from the tomb! The dead arose! Creation, with Adam, beheld this and rejoiced with Thee! And the world, O My Saviour, praises Thee forever.

**Kontakion of St Methodius tone 4:** O Priest and initiate of the Holy Trinity,/ preacher of Divine commandments and support of the Orthodox,/ thou didst expose the errors of false doctrine/ and shed thy blood as a martyr for the Faith./ O Methodius, standing before Christ with the Angels, pray that we may be saved.

#### Matins Gospel III

#### EPISTLE: Romans 5:1-10

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; And perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

#### THROUGH WHOM ALSO WE HAVE ACCESS BY FAITH INTO THIS GRACE

And let me beg you to consider how he everywhere sets down these two points, His part, and our part. His part, however, is varied and numerous and diverse. For He died for us and reconciled us; He brought us to Himself, and gave us grace unspeakable. But we brought only faith as our contribution. And so he says, 'by faith, into this grace.' What grace is this? Tell me. It is being counted worthy of the knowledge of God; being forced from error; coming to a knowledge of the truth; obtaining all the blessings that come through baptism. For the purpose of His bringing us close was that we might receive these gifts. It was not only that we might have simple remission of sins and that we should be reconciled, but that we might also receive countless benefits ...He unveils the whole of things to come ...For this is the nature of God's grace. It has no end; it knows no bounds, but is on the advance at all times to greater things ...Take an instance of what I mean. A person has acquired rulership and glory and authority, yet he does not stay in that status continuously, but is speedily cast out of it. If man does not take it from him, death comes, and is sure to seize it. But God's gifts are not of this kind: for neither man, nor occasion, nor crisis of affairs, nor even the Devil, nor death, can come and cast us out of them. But when we are dead, we then more strictly speaking have possession of them, and continue enjoying them more and more.

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily IX on Romans IV: B#55, p. 396.*



## GOSPEL: St. Matthew 6:22-33

"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; And yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, in our daily lives we often find that there exists a sort of contradiction: We call ourselves Christians, we are supposed to be filled with the joy and peace of Christ, and yet, we find that so much of our daily life is filled with pain, with sorrow, with anxiety, and often, peace -especially inner peace-is so far from us. And so, we can ask ourselves, "Why is this so?" The Scripture readings for today, in a very direct way, give us the answer to this perplexing paradox.

Our Lord tells us in St. Matthew's Gospel that no one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24). Here, I think, is the real source of our problem. We experience the anxieties of life and allow them to disturb our peace because, in effect, we are passing through life with double minds. We really don't know just Who to follow and we haven't really decided to center our love and devotion on God Who is the only source of true happiness and peace.

We have to seriously ask ourselves, just whom do we serve. Is our life centered around God and His Holy Church, or is it centered around the things of this life?—our homes, our jobs, our possessions, our family and friends, our little pleasures and recreational activities? How many of us call ourselves Christians, call ourselves faithful and dedicated Church goers and yet, if we truly and honestly examine our personal lives, find that surely God and His Church does not come first?

Yes, we find ourselves in church on Sunday mornings and a few feast days, but what about the other Divine services? Vespers, Matins, Vigil, and so on? How often do we find many excuses not to come to church? Perhaps, and this is especially appropriate at this time of year, we are on vacation. How much of an effort do we make to find an Orthodox church within which to glorify God on Sunday morning? Or perhaps we say that we can't come to a feast day Liturgy because we have to work—but there are still the beautiful Evening services—the Vigil— which actually begin the feast. How wonderful it would be if we would come to services on Saturday night to begin our preparation for the Sunday morning Liturgy we certainly are often able to find many other things to do!

