

8th Sunday After Pentecost

Martyr Callinic

29 July / 11 August



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.

Tropar of St Callinic tone 3: O Callinic, thou didst receive a worthy crown and Prize/ for thy victory over tyrants,/ for thou didst finish thy course and wast glorified as a noble athlete./ O glorious Martyr,/ entreat Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

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.

Kondak of St Callinic tone 2: Thou hast rightly inherited the joyful dwellings on high,/ for thou wast aflame with love for Christ, O Callinic./ Therefore thou didst bravely endure the fire./ As thou dost stand in God's presence intercede for us all.

Matins Gospel VIII

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1: 10-18

10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. 12 Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptised in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I baptised none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 lest anyone should say that I had baptised in my own name. 16 Yes, I also baptised the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptised any other. 17 For Christ did not send me to baptise, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. 18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

IS CHRIST DIVIDED?

The emphatic force of the word 'schism,' I mean the name itself, was a sufficient accusation. For it was not that they had become many parts, each entire within itself, but rather the One Body ...had perished ...'That each one of you says,' for the corruption did not pervade a part, but the whole of the Church ...By a kind of divine art he does away with their swelling pride on this point, not with the efficacy of baptism, but with the folly of those who were puffed up at having been baptisers: first, by showing that the Gift is not theirs, and secondly by thanking God for it. For Baptism truly is a great thing, but its greatness is not the work of the person baptising, but of Him who is invoked in the Baptism ...Great indeed is Baptism, and without baptism it is impossible to obtain the kingdom...But prove to me that Peter and Paul were eloquent. You cannot: for they were 'unlearned and ignorant men!'

St. John Chrysostom. Homily III on 1 Corinthians I, 1, 3, 6, 8. B#56, pp. 10-14

The Gospel According To St. Matthew 14: 14-22

And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." He said, "Bring them here to Me." Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.

FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of this morning's Gospel in the scheme of the Orthodox Sunday Lectionary. Of all the signs and wonders that Jesus performed, it is this Feeding Miracle alone that is recorded by all four of the Evangelists (Matt. 14:14-22; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14). Moreover, both St. Matthew and St. Mark record still a second miraculous feeding (Matt. 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10). Clearly, the Holy Evangelists in concert are directing our attention to what is proclaimed as a keystone Gospel Lesson in our Christian lives. The Feeding of the Five Thousand is a cornerstone Gospel event, a foundation both for understanding liturgy as well as celebrating Scriptures.

The New Testament Lessons are always careful to show how Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament expectations, both in the Law and the Prophets. Through Moses God fed the children of Israel in the wilderness with manna, the bread from heaven (Ex. 16). Jesus reveals that the Old Testament miracle is a shadow of Himself, now brought to light. He Himself is both the Bread from Heaven and the Giver of that Bread.

Elisha fed 100 men with the miraculous multiplication of the bread of the first-fruits (2 Kings 4:42ff). This Old Testament sign was a heralding of the consummation of time, the coming of the messianic age. Jesus fulfilled; the Messiah has come.

All four Evangelists record the Miracle of the Multiplication of the Loaves because they, together with their fellow-Christians of the Early Church, saw in this feeding an anticipation of the Holy Eucharist (Matt. 26:26ff). There remains to this day in the Orthodox Church a liturgical connection; we anticipate the Holy Eucharist of the Great Feast Days with the blessing of the five loaves, wheat, wine and oil in the Vigil before the Feast, asking Christ to multiply these gifts of feeding and healing here, and in all the world.

This feeding miracle directs our attention to the words of our Lord, as He repeatedly speaks to us of the salvation He is bringing as BREAD. In the Old Testament, "bread" is consistently used as the symbol of salvation, truth and life. And so Jesus says as He is about to give Himself up for our salvation: I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me (John 14:6). This fulfils the revelation of Himself when Jesus explains the meaning of the feeding of the five thousand, saying, I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven. Christ is the Bread of Salvation, the Way, the Truth and the Life. If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live forever; and the Bread that I shall give is My Flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world (John 6:51). He Who was born in Bethlehem's manger (Bethlehem means "House of Bread") is the Food of Life Everlasting.

