

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

### The Holy Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils and

### St Seraphim of Sarov

11 July / 1 August



**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 of the First Six Ecumenical Councils, Tone 8 Spec. Mel. ("Virgin Theotokos rejoice ..."):** Most glorious art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast established our fathers upon the earth as beacons, and hast thereby guided us all to the true Faith! O greatly Compassionate One, glory be to Thee!

**Tropar of St. Seraphim of Sarov, Tone 4:** From thy youth thou didst love Christ, O blessed one; / and, aflame with the desire to serve Him alone, / thou didst struggle in the wilderness in unceasing prayer and labour; / and with compunction of heart acquiring the love of Christ, / thou wast shown to be the beloved favourite of the Mother of God. / Wherefore we cry unto thee: // Save us by thy prayers, O our venerable father Seraphim!

**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 of the First Six Ecumenical Councils, Tone 8 Spec. Mel. ("As the firstfruits ..."):** The preaching of the apostles and the dogmas of the fathers sealed the one Faith of the Church; and clad in the robe of truth woven of theology from on high, it setteth aright and glorifieth the great mystery of piety.

**Kondak of St. Seraphim of Sarov, Tone 2:** Having forsaken the beauty of the world and the corruption therein, / thou didst take up thine abode in the monastery of Sarov. / And having lived there as an angel, / thou didst become a path for many to salvation. / Wherefore Christ has glorified thee O father Seraphim, / and enriched thee with the gift of healings and miracles. / Therefore we cry out to thee: // Rejoice O our venerable father Seraphim !

**Vespers Gen.** 14:14-20; Deut. 1:8-11; Deut. 10:14-21

**Matins Gospel VI**

**EPISTLE: ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS 12: 6-14**

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; Or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; He who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

#### **HAVING GIFTS THAT DIFFER ACCORDING TO THE GRACE GIVEN TO US, LET US USE THEM**

He wants to make them vie with each other, and to labour more earnestly by showing that it is they themselves who give the grounds for their receiving more or less. For he says indeed that it is given by God ...But he also says that the beginnings lie with themselves in order to rouse the listless. This he does in the Epistle to the Corinthians as well, to produce these emotions. For when he says, 'covet the gifts earnestly,' (I Cor. 12:31), he shows that they were themselves the cause of the differences in what was given ...For though it is a grace, yet it is not poured forth at random, but framing its measure according to the recipients, it lets as much flow as it may find the vessel of faith that is brought to be capable of holding...

## CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEEDS OF SAINTS, PRACTICE HOSPITALITY

Even the Apostleship is called a ministry, and every spiritual work is a ministry ... It is not enough to give, but we must also do it with munificence, for this always answers to the name of simplicity ... It is not enough to show mercy, but it behooves us to do it with largesse and an ungrudging spirit ... even with a cheerful and rejoicing one ... He said, 'He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully' (II Cor. 9:6) ... In this way the widow outweighed many talents by the two mites, for her spirit was large.

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXI on Romans XII. B#55, pp. 501, 502.*

### Second Epistle Heb 13:7-16

#### **GOSPEL: ST. MATTHEW 9: 1-8**

So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, "This Man blasphemes!" But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"--then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.

#### **JESUS HEALS THE PARALYTIC**

The Gospel reading of last Sunday told us how the Gadarenes went out to meet Jesus and how they asked Him to "depart out of their coasts." And this happened because all of them were infected with one sin, the passion for profit, the love of money. This was an insatiable thirst for wealth, more and more of it. And wealth came to them through large herds of swine which were grazing in their pastures. But according to Jewish Law, they had no right to keep them. In this was their sin, and they lived in sin, to satisfy only this passion, this idol of getting rich. And this passion seemed to unite them all. See how the Gospel says: "And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus and...besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts" (Mt. 8:34).

Yet not all inhabitants of this town were bad people. Undoubtedly, among them were those who wanted to see Jesus, who wanted to listen to His teaching, and maybe were ready to believe in Him. Salvation was so close, so very close. But this idol, this passion for profit enslaved them; and instead of asking the Lord to remain in their town, they asked Him to go away. They were already deprived of their freedom of will; through sin they were enslaved, a spiritual paralysis possessed them. The Gospel continues, "And He entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into His own city. And, behold, they brought to Him a paralytic, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the paralytic; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mt. 9:1-2).