Or even more important, how much of the Gospel—the "Good News" of Christ—do we bring home and actually put into practice? How hard do we actually try to live our lives worthy of the Name of Christ? Do we try to forgive those who hurt us or wrong us? (And here we don't mean just family and friends!) Do we try to love everyone we meet as if we have just met Christ Himself? Do we give glory to God for every good thing that we might do, realizing that without God's help, on our own we are incapable of doing good? Do we give thanks to God for every blessing that comes our way? Do we really believe, as Scripture tells us, that the sufferings of this life are a result of the spread of sin in the world and that, as St. Paul tells us, we [should] rejoice in our sufferings, for we know that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope—the hope of sharing the glory of God (Rom. 5:3-4,2)? The Martyrs marched into the arena with hymns of joy on their lips!

In today's Gospel lesson, Jesus speaks to us about what the proper attitude should be concerning the material side of our lives: I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" (Matt. 6:25-31).

The key to all this comes in the very next verse: Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well (vs. 33). God loves us so much that, as St. Paul tells us, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). Looking back at St. Paul's words concerning suffering, endurance, character and hope, he tells us further that hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us (Rom. 5:5).

Dear brothers and sisters, may God's love fill all of us with joy today and give us the strength and courage to continue along the path of life, causing us to place all of our trust and hope in Him, for He dearly loves all of us. For to Him belong glory and dominion, forever and ever (1 Pet. 4:11). Amen.

M.A.

## Saints of the Week

**20 June / 3 July — Apostles' Fast — The Hieromartyr Methodius, Bishop of Patara** - he devoted himself from his youth to the ascetic life and, like a city set on a hill, was seen and called to the episcopate in the city of Patara in Lycia. Methodius was a learned and eloquent hierarch and wrote against the heresy of Origen. His words, 'inspired by God, illumine the whole world like lightning'. The pagans rose up against him, tortured him and beheaded him in 311, in Chalchis in Syria. The Holy Martyrs Aristocles, Dimitrianus and Athanasius;

**Our Holy Father Naum of Ochrid** - During this his summer feast there is a great assembly of people at the monastery of St. Nahum. Many sick people come or are brought to beseech healing through faith and prayer over the relics of the saint. Not only Orthodox people but also those from other faiths come to seek favour from St. Nahum. In 1926, a Muslim from Resna brought and donated a bell to the monastery out of thanksgiving because St. Nahum healed his brother from his deathbed and restored him to life. The donor was Jemail Zizo and his brother, who was healed, was called Suleiman Zizo. Both were prominent citizens of Resna.; St Kallistos I, Patriarch of Constantinople; St Leucius, Bishop of Brindisi; Blessed Studios.

**21 June / 4 July — Apostles' Fast — The Holy Martyr Julian of Tarsus** - of a noble senatorial family, he lived in Tarsus in Cilicia and suffered in the reign of Diocletian. Although only eighteen years old when he was taken for trial for the Faith, St Julian was already both educated and resolute in Christian faith and devotion. The imperial governor took him from city to city for a whole year, torturing him all the while and attempting to persuade him to renounce Christ. Julian's mother followed her son at a distance. When the governor seized her and sent her to urge her son to renounce Christ, she spent three days in the prison with him, giving him precisely the opposite advice, teaching him and giving him the strength not to lose heart but to go to his death with courage and gratitude to God. His torturers then sewed Julian into a sack of sand with scorpions and snakes and threw him into the sea, and his mother also died under torture. The waves carried his body onto the shore, and the faithful took it to Alexandria, where they buried it in 290. His relics were later taken to Antioch. St John Chrysostom himself gave an eulogy for the holy martyr Julian: 'A holy voice comes forth from the lips of the martyr, and with this voice is poured out a light brighter than the rays of the sun.' He said further: 'Take whomsoever you will, be he a madman or one possessed, and lead him to the grave of this saint, to the martyr's relics, and you will see the demon immediately jump out and flee as from blazing fire.' It is evident from this speech that many wonders must have been wrought at St Julian's grave. Our Holy Fathers Julius and Julian; The Holy Martyr Archil II, King of Georgia; The Holy Martyr Luarsab II, Prince of Kartli.