It is in the breaking of bread in Emmaus (Luke 24:30-31) and in breaking bread by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:13) that our Lord Jesus revealed Himself to His Disciples after His Resurrection. It is not in the Scriptures, but in the Breaking of Bread that Christ appears and is known, Himself explaining the meaning of the Scriptures. Repeatedly, bread is given to us as a sign of Christ's Presence: in the Artos (Bread) of the Holy Paschal Bright Week, the breaking of the Kolach (Bread) at the Slavas (Family Name's Day Feasts), in the Bread of the Veliya (Little Christmas Eve Supper), in the simple piety we were taught as children for bread at the family table (remember how we were taught to handle bread with respect, kissing it with reverence?).

Every simple act of eating together as family, as friends gathered in Christian fellowship, anticipates the Holy Eucharist and the appearance of the Resurrected Christ. This is at the heart of the inner meaning of this morning's Gospel. Christians breaking bread together partake of the "hidden manna" of which Christ speaks in the Book of Revelation (2:17). Indeed, pious Christians would keep an extra place set at their table for family feasts; for Christ says, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to dine with him, and he with Me (Rev. 3:20).

This is what Jesus Christ our Lord does for us in the multiplication of the loaves. But He also commands us to do something in this morning's Gospel. The multitude followed Christ into the wilderness to hear His preaching and receive His healing; now it was late, and they were hungry, the Disciples wanted to send them away so that they could find something to eat (Matt. 14:16). Christ places the burden of finding something to eat upon His Disciples. He does not permit them to send the hungry crowd who had followed Him empty away. They would have to collect an offering—no matter how meagre or small—for Christ to bless and multiply.

What would have happened if the Disciples took no collection, or if those who had the five loaves and two fish were unwilling to share them? One shudders to think of how we can prevent miracles from happening by sending people away rather than asking them to stay, and offer what little they have so that Christ can bless their offering and multiply it for the nourishment of all, with plenty left over, and this is the meaning of the twelve baskets full left over: that there was more than enough without skimping, one basket for each of the Twelve Disciples, each entrusted in turn to share the blessed abundance coming from Christ, and from them, still to others.

Finally, you see, the "Litya"—originally that procession or exodus into the courtyard or garden (or into the streets as St. John Chrysostom did)—tells us that the blessing of the bread, wheat, wine and oil in remembrance of the multiplication of the loaves is meant not just to sustain us to stay on for the Feast Day Vigil. Can you see that out of the abundance of what we receive we must share with those who are still "outside"? There is a marvelous sermon from St. John Chrysostom telling us how sacred indeed is every human altar set up in every street and crossroad. You must be that human altar, my dearest

friends, from which the hungry are fed and the infirm are healed and the good news of salvation is preached. Let your self-giving be the human altar from which Christ offers Himself for each and all. Amen.

S.A.G.

Saints of the Week

July 29 / August 11 — The Holy Martyr Callinicus - born in Cilicia and brought up in Christian piety, he left all and began to preach the Gospel. He was arrested in Ancyra by the pagan governor, Sacerdos. When the governor, in fury, threatened him with torture if he would not worship idols, St Callinicus replied: 'Every torture for my God is as welcome to me as bread is to a hungry man.' After harsh torture and beating, the governor shod him with iron shoes, with the nails sticking inwards, and ordered that he be driven out to the town of Gangra, for he did not dare to have him further tortured or killed in Ancyra, as many men, beholding the heroic endurance of the man of God, were turning to the Christian faith. On the way, the soldiers became thirsty and there was no water. St Callinicus prayed to God and brought forth water from a rock. When they arrived in Gangra, the torturers threw Callinicus into a fiery furnace. The saint prayed to God, saying: 'I thank Thee, O heavenly Father, that Thou makest me worthy in this hour to die for Thy holy Name ! ' He then went into the fire. When the fire was extinguished, his dead body was found whole and untouched by the flames. He suffered with honour, and was crowned with a wreath of eternal glory, in about 250. The Holy Martyr Seraphima; The Holy Martyr Theodotia; The Holy Martyr Eustathius of Mtskhet; St. Olaf, king of Norway (1030).