There is physical paralysis, but there is also spiritual paralysis. Being paralysed physically we want to do something, but either our hand or our foot does not move. But being spiritually paralysed even to think is difficult, and we don't want to do anything—we lose heart. There is a desire to fulfill a commandment of Christ, and yet we cannot; something is interfering, something is holding us back. And instead of Christ abiding in our heart—there is a storm, and Christ goes away.

What motivated the Gadarenes to ask Christ to leave their land? Sin—the passion for profit. And this sin brought them into spiritual paralysis, and they did not have enough spiritual fortitude to detain Christ with them.

So it happens to us. The only reason is sin. And sin is not only love of money. There is a whole variety of rays from this "black diamond." This means laziness, pride, vain talking, lying, condemnation, gluttony, anger, irritability, cruelty, any kind of impurity, despondency and still more and more. And we all suffer from these sins: whoever has any of these, this is sin. And this is what brings us to spiritual weakness, to spiritual paralysis. Let us look within ourselves and let us honestly recognise that, like the Gadarenes, we all live in spiritual weakness, in spiritual paralysis.

But let us not despond. The Gospel today gives us great comfort. With what words does Christ heal the paralytic? "Thy sins be forgiven thee." This means that in bodily paralysis, also, the reason is often sin. And in spiritual paralysis, sin is always the reason. All you have to do is find this sin, this passion which stands between us and Christ; take it to the Lord and say: "Lord, heal me!" Then the Lord will tell us as He did the paralytic: "Thy sins be forgiven thee.... Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house" (Mt. 9:5-6).

And the storm will calm down, will go away from the heart, and Christ will fill it with quiet joy. The weakness will disappear and a new energy will appear in us, a new life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei*

### Second Gospel - John 17:1-13

## Saints of the Week

**July / 1 August --Our Holy Mother Macrina** - The eldest sister of St Basil the Great and St Gregory of Nyssa, she was as a girl betrothed to a young nobleman and, when her betrothed died, Macrina vowed never to enter into marriage, saying: 'It is not right for a girl, having once been betrothed, to turn to another; according to natural law there must be one marriage, as there are one birth and one death.' She justified this by her belief in the resurrection of the dead, regarding her betrothed not as dead, but as alive in God. 'It is a sin and a shame', she said, 'if the spouse does not keep faith when the partner goes to distant climes.' Then, with her mother Emilia, she became a nun in a monastery of virgins, where she lived in asceticism with the other nuns. They lived by the work of their hands, devoting the greater part of their time to pondering on God, to prayer and to a ceaseless lifting-up of their minds to Him. After a time, her mother died, and then her brother Basil. In the ninth month after Basil's death, Gregory came to visit his sister and found her on her deathbed. At the time of her death, Macrina made this prayer to God: 'Thou, O Lord, givest rest to our bodies in the sleep of death for a little time, then Thou wilt waken them again with the Last Trump. Forgive me, and grant that, when my soul is parted from my body, it may be presented before Thee stainless and without sin, and that it may be as incense before Thee.' She then made the sign of the Cross on her brow, eyes, face and heart, and breathed her last. She entered into rest in the Lord in 379.

**Uncovering of the Relics of Saint Seraphim, Wonderworker of Sarov:** The glorification of Saint Seraphim of Sarov (January 2), took place in 1903, seventy years after his repose. On July 3, 1903 Metropolitan Anthony of Saint Petersburg, assisted by Bishop Nazarius of Nizhni-Novgorod and Bishop Innocent of Tambov, transferred the saint's relics from their original burial place to the church of Saints Zosimus and Sabbatius. Tsar Nicholas II and Tsarina Alexandra provided a new cypress coffin to receive the relics. This cypress coffin was then placed inside an oak coffin and remained in the church until the day of the saint's glorification. At noon on July 16, the first day of the festivities, Metropolitan Anthony offered a Memorial Service for the ever-memorable Hieromonk Seraphim in the Dormition Cathedral. Services also took place in the monastery's other churches. The next day Metropolitan Anthony and Bishop Nazarius served a Memorial Liturgy in the Dormition Cathedral. At 5:00 that afternoon, the bells of Sarov began to ring, announcing the arrival of Tsar Nicholas and his family. Metropolitan Anthony greeted them and then led them to the Dormition Cathedral for a Service of Thanksgiving. The royal family attended the early Liturgy on July 18th and received the Holy Mysteries. Later that morning, the final Memorial Service for the repose of Hieromonk Seraphim's soul was offered in the Cathedral. These would be the last prayers offered for him as a departed servant of God. From that time forward, prayers would be addressed to him as a saint. At 6 P.M. the bells rang for Vigil, the first service with hymns honoring Saint Seraphim, and during which his relics would be exposed for public veneration.