**St. Mewan, abbot of St. Meen** - One of the most famous of the Breton saints was Saint Mewan. A relative of Saint Samson of Dol,\* (\* A Life of St. Samson appeared in OA #40, June 1984) he was born in Gwent of a noble family, and was well-educated, intelligent and serious-minded. When quite young he chose to renounce the world and lead a life of poverty. As a disciple of his kinsman, he travelled with Saint Samson and a small group of monks on a missionary journey to Brittany. After some time in the monastery of Dol which they founded, Samson sent young Mewan to a certain count to beg for assistance in building his basilica. On the way Mewan met a wealthy and pious man, who promised him his own estate as a site for the monastery. This offer was taken up later with Samson's blessing when Mewan desired to lead a more solitary life. The site proved suitable for a monastery except that there was no water. Mewan prayed fervently, and struck his staff into the ground. Immediately a spring of water gushed out. This water healed both sick men and animals, so that soon the fame of it spread abroad, and people flocked to it from distant places. The number of monks increased rapidly as his sanctity became known. Once a count imprisoned and sentenced to death one of his servants for a trifling misdemeanour. St. Mewan begged the count to release him without avail. Through the prayers of St. Mewan, the servant was miraculously released, and fled to the monastery for sanctuary. The infuriated count broke in and seized him, ignoring St. Mewan's warning that as a punishment he would die in three days' time. As the count was returning home, he was seriously injured by a fall from his horse. He repented, confessed and died on the third day. Many miracles, particularly of healing, are recorded in the life of the Saint. After his death his cult gradually spread all over France. His well was famous for its powers of curing a malady popularly called "St. Mewan's evil," namely a malignant mange that eats the flesh down to the bone. In the Middle Ages it was established that between four and five thousand pilgrims came annually for healing. The name Méen (Mewan) is pronounced like the French word for hand, main, so pilgrims used to wear a hand-shaped piece of cloth sewn on their clothes or hat. They were supposed to live on alms throughout their pilgrimage, and give to the poor on their return the money they would have spent on the journey. It is recorded that in the mid-seventeenth century some fifteen thousand pilgrims passed each year through Rennes, where a hospice was built to accommodate them. Even in the late eighteenth century, annual pilgrimages were still being made and numerous healings of skin diseases reported. A charming anecdote is told about Saint Mewan's death. Knowing beforehand the hour of his repose, he called the brethren together in words of love to give them his last instructions. His godson Austol, who had never been parted from him and had always served him humbly, was pierced with grief. "Why, father," he cried, "do you leave me your servant desolate? It had been better that I had been buried by your hands and commended by your holy prayers before your departure." He wept bitterly, and his beloved godfather replied, "Dearest godson, continue with your usual labour, for by God's mercy, in seven days you shall join me in the glory of the heavenly life. The bond of love which unites us is not broken; no, it will be made even stronger." After the Saint's death, Austol continued to serve the brothers as before. On the seventh day, having observed a three-day fast, he went alone to the church, and there peacefully reposed. The brothers, finding him dead, and remembering the love which these two servants of God had for each other, opened Saint Mewan's tomb and discovered that the Saint's body, which diffused a divine fragrance, had moved and was lying on the right of the grave facing the space on the left as if waiting for his disciple. So Austol, who later was also glorified, was buried beside his beloved friend. The bones of the two saints thus declared the love that had always united them. In the year 919 the relics of Saint Mewan and his disciple Saint Austol were moved to Central France to escape the Norsemen, and were brought back in 1074 on January 18, the day on which they are commemorated