July 30 / August 12 — The Holy Apostles Silas, Silvanus, Crescens, Epauetus and Andronicus - these are all among the Seventy. St Silas was sent from Jerusalem to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, to settle a quarrel among the faithful concerning circumcision: namely, whether or not it was necessary to circumcise pagans who had embraced Christianity (Acts 15:22). After that, Silas travelled with Paul around Asia and Macedonia, and was installed as Bishop of Corinth, where he died peacefully. Silvanus helped the two greatest apostles (I Pet. 5:12; II Cor. 1:19) . As bishop in Salonica, he laboured much and suffered much, until he exchanged the earthly life for the heavenly. Crescens was a fellow-worker with the Apostle Paul (II Tim. 4:10), and then bishop in Galatia and a missionary in Gaul, where he died a martyr for Christ under Trajan. St Epauetus is mentioned by the Apostle Paul (Rom. 16:5), and became Bishop of Carthage. Andronicus (Rom. 16:7), Bishop of Pannonia, is also commemorated separately on May 17th; The Hieromartyr Valentine; The Hieromartyr Polychronius, Bishop of Babylon; St John the Soldier; Our Holy Mother Angelina; Birthday of the New Martyr Crown Prince Alexis.

July 31 / August 13 — Forefeast of the Procession of the Precious and Life-giving Cross of the Lord — Righteous Eudocimus - born in Cappadocia of devout parents, Basil and Eudocia. In the time of the Emperor Theophilus (829-842), Eudocimus was a young army officer. Even as a soldier, he endeavoured with his whole heart to live according to the precepts of the Gospel. He kept his purity unstained and avoided converse with any woman except his mother. He was liberal to the poor, assiduous in the reading of holy books and yet more assiduous in prayer to God. He fled vain chatter and idle talk. 'Among all the chaos and vanity of the world, he was like a lily among thistles, and like gold in the furnace.' For his rare virtues, the Emperor made him military governor of Cappadocia. In this high state, Eudocimus strove to be righteous before God and man . By God's providence, he died early, at the age of thirty-three, and his relics were found to have healing power. An insane man touched his tomb and was healed, and a paralytic child stood upright and was made whole. After eighteen months, his mother opened his coffin, and found his body as though still alive, with no mark of corruption—and a wonderful fragrance arose from the saint's body. His relics were later translated to Constantinople and buried in the new church of the Holy Mother of God, built by Eudocimus's parents.

Righteous Joseph of Arimathea - a rich man, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin and a secret follower of Christ (Matt. 27:57; Jn 19:38), took Christ's body down from the Cross together with Nicodemus, and laid it in his own new tomb. For this, he was fettered by the Jews and cast into prison. The risen Lord appeared to him and brought him to belief in His Resurrection. The Jews then released him from prison and drove him from his fatherland. He travelled around the world, preaching the Gospel of Christ, and took this Good News to England, where he entered into rest in the Lord. The Holy Martyr Julitta; St John the Exarch; St. Germanus, bishop of Auxerre (448).

St. Neot, hermit in Cornwall (c.877) - the son of King Ethelwulf of Kent and Wessex. Like Zaccheus, who had to climb up in a tree in order to see our Saviour, St Neot was very short. When he was old enough to become a soldier, he was not allowed to join the army because he was too short, so he decided to become a soldier for Christ instead, and he became a monk. At first, Saint Neot lived in the Glastonbury monastery. Here, he was made a presbyter, but because he was so short, he had to stand on a little stool when he served the Divine Liturgy. The saint was a great struggler, fasting, praying and reading the Scripture all the time. Because of his great struggles and faith, God gave him many gifts of Grace. He healed people of both bodily and spiritual illnesses, and he had great wisdom. Soon, he became famous, and people from all over Britain came to see him. St Neot did not like for all these crowds of people to come to him. He no longer had time for his prayers, and besides, he was afraid that he might fall into pride. With the blessing of his elder, the saint took one other monk, Father Barrey, and went to a wild valley in the deep forests of Cornwall. Even here, however, the saint became famous, and people walked through the dense forests to see the saint, ask for his prayers and his help. Even the great King Alfred came to the saint and asked for a blessing. The saint did not bless the king, but began to chastise him for his proud harshness and sinful way of life. Then the saint prophesied that King Alfred would be beaten in war, "but if you repent of your sins and help the poor, God will help you and you will finally have victory over your enemies." This happened just as the saint foretold. King Alfred had to flee from his enemies, the Danes, but the saint (who had reposed the year before) appeared to him one night and comforted him. "Because you have wept for your sins, God will help you. You will be given victory on the Seventh Week after Pascha." Not only did King