At the time of the Litia during Vespers, the saint's coffin was carried from the church of Saints Zosimus and Sabbatius and into the Dormition Cathedral. Several people were healed of various illnesses during this procession. During Matins, as "Praise ye the Name of the Lord" was sung, the coffin was opened. After the Gospel, Metropolitan Anthony and the other hierarchs kissed the holy relics. They were followed by the royal family, the officiating clergy, and all the people in the cathedral.

On July 19, the saint's birthday, the late Liturgy began at 8 o'clock. At the Little Entrance, twelve Archimandrites lifted the coffin from the middle of the church, carried it around the altar, then placed it into a special shrine. The long awaited event was accompanied by numerous miraculous healings of the sick, who had gathered at Sarov in large numbers. More than 200,000 people came to Sarov from all across Russia.

The festivities at Sarov came to an end with the dedication of the first two churches to Saint Seraphim. The first church to be consecrated was over his monastic cell in Sarov. The second church was consecrated on July 22 at the Diveyevo convent. In 1991, Saint Seraphim's relics were rediscovered after being hidden in a Soviet anti-religious museum for seventy years. Widely esteemed in his lifetime, Saint Seraphim is one of the most beloved saints of the Orthodox Church.

**New Martyr Bishop Victor of Glazov** - Victor (Ostovidov) was the son of a church chanter. He entered a monastery early in life and spent many years there. Nonetheless, he acquired also a good theological education and in 1912 published a detailed study on "The New Theologians," criticizing a new theological trend that had found expression particularly in the book of Metropolitan (later "Patriarch") Sergius, *The Doctrine of Salvation* (Kazan, 1898). After the Revolution of 1917 he was a vicar bishop of the Vyatka diocese, with the title of Glazov and Votkinsk, with his headquarters in Vyatka. In 1922 he was arrested and was in prison until 1925. When the "Declaration" of 1927 came out his was the first voice of protest, and his flock joined him in separating from Metr. Sergius, which led to his arrest and incarceration in the concentration camp of Solovki, where he was from 1928 to 1930, working as a bookkeeper at the rope factory a mile from the main Kremlin of the former monastery of Solovki. The little house where he lived and worked was located in a clearing of the forest; deep within this forest he celebrated secret church services with other members of the Catacomb Church. In Solovki, despite the tragic state of Soviet Russia, Bishop Victor preserved an optimistic view of the future and even tried to infect with this the more realistic Bishop Maxim of Serpukhov. But within a few years this optimism apparently vanished, for a witness who saw him in the spring of 1931 at the concentration camp of Mai Guba in the Far North heard him say: "Ahead there is nothing but suffering." In the summer of the same year he was released from this camp and exiled for three years to the bank of the Onega River in the Archangelsk region, where, according to some reports, he was in contact with the catacomb hierarchs, Metropolitan Joseph and Bishop Damaskin. Late in 1933 he was sent to an even more remote exile in Siberia, and after this nothing more was ever heard of him. But if little is known of the life and sufferings of this new confessor, his courageous and uncompromising spirit is set forth in the documents which he has left behind, which accuse Sergianism as a profound error that denies the very nature of the Church of Christ. Our Holy Father Dius; St Milica (Militsa), Princess of Serbia; Commemoration of Stephen the Tall.