**22 June / 5 July — Apostles' Fast - The Hieromartyr Eusebius of Samosata** - he was a major opponent of Arianism. When the patriarchal throne of Antioch became vacant, Meletius was elected Patriarch. This Meletius was a shining light in the Church, and deserved the great eulogy given by St John Chrysostom at his death. But the Arians soon drove Meletius from Antioch. When Constantine's evil son, died, he was followed by Julian the Apostate, a man even worse than he, as ruler of the Empire. During Julian's persecution of Christians, St Eusebius took off his cassock, clad himself in soldier's garb and travelled around the persecuted churches of Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine, strengthening the Orthodox faith everywhere and creating the necessary priests, deacons and other clergy and raising some to the episcopate. After the news of Julian's death, St Eusebius advised Meletius to summon a Council of the Church in Antioch. This took place in 363, and the twenty-seven hierarchs present denounced Arianism once again and proclaimed the Orthodox faith as it was expressed at the First Ecumenical Council. Besides Meletius and Eusebius, St Pelagius of Laodicea, a man of great asceticism and chastity, made a great impact at this Council, which took place during the reign of the devout Emperor Jovian. But he died soon after, and the evil Valens took the throne, and the persecution of Orthodoxy began afresh. St Meletius was banished to Armenia, Eusebius to Thrace and Pelagius to Arabia. After Valens, the Emperor Gratian came to the throne and restored freedom to the Church, returning the exiled bishops to their rightful places: Meletius to Antioch, Eusebius to Samosata and Pelagius to Laodicea. Many dioceses were vacant at that time and Eusebius was quick to find canonical pastors for the people. But when he arrived at the city of Doliche with the newly-chosen bishop, Marinus, to install him as bishop and denounce the Arian heresy (which was strong in that city), a certain fanatical heretic threw a tile from the roof and gave him a mortal wound. This great zealot for Orthodoxy, this saint and martyr, died and entered into eternal life in the blessedness of Paradise in the year 379. The Holy Martyrs Xenon and Xenas;

**St. Alban, protomartyr of Britain (c.305)** - when the people of Britain began to follow our Saviour, Jesus Christ, many of them were killed by those who worshipped Satan. The first British Christian to be martyred was St. Alban. Alban lived in the city of Verulamium, which today is called Saint Albans. We do not know who his parents were, or what kind of work he did. But we do know that he was a very kind man. When the soldiers were looking for the local presbyter in order to kill him, Alban hid God's servant in his own house. Alban was not yet a Christian, but as he watched and spoke with the presbyter, and heard his prayers, he began to believe in Christ. The presbyter taught St. Alban about our Saviour and about the Christian Faith, and the saint believed with all his heart, and asked to be baptised. One day, the soldiers heard that the presbyter was hiding in Alban's house. They came to search the house and arrest God's servant. St. Alban, however, put on the presbyter's robes and the soldiers, thinking that he was the presbyter, arrested him and took him before the judge. The judge was very angry with Alban. "Why did you hide this presbyter?" he shouted. "Turn him over to my soldiers, or else you will be punished." At this, Saint Alban declared, "I am also a Christian and I adore the true, living God." The judge was furious. He cried out, "Renounce Christ and worship our idols, or I will have your head cut off!" The saint, however, gave glory to God. The judge ordered, "Take him to the hill and cut off his head." The holy martyr was very happy. He was joyful that he was going to give up his life for Christ. As the saint was being led to Holmhurst Hill to be killed, they came to the River Ver. The bridge over the river was crowded with people who had come to watch his martyrdom, and so the saint walked to the river, signed it with the Cross, and the river opened and left a path for the saint and the soldiers. When the executioner saw this, he fell at the saint's feet and confessed Christ. The soldiers quickly arrested this new Christian also. The two were taken to the top of the hill, where their heads were cut off, and they received the Martyr's Crown from Christ.