Alfred receive his victory, but his enemy, King Guthrum of Denmark was later baptised at Cirncester, as were many of his soldiers. The rest of King Alfred's reign passed in peace, justice and mercy. When the saint reposed in Christ, a wonderful fragrance came from his body.

August 1 / 14 — Procession of the Precious and Life-giving Cross of the Lord — (First of the three "Feasts of the Saviour" in August) Beginning of the **Dormition Fast - Wine & Oil Allowed - Lesser Blessing of Water** (Epistle: 1st Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians 14: 6-19; Gospel: St. Matthew 20: 17-28) Prayer: O Lord our God, who art mighty in counsel, and wonderful in deeds, the Creator of all things, who keepest thy covenant and thy mercy unto those who love thee and keep thy commandments, and receivest the contrite tears of all who are in distress: (For this cause thou didst come in the similitude of a servant, scorning not our image, but giving true health to the body, and saying, thou art healed, sin no more; and with clay thou didst make the man's eyes whole, and having commanded him to wash, didst make him, by thy word, to rejoice in the light, putting to confusion the floods of passion of enemies, and drying up the bitter sea of the life of the same, and subduing the waves of sensual desires heavy to be endured): Do Thou, the same King who lovest mankind, who hast granted unto us to clothe ourselves in the garment of snowy whiteness, by water and the Spirit, send down upon us thy blessing, through partaking of this water, and through sprinkling therewith, washing away the defilement of passions. Yea, we beseech thee, visit thou our weakness, O Good One, and heal our infirmities, both spiritual and bodily; by thy mercy; Through the prayers ...

Holy Seven Maccabees, their Mother Solomonia and Eleazar the Priest - they all suffered for the purity of the Israelite faith under King Antiochus, called by some 'Epiphanes'—God manifest—and by others, 'Epimanes'—mad. For the great sins of Jerusalem, and especially for the wresting-away of the high-priestly power and the wickedness that ensued, the Lord let loose great calamity on the Holy City. Antiochus desired after that to bring the Jews to idolatry in place of their faith in the one, living God, and did all he could to this end. He was helped in his intention by several disaffected high priests and elders of Jerusalem. The king once came himself to Jerusalem and commanded that all Jews eat pork, which was against the Law of Moses and was therefore a recognisable sign of apostasy from the Jewish faith. The elder Eleazar, a priest and one of the seventy translators of the Old Testament into Greek, refused to eat pork. He was therefore tortured and burned. Returning to Antioch, the king took the seven young men, the Maccabees, and their mother Solomonia (II Macc. 6:18-7:41). The seven Maccabean brothers were called: Avim, Antonius, Eleazar, Gurius, Eusebon, Achim and Marcellus. Before their mother's eyes, the wicked king tortured her sons one after the other, flaying the skin from their faces and then throwing them into the flames. They all endured torture and death with courage, remaining steadfast in their faith. Finally their mother, when she saw her three-year-old son in the fire, threw herself into the flames and perished, giving her soul into God's hands. They all suffered with honour for their faith in the one, living God in about 167BC; The Nine Holy Martyrs: Leontius, Attus, Alexander, Cindeus, Mnesitheus, Cyriacus, Menaeus, Catunus and Eucleus; St. Nicholas, enlightener of Japan;