**20 July / 2 August -The Holy Prophet Elijah** - a man who saw God, a wonderworker and a zealot for faith in God, Elijah was of the tribe of Aaron, from the city of Tishba, whence he was known as 'the Tishbite'. When Elijah was born, his father Sabah saw angels of God around the child, swaddling it with fire and feeding it with flames. This was a foreshadowing of Elijah's fiery character and his God-given fiery powers. He spent his whole youth in prayer and meditation, withdrawing often to the desert to ponder and pray in tranquillity. At that time, the Jewish Kingdom was divided into two unequal parts: the Kingdom of Judah consisted only of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with its capital at Jerusalem, while the Kingdom of Israel consisted of the other ten tribes, with its capital at Samaria. The former kingdom was ruled by the descendants of Solomon, and the latter by the descendants of Jeroboam, a servant of Solomon's. The prophet Elijah came into the greatest conflict with the Israelite king, Ahab, and his evil wife Jezebel, for they worshipped idols and turned the people from the service of the one, living God. On top of this, Jezebel, being a Syrian, persuaded her husband to build a temple to the Syrian god, Baal, and appointed many priests to the service of this false god. Elijah performed many miracles by the power of God: he closed the heavens, that no rain should fall for three years and six months; called down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice to his God, while the priests of Baal were unable to do this; brought rain from the heavens at his prayers; miraculously multiplied corn and oil in the widow's house at Zarephath, and restored her dead son to life; prophesied to Ahab that the dogs would lick up his blood, and to Jezebel that the dogs would devour her—which came to pass; and performed many other miracles and foretold many events. He talked with God on Horeb, and heard His voice in the calm after the great wind. At the time of his death, he took Elisha and appointed him his heir as a prophet; he parted the Jordan with his mantle and was finally borne to heaven in a fiery chariot drawn by fiery horses. He appeared, together with Moses, to our Lord Jesus Christ on Tabor. At the end of the world, Elijah will appear again, to break the power of antichrist (Rev. 11). St Elias, Patriarch of Jerusalem and St Flavian, Patriarch of Antioch; St. Ethelwida, widow of King Alfred the Great (9th c.).

**21 July / 3 August -Our Holy Fathers Simeon and John** - these two young men left their homes and kinsfolk: Simeon his old mother and John his wife, and were made monks in the community of St Gerasim, at the hands of Abbot Nikon. They went off into the desert, where they spent many years in the strictest asceticism. They mortified their bodies with this asceticism until they were like two pieces of dry wood. One day, Simeon said to John that, at God's command, he must leave the desert and return to the company of men, there to serve God. John gave him this advice: 'Keep your heart from all that you see in the world. Whatever there may be that touches your hand, let it not take hold of your heart. When food passes your lips, let not your heart be sweetened by it. If your feet have to move, let there be peace within you. Whatever you do outwardly, let your mind remain tranquil. Pray for me, that God may not part us from each other in the world to come.' Holy Simeon accepted his friend's advice, embraced him and then left the desert and went among men, to teach them through folly and turn them to the Christian faith. He made himself appear mad to men, but his heart was a temple of the Holy Spirit, a temple of unceasing prayer. He had abundant gifts from God, having discernment into all men's secrets, both close at hand and afar off, and healed men of evil spirits and other infirmities. Dancing through the streets like a mad-man, he drew near to people and whispered their sins in their ears, calling them to repentance. He appeared to sinners in dreams, reprimanding them for their sins and calling them also to repentance. Thus St Simeon appeared in a dream to a pagan actor, Bali, who publicly mocked the holy things of the Christians. He rebuked him and threatened him, and Bali repented and became a good Christian. A dissolute youth went out of his mind with lust. Seeing him, St Simeon, feigning madness, struck him a blow on the face, and said: 'Do not commit adultery!' At that moment, the unclean spirit left the young man and he was healed;