**23 June / 6 July — Apostles' Fast - The Holy Martyr Agrippina** - born and brought up in Rome. She trained herself from childhood to live by the Gospel, expelling the stench of the passions from her heart with the sweet-smelling perfume of purity and chastity. She was betrothed to Christ the Lord, and suffered as a bride of Christ in the reign of the Emperor Valerian. She endured beating with staves until her bones were crushed. An angel of the Lord appeared to her to strengthen her, until she surrendered her soul to God under fresh tortures. Her friends, Vassa, Paula and Agathonica, took her relics to the island of Sicily and buried them there. A church was later built there in her name, where countless miracles were wrought over her relics. She entered into eternal rest and was crowned with glory in the year 275. The Holy Martyrs Eustochius, Gaius and those with them; The Vladimir Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God; The Tale of Theophilus' Repentance ;

**St. Etheldreda of Ely, England, (679)** - Twice Saint Etheldreda (who is also called Saint Audrey) married. released from these unwelcome ties first by the death of her husband after five years and secondly after she managed to persuade her second husband that they should live as brother and sister a relationship that led him to release the saint after twelve years. At last she was able to fulfil her life's desire. In between her two marriages she had lived in solitude for five years on the island of Ely. Now she founded a nunnery and a monastery about the year 672, ruling this double house as abbess. Etheldreda was a woman of noble birth, the daughter of King Anna of East Anglia. But from now on she ceased to wear clothing of fine linen and dressed only in woollen garments. Except at Easter, Pentecost and Epiphany, she washed only in cold water. Only when she was ill or on great church festivals did she eat more than one meal a day. Seven years after the foundation of the double monastery, she died of a plague. The year was 679. The Venerable Bede tells how the body of the saint was exhumed. When she died, she had a tumour on her neck. She attributed this to divine punishment because she was once vain enough to wear a costly necklace. When her coffin was opened sixteen years later, the tumour had healed. Thus Etheldreda became the patron saint of those suffering throat and neck ailments. He also wrote, "Now Etheldreda shines upon our days, Shedding the light of grace on all our ways. Born of a noble and a royal line, She brings to Christ her King a life more fine."



**24 June / 7 July — Apostles' Fast - The Nativity of St John the Forerunner** - six months before his appearing to the most holy Virgin Mary in Nazareth, the great Gabriel, archangel of the Lord, appeared to Zacharias the High Priest in the Temple in Jerusalem. Before he revealed the miraculous conception by a virgin who had not known a man, the archangel revealed the wondrous conceiving by an old and barren woman. Zacharias was unable at once to believe the words of God's herald, and for this his tongue was bound in dumbness and remained thus until the eighth day after John's birth. The kinsfolk of Zacharias and Elisabeth gathered together on that day for the infant's circumcision and naming. When they enquired of the father how he wished the child to be called, he, being still dumb, wrote on a slate: 'John'. At that moment his tongue was loosed and he began to speak. Zacharias's house was on the heights between Bethlehem and Hebron. The news of the angel's appearing to Zacharias, of his dumbness and of the loosening of his tongue at the exact moment that he wrote 'John', was carried throughout all Israel, coming to Herod's ears. So, when he sent men to kill all the infants around Bethlehem, he sent men off to Zacharias's family house in the hills, to slay John also. But Elisabeth hid the child in good time. The king was enraged at this, and sent an

executioner to the Temple to kill Zacharias (for it was then his turn to serve in the Temple again). Zacharias was killed between the court and the Temple, and his blood clotted and solidified on the paving slabs, and remained as an enduring witness against Herod. Elisabeth hid herself and the child in a cave, where she soon died. The young John remained in the wilderness alone, in the care of God and His angels. St Nikita, Bishop of Remesiana;

**Troparion of the Forerunner tone 4:** O Prophet and Forerunner of the coming of Christ,/ we honour thee lovingly but cannot extol thee worthily;/ for by thy birth thy mother's barrenness/ and thy father 's dumbness were unloosed;/ and the Incarnation of the Son of God is proclaimed to the world.

**Kontakion of St John the Baptist tone 3:** The formerly barren one today gives birth to the Forerunner of Christ/ Who is the fulfilment of prophecy./ For the Prophet, Herald and forerunner of the Word/ submitted to Him Whom the prophets foretold/ by laying his hand on him in the Jordan.