St. Ethelwold, bishop of Winchester (984) - born there of good parentage in the early years of the tenth century; d. 1 Aug., 984. After a youth spent at the court of King Athelstan, Ethelwold placed himself under Elphege the Bald, Bishop of Winchester, who gave him the tonsure and ordained him priest along with Dunstan. At Glastonbury, where he was dean under Saint Dunstan, he was a mirror of perfection. In 955 he became Abbot of Abingdon; and 29 November, 963, was consecrated Bishop of Winchester by Dunstan, with whom and Oswald of Worcester he worked zealously in combating the general corruption occasioned by the Danish inroads. At Winchester, both in the old and in his new minster, he replaced the evil-living seculars with monks and refounded the ancient nunnery. His labours extended to Chertsey, Milton (Dorsetshire), Ely, Peterborough, and Thorney; expelling the unworthy, rebuilding and restoring; to the rebellious "terrible as a lion", to the meek "gentler than a dove". The epithets "father of monks" and "benevolent bishop" summarize Ethelwold's character as reformer and friend of Christ's poor. Though he suffered much from ill-health, his life as scholar, teacher, prelate, and royal counsellor was ever austere. He was buried in Winchester cathedral, his body being translated later by Elphege, his successor. Abingdon monastery in the twelfth century had relics of Ethelwold.

August 2 / 15 — **Dormition Fast —The Finding and Translation of the Relics of St Stephen** - when the wicked Jews stoned St Stephen to death, they left his body for the dogs to eat. But God's providence disposed otherwise. The martyr's body lay in an open place outside the town a night and two days, then, on the second night, Gamaliel, Paul's teacher and a secret follower of Christ, came and took his body to Caphargamala, and there buried it in a cave on his own land. Gamaliel buried his friend Nicodemus, who died lamenting over Stephen's grave, in the same cave. He also buried his godson Abibus there and, in accordance with his wishes, was buried there himself. Centuries passed, and no-one living knew the whereabouts of Stephen's grave. But in 415, in the time of Patriarch John of Jerusalem, Gamaliel appeared three times in a dream to a priest, Lucian, in Caphargamala, and told him in minute detail about the burial of all the above-mentioned, indicating precisely the forgotten place of their burial. Moved by this dream, Lucian informed the Patriarch and, with his blessing, went with a group of men and dug up the four graves, Gamaliel having already told him in the dream which grave was which. A strong and fragrant odour from the relics of these saints filled the cave. St Stephen's relics were solemnly translated to Sion and there buried with ceremony, and the relics of the others were taken to a hill above the cave and laid to rest in a church there. Many healings of the sick were performed in those days over the relics of St Stephen. Later, they were taken to Constantinople. Thus the Lord crowned with great glory him who first shed his blood for His name; The Hieromartyr Stephen, Pope of Rome;

Blessed Basil the Fool for Christ of Moscow - Basil's father was named Jacob and his mother Anna. At age sixteen, he dedicated himself to a life of asceticism as a "Fool for Christ" and in this difficult mortification persevered for seventy-two years. Altogether, he lived to be eighty-eight years old. He traveled barefooted, bareheaded and in rags. He did not have any permanent dwelling place. He admonished sinners, reprimanded the noblemen, prophesied the truth and had visions of distant places. Having suffered greatly from hunger, frost and from the insults of men, Blessed Basil presented his holy soul to

God. Tsar Ivan, with the Metropolitan, attended his funeral. He is buried in Moscow in the Church of the Most-holy Birth-giver of God, later named after him; Fr. Alexis (Medvedkov), priest of France, whose relics are incorrupt (1934).