**The Holy Prophet Ezekiel** - the son of a priest from the city of Sarir, he was taken into captivity in Babylon with King Jehoiachin and many other Israelites. Living in captivity, Ezekiel prophesied for twenty-seven years. He was a contemporary of the Prophet Jeremiah. As Jeremiah taught and prophesied in Jerusalem, so Ezekiel taught and prophesied in Babylon. Jeremiah's prophecies were known in Babylon, as were Ezekiel's in Jerusalem. Both these holy men were in agreement in their prophecy, and they were both ill-treated and tormented by the faithless Jewish people. Ezekiel had vivid and indescribable visions. By the river Chebar, he saw the heavens open, and a cloud like fire and lightning, and four living creatures like molten copper. One of the living creatures had the face of a man, the second that of a lion, the third that of a calf and the fourth that of an eagle. The human face signified God incarnate as man, the lion's face His divinity, the calf's His sacrifice and the eagle's His Resurrection and Ascension. In another image, he was shown the resurrection of the dead. The prophet saw a valley filled with the dry bones of the dead, and when the Spirit of God came upon them, they came to life and stood on their feet. He also saw the terrible destruction of Jerusalem, when the wrath of God cut down all except those who had earlier been marked with the mark, that of the Greek Tav, our letter 'T', which is also the sign of the Cross. The malice of the Jews did not spare this holy man. Embittered against him for having denounced them, the Jews bound him to the tails of horses and he was torn asunder. He was buried in the self-same place in which Shem, the son of Noah, was buried.

**22 July / 4 August - Fast Day - St Mary Magdalene** - one of the myrrh-bearing women, and equal to the apostles, she was born in Magdala by the Lake of Gennesaret, of the tribe of Issachar. She was tormented by seven evil spirits, of which she was freed and healed by the Lord Jesus. She was a faithful follower and servant of the Lord during His earthly life, and also stood beneath the Cross on Golgotha and lamented bitterly with the most holy Mother of God. After the Lord's death, she visited His tomb three times; and when He rose again, she saw Him twice, once alone and the other time with the other myrrh-bearing women. She travelled to Rome, went before Tiberias Caesar and presented him with a red egg, greeting him with the words: 'Christ is risen !' At the same time, she denounced Pilate to Caesar for his unjust condemnation of the Lord Jesus. Caesar listened to her, and moved Pilate from Jerusalem to Gaul, where this unjust judge died under imperial displeasure after a terrible illness. After that, she returned from Rome to Ephesus, to St John the Theologian, whom she helped in his task of preaching the Gospel. With great love for the risen Lord and with great zeal, she proclaimed the holy Gospel as a true apostle of Christ. She died peacefully in Ephesus and was buried, according to tradition, in the same cave in which the seven young men (see August 4th) had been in a charmed sleep for a hundred years. They came to life, and then died. St Magdalene's relics

were then taken to Constantinople. Near the Garden of Gethsemane, there is a beautiful Russian church dedicated to St Mary Magdalene. The Hieromartyr Phocas; Our Holy Father Cornelius of Pereyaslav; The Holy Martyr Marcella.

**23 July / 5 August - The Holy Martyrs Trophimus and Theophilus and thirteen others with them** - they suffered in Lycia, in the time of the Emperor Diocletian. Because they would in no way deny Christ nor offer sacrifice to idols, they were put to manifold tortures: they were stoned, flayed with iron flails, their knees were broken and, thus tortured and more dead than alive, they were thrown into the flames, in which the power of God kept them unharmed. They were then taken from the fire and beheaded. The Lord glorified them both on earth and in His heavenly Kingdom. They suffered with honour in Lycia at the beginning of the fourth century; The Hieromartyr Apollinarius - he was a disciple of the Apostle Peter and was born in the city of Antioch. St Peter took him with him from Antioch to Rome, and, in Rome, consecrated him Bishop of Ravenna. Arriving in Ravenna, Apollinarius went into the house of a soldier, Irenaeus, whose blind son he healed and by this brought the whole family to the Christian faith. He also healed the wife of the military governor of Ravenna of a grave infirmity, and baptised his whole household. At the governor's request, Apollinarius remained in his house as his guest. Here he formed a house-church, and lived in that house for twelve years, preaching the Gospel and baptising unbelievers. He was grievously tormented in various ways by the pagan elders, but the strong right hand of God upheld him and preserved him. He was finally condemned to exile in Illyria in the Balkans. But the boat in which he was sailing capsized in a storm and, from among all the travellers, only St Apollinarius, together with two soldiers and three of his priests, was saved. Saved so miraculously, the soldiers came to believe in the power of Apollinarius' God and were baptised. Then Apollinarius began preaching the Gospel throughout the Balkans, travelling as far as the Danube. He then went to Thrace, where he spread the Gospel against great opposition. After three years of working in the Balkans, he was driven back to Italy. He went to Ravenna, where the faithful welcomed him with great joy. Hearing of this, the pagan elders wrote to Emperor Vespasian about Apollinarius, calling him a magician and asking if he should be put to death as an opponent of their gods. The Emperor replied that it was not necessary to kill him, but that he should be made to sacrifice to idols or driven from the city, for, he said: 'It is not seemly to take revenge on someone on behalf of the gods, for they can themselves be revenged on their enemies if they are angered.' But, in spite of this imperial decree, the pagans assaulted Apollinarius and stabbed him with daggers. This servant of God died of his wounds and went to the Kingdom of God. His relics are preserved in Ravenna, in the church dedicated to him.