**The Holy Martyrs Orentius, Pharnacius, Eros, Firmus, Ferminus, Cyriacus and Longinus** - During the reign of Maximian (284-305) the Scythians attacked the Greeks. St Orentius was ordered to fight against the Scythian champion Marothom, who was distinguished for his special strength of body. He was also a strong and brave warrior. Orentius was a Christian, as were his six brothers, who were also serving in the imperial army. Calling on the Lord for help, St Orentius defeated Marothom and so stopped the invasion of the Scythians. The emperor intended to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods for this victory and he invited the victor, St Orentius, to participate. The saint refused, explaining that he was a Christian, and said that he vanquished the enemy by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither the promise of honors and riches, nor threats of punishment could induce the saint to renounce Christ. The fierce and ungrateful emperor gave orders to banish both the saint and his six brothers to the Caucasus. During the journey all seven brothers died from hunger or torture. The first to die was St Eros on June 22 at Parembol; after him St Orentius suffered martyrdom. They tied a stone around his neck and cast him into the sea. The Archangel Raphael took him from the water to dry land at Riza, on the south shore of the Black Sea, where the holy martyr surrendered his soul to God. St Pharnacius went to the Lord on July 3 at Kordila. Sts Firmus and Ferminus died on July 7 at Aspara, on the eastern shore of the Black Sea. St Cyriacus departed this transitory life at Ziganeia on July 14, and St Longinus died on the ship on July 28. Battered by a storm, the ship went aground at Pitindeia (Pitsunda), where the body of the holy martyr was buried.

**25 June / 8 July — Apostles' Fast - Our Holy Mother, the Martyr Fevronia** - the daughter of Prosporus, a Roman senator. In order to escape marriage with a mortal man, she betrothed herself to Christ and became a nun in the East, in Assyria, in a monastery where her aunt, Bryaena, was abbess. Lysimachus, a nobleman's son, was desirous of entering into marriage with Fevronia, but the Emperor Diocletian, suspecting him of being a secret Christian, sent him to the East with his uncle, Silenus, to seize and kill the Christians. Silenus was as ferocious as a wild beast and mercilessly exterminated the Christians wherever he could. Lysimachus, on the contrary, protected the Christians whenever possible and hid them from his bestial uncle. Having emptied Palmyra of Christians, Silenus came to the city of Nisibis, close to which there was the monastery of fifty ascetic virgins in which Fevronia was a nun. Although she was barely twenty years old, Fevronia was held in respect both in the monastery and in the city for her meekness, wisdom and restraint. The monastery followed the rule of a former abbess, Blessed Platonida, and every Friday the nuns would spend their time in prayer and reading sacred books, with no other work. Bryaena had appointed Fevronia to read to the other sisters while standing behind a curtain, so that no-one would be distracted or captivated by the beauty of her face. When Silenus heard about Fevronia, he ordered that she be brought before him. When the holy maiden refused to renounce Christ and enter into marriage with a mortal man, he ordered them to whip her and then cut off her hands, breasts and feet and finally to slay her with the sword. But a fearful divine punishment came upon her tormentor that very day. A demon entered into him, and a fearful terror took hold of him. In his terror, he struck his head on a marble pillar and fell down dead. Lysimachus ordered that Fevronia's body be gathered together and brought to the monastery for solemn burial, and he, together with many of the soldiers, was baptised. Many healings were wrought through Fevronia's holy relics, and she herself appeared on the day of her Feast, standing in her usual place among the sisters. They beheld her with both fear and joy. St Fevronia suffered and went to eternal blessedness in the year 310, and her relics were translated to Constantinople in 363. Our Holy Father Dionysius.