August 3 / 16 — Dormition Fast — Holy Salome the Myrrh-Bearer - the mother of the holy Apostles James and John, the wife of Zebedee and daughter of Joseph, the betrothed of the most holy Mother of God, she served the Lord during His earthly life, and was made worthy to be among the first bearers of the tidings of His Resurrection; Our Holy Fathers Isaac, Dalmatus and Faustus - - Isaac is commemorated separately on May 30th. St Dalmatus was first an officer under the Emperor Theodosius the Great, who held him in great honour, but, when his spirit awakened within him, he scorned all that is of this world, abandoning his rank, and took his only son Faustus off to the outskirts of Constantinople, to St Isaac's community, where they were both tonsured as monks. Dalmatus consecrated himself utterly to please God in his life, which was a joy to the elder, Isaac. When Isaac came to the hour of death, he installed Dalmatus as abbot in his place, and the community later came to be called after Dalmatus. He sometimes fasted for forty days at a time, conquering by his fasting the invisible power of the demons. He took part in the Third Ecumenical Council in 431, and battled against the Nestorian heresy. Being pleasing to God, he entered peacefully into rest in the 5th century. His son Faustus supported his father in everything and, after a godly life, died peacefully in that community; Our Holy Father Cosmas the Eunuch; Our Holy Father Antony the Roman.

4 / 17 August - Dormition Fast — The Seven Holy Youths of Ephesus - the "Seven Sleepers"-Maximilian, Jamblicus, Martinian, John, Dionysius, Exacustodian (Constantine), and Antoninus - There was a great persecution of Christians under the Emperor Decius. The Emperor himself went to Ephesus, and there prepared a riotous festival in honour of dead idols and also a vicious slaughter of Christians. Seven youths, all of them soldiers, held themselves apart from the foul offering of sacrifice, and wholeheartedly begged the one God to save the Christian people. They were the sons of the most eminent administrator in Ephesus, and their names were: Maximilian, Jamblichus, Martinian, John, Dionysius, Exacustodianus and Antoninus. When they were accused before the Emperor, they hid on a hill called Ochlon outside Ephesus, concealing themselves in a cave. When the Emperor discovered this, he commanded that the cave be walled-in. God then, in His far-seeing providence, let a miraculous and long-lasting sleep fall on the young men. The imperial courtiers Theodore and Rufinus, secret Christians, caused a copper catafalque with leaden plaques to be made, on which were written the names of these young men and their death by martyrdom under the Emperor Decius. More than two hundred years then passed. In the time of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger (408-450), there arose a great dispute about the resurrection of the dead, for there were some who doubted the resurrection. Emperor Theodosius was greatly grieved at this dispute among the faithful, and prayed God that He would in some way reveal the truth to the people. At that time of altercation in the Church, some shepherds of a certain Adolius, who owned Ochlon, began building pens for their sheep and took stone after stone from this cave. Then the youths awoke from their sleep, young and in full health as they had fallen asleep. This marvel was noised abroad on all sides, and Theodosius himself came with a great retinue and spoke apart with the young men. After a week, they again entered into sleep, the sleep of death, to await the General Resurrection. The Emperor wanted to place their bodies in golden coffins, but they appeared to him in a dream and told him to leave them in the earth, as they had been; St. Cosmas of Aitolia, Equal-to-the-Apostles.

HOMILY

About the delaying of the Dreadful Day according to the mercy of God

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness: but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Brethren, the mercy of God delays "that day which burns like a furnace, according to the words of the Prophet Malachi" (Malachi 4:1). Therefore, let the scoffers be ashamed, who scoff at the promise of God and say: "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter 3:4). God has not forgotten His promise but the sinners themselves have forgotten it. God, according to His immeasurable mercy, waits for the sinners to come to their senses, repent and to prepare themselves for that day which is not repeated. Behold that day is not like the many days which are given to men for the sake of repentance and to prepare for the encounter with God. That day is the only day and it differs from all other days, for it does not come for the sake of repentance but rather for judgment. Just as the Dreadful Judgment is only one and unrepeatable, thus is that day only one and unrepeatable.

God does not desire that any man be lost. He did not create man for death but for salvation. Is there a gardener who sows vegetables and desire that his vegetables dry out and perish? God is wiser and more compassionate than all men. God has only one desire, i.e., that all men repent and turn away from evil. How does the husbandman rejoice when his withered vineyard comes to life and again becomes green and brings forth fruit! How much more then is the joy of God and the angels of God when the souls of men, withered from sin, return and become young again from the tears of repentance and bring forth fruit of repentance.

O Lord, Merciful and Lover of Mankind, help sinners to sense Your mercy and Your pity toward them to sense and to repent to repent and to turn away from their wicked ways.

To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.