**"Joy of All Who Sorrow" (with coins), which was at the glass factory in Petersburg** - This image was glorified in 1888 in Petersburg, when lightning hit a chapel during a terrible thunderstorm, but the holy icon of the Queen of Heaven located therein remained unharmed; only small brass coins (groshiki [half-kopecs]), that were lying in front of the icon, stuck to it. On the site of the chapel, a church was built in 1898. The Theotokos is depicted in a specific manner, standing beneath her Son, who is in Heaven as a king, and surrounded by people and angels. In addition, specific hymns are dedicated to celebrating her role of bringing hope and salvation into the world, thus becoming joy for all who sorrow "To Thee, the champion leader, do we Thy servants dedicate a hymn of victory and thanksgiving, as ones who have been delivered from eternal death by the Grace of Christ our God Who was born of Thee and by Thy maternal mediation before Him. As Thou dost have invincible might, free us from all misfortunes and sorrowful circumstances who cry aloud: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, full of Grace, Joy of all who sorrow!" Many Orthodox parishes are named "Joy of all who Sorrow"

**24 July / 6 August - Fast Day - The Holy Martyr Christina** - Born in the city of Tyre, she was the daughter of the imperial governor, Urban, an idolater. It is not known why her parents gave her the name Christina, but it carried within itself the mystery of her future following of Christ. She knew nothing of Him until the age of eleven, but, when she reached that age, her father (wanting, because of her beauty, to hide her from the world until she was fully grown) made her live on the top floor of a high tower. He gave her every comfort — slaves and gold and silver idols to which to offer daily sacrifice. But the soul of the young Christina was weighed down and suffocated in this idolatrous atmosphere. Looking out of the window by day at the sun, and by night at the wonderful constellations of shining stars, she came, through her natural understanding, to a firm belief in the one, living God. God, in His great mercy, seeing her yearning for the truth, sent His angel to her, who signed her with the sign of the Cross, named her the bride of Christ and instructed her fully in the things of God. Then Christina smashed all the idols in her rooms, incurring her father's terrible wrath. He brought her to trial and had her tortured and thrown into prison, intending that she be beheaded on the following day. But that night, Urban, in full health, gave up the ghost and went to the grave before his daughter. After that, two of the governors, Dion and Julian, continued the interrogation of this holy maiden. Christina's courage in suffering and the marvels which were performed by the power of God brought many of the pagan inhabitants of Tyre to Christianity. During Christina's torture, Dion suddenly fell dead among the people. His successor, Julian, cut off Christina's breasts and cut out her tongue. The martyr took her tongue in her hand and threw it into Julian's face, and he was instantly blinded. Finally, her sufferings for Christ were ended under a sharp sword, but her life went on in the immortal kingdom of the angels. St Christina suffered with honour in the third century; Our Holy Father Polycarp, Abbot of the Kiev Caves;