**26 June / 9 July — Apostles' Fast – Our Holy Father David** - born in Salonica, where he at first lived the ascetic life in a shelter he had built in an almond tree, he later continued his asceticism in Thessaly. He purified himself so greatly by fasting, prayer and vigils that he was made worthy to receive great grace from God. Once he took a live coal in his hand, placed incense on it and censured the Emperor with no sort of protection for his hand. The Emperor, when he saw this, bowed down to the ground before David, who amazed the people by his countless miracles. He entered peacefully into rest in the blessedness of eternity in 540; The Tikhvin Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God; The Hodogitria Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God; The Icon of the Mother of God of Lydda or Rome; Translation of the relics of St. Brannock (Brynach) of Braunton, England.

### HYMN OF PRAISE

#### SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

By God's miracle, John entered the world, As once did Sarah's and Abraham's Isaac, By God's miracle, remained alive From Herod's bloody knife. The knife, the young child John missed, But John's father, it did not miss; By God's miracle, John in the desert For thirty years, he sustained himself, To the servant of God angels are shepherds, To the poor angels are guardians! John grew loveable lamb, The Lamb of God to serve, To proclaim the bright day, before the sun, The Unknown, recognized and glorified. Of the great prophets, the last And of God's apostles, the beginning. As Elijah, with God he speaks And as an apostle, loves and rebukes, Of the high priest, wondrous son, Of the martyr of God, the first-born brother.

### REFLECTION

One of the differences between the eloquent philosophy of the Greeks [Hellenes] and the Christian Faith is that the entire Hellenistic philosophy can clearly be expressed with words and comprehended by reading, while the Christian Faith cannot be clearly expressed by words and even less comprehended by reading alone. When you are expounding the Christian Faith, for its understanding and acceptance, both reading and the practice of what is read are necessary. When Patriarch Photius read the words of Mark the Ascetic concerning the spiritual life he noticed a certain unclarity with the author for which he wisely said: "That [unclarity] does not proceed from the obscurity of expression but from that truth which is expressed there; it is better understood by means of practice (rather than by means of words) and that cannot be explained by words only." And this, the great patriarch adds, "It is not the case with these homilies nor only with these men but rather with all of those who attempted to expound the ascetical rules, passions and instructions, which are better understood from practice alone."

### CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the miraculous recognition of the Elder Simeon the Receiver of God: "And he came by inspiration of the Spirit into the Temple. And when his parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the Law:" (St. Luke 2:27): 1. How this holy elder recognized by the spirit the helpless Child as Lord and Messiah, while the blinded scribes and priests did not recognize Him neither then nor when He worked numerous miracles and revealed unheard of wisdom; 2. How also my soul, if it grew old in sin, cannot recognize the Lord.

### HOMILY

#### **Against malicious rejoicing**

***"Rejoice not when your enemy falls and when he stumbles, let not your heart exult" (Proverbs 24:17).***

He is a man, do not rejoice in his fall. He is your brother, let not your heart skip for joy when he stumbles. God created him for life and God does not rejoice in his fall. And you also, do not rejoice at that which grieves God. When man falls, God loses; would you rejoice in the loss of your Creator, your Parent? When the angels weep would you rejoice?

When your enemy falls, pray to God for him that God will save him and give thanks to God that you did not also fall in the same manner. You are of the same material, both you and he, as two vessels from the hand of the potter. If one vessel breaks should the other smile and rejoice? Behold, a small stone, which broke that vessel waits only for another's hand to raise it and then to destroy this vessel also. Both vessels are of the same material and a small stone can destroy a hundred vessels.

When one sheep is lost, should the remaining flock rejoice? No. They should not rejoice. For behold, the shepherd leaves his flock and, concerned, goes to seek the lost sheep. The loss of the shepherd is the loss of the flock. Therefore, do not rejoice when your enemy falls, for neither your shepherd nor his shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, rejoices in his fall.

O Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, extricate malicious joy from our hearts and in its place, plant in our hearts compassion and brotherly love.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.