**St. Declan, bishop of Ardmore, Ireland (5th c.)** - Born at Desi (Decies), Waterford, Ireland, 5th century. Declan, an Irish monk, was baptised by and a disciple of Saint Colman. He appears to have been an Irish evangelist before the arrival of Saint Patrick. He may have made two pilgrimages to Rome and later became the first bishop of Ardmore, a see confirmed by Patrick during the synod of Cashel in 448. Many miracles are attributed to Declan. Five miles or less to the east of Youghal Harbour, on the southern Irish coast, a short, rocky and rather elevated promontory juts, with a south-easterly trend, into the ocean [ $\pm 51^{\circ} 57' N / 7^{\circ} 43' W$ ]. Maps and admiralty charts call it Ram Head, but the real name is Ceann-a-Rama and popularly it is often styled Ardmore Head. The material of this inhospitable coast is a hard metamorphic schist which bids defiance to time and weather. Landwards the shore curves in clay cliffs to the north-east, leaving, between it and the iron headland beyond, a shallow exposed bay wherein many a proud ship has met her doom. Nestling at the north side of the headland and sheltered by the latter from Atlantic storms stands one of the most remarkable groups of ancient ecclesiastical remains in Ireland—all

that has survived of St. Declan's holy city of Ardmore. This embraces a beautiful and perfect round tower, a singularly interesting ruined church commonly called the cathedral, the ruins of a second church beside a holy well, a primitive oratory, a couple of ogham inscribed pillar stones, &c..

**25 July / 7 August - The Dormition of the Righteous Anna, the Mother of the Most Holy Mother of God;**

**St Olympias the Deaconess** - Olympias was born in Constantinople of very distinguished parents. Her father, Anysius Secundus, was a senator and her mother was the daughter of the famous nobleman Eulavius who is mentioned in the hagiography of St. Nicholas the Wonder-worker. When Olympias reached maturity, she was betrothed to a nobleman who died before the marriage took place. The emperor and the other relatives pressured Olympias to marry another, but in vain. However, she refused them this and devoted herself to a god-pleasing life, giving from her inherited estate great offerings to the churches and alms to the needy. She served as a deaconess in the Church, at first during the time of Patriarch Nectarius and, after his death, during the time of St. John Chrysostom. When Chrysostom was exiled, he counselled Olympias to remain in the church and to serve as before regardless who the patriarch after him would be. Immediately after the banishment of this great saint, someone started a fire in the Great Church [The Church of the Divine Wisdom Hagia Sophia] and the fire consumed many prominent buildings in the capital. The enemies of Chrysostom accused this holy woman of initiating this malicious fire. Olympias was banished from Constantinople to Nicomedia where she died in the year 410 A.D., requesting in her testament that her body be placed in a box and cast into the sea and wherever the water tosses it up, there she is to be buried. The coffin was cast ashore in the city of Vrochthoi, where there existed a church dedicated to the Apostle Thomas. From her relics, great healing miracles appeared throughout the centuries. The exiled Chrysostom wrote beautiful letters to the exiled Olympias which, even today, serve as a great comfort to all those who suffer for the sake of God's justice. Among other things, Chrysostom writes to Olympias: "Now I am very elated not only because you were relieved from infirmity, but more so, that you are nobly enduring all difficulties referring to them as trivialities which is characteristic of a soul full of power and abounding in the rich fruits of courage. For you not only courageously are enduring misfortune rather you do not even notice it when it comes and without exertion, without labour and disturbance not even talking about it to others but rejoicing and triumphing over it. That serves as the greatest wisdom" (Letter VI). ;

**Our Holy Mother Eupraxia the Virgin** - Eupraxia was the daughter of Antigonus, a nobleman of Constantinople and a relative of Emperor Theodosius the Great. Her mother, a young widow, with Eupraxia settled in Egypt and visited the monasteries there distributing alms and praying to God. By her fervent desire, the seven-year-old Eupraxia was tonsured a nun. The older she got the more she imposed upon herself the heavy burden of mortification. At one time, she fasted for forty days. She reposed in 413 A.D, in her thirtieth year. She possessed the great grace of God and healed the most difficult illnesses.

**Commemoration of the Fifth Ecumenical Council** - This Council was convened in Constantinople during the reign of Emperor Justinian the Great in the year 553 A.D. All the heresies of the Monophysites were condemned at this Council as well as the heretical writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus and Origen (his teaching against the resurrection of the dead).

Tropar of St. Nessian Tone 2: O thou who didst converse with St. Patrick/ and follow him in the monastic way:/ as thou didst guide monks to Christ our God,/ pray that our souls may be saved.