

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

## Martyr Eusignius of Antioch & Forefeast of the Transfiguration

5 / 18 August



**Resurrection Tropar, Tone 8:** Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One! / Thou didst endure the three-day burial / to free us from our sufferings! / O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee.

**Troparion of the Forefeast tone 4:** Come, you faithful, let us welcome the Transfiguration of Christ/ and let us joyfully cry as we celebrate the forefeast:/ The day of holy gladness has come./ The Lord has ascended Mount Tabor/ to radiate the beauty of His Divinity.

**Troparion of St Eusignius tone 4:** Thou wast filled with the faith of Christ,/ and in old age possessed a godly, youthful firmness./ Thou didst confess God the Word as transcendent in Essence and didst boldly rebuke the apostate's audacity./ Wherefore thou art glorified with the martyrs, O Eusignius, soldier of Christ.

**Resurrection Kondak, Tone 8:** By rising from the tomb Thou didst raise the dead and resurrect Adam/ Eve exults in Thy Resurrection, / and the world celebrates Thy rising from the dead, O Greatly Merciful One.

**Kontakion of the Forefeast tone 7:** All mortal nature is shining today with the divine Transfiguration/ and is crying with exultation:/ Christ the Saviour of all is transfigured.

**Kontakion of St Eusignius tone 8:** Today the Church glorifies the holy contests of wise Eusignius, the witness of godliness/ and she cries unceasingly: Preserve Thy servants by his intercessions, O most Merciful One.

### Matins Gospel IX

#### EPISTLE: Corinthians 3:9-17

For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, Each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

#### WE ARE GOD'S FELLOW WORKERS... YOU ARE GOD'S BUILDING

His assertion that they are one, refers to their inability to do anything without 'God who gives the increase' ...Since this had a tendency to make men more indolent - I mean all being esteemed as one - whether they had laboured much or little, observe how he sets this right. He says, 'But each will receive his own reward according to his own labour' ...Do you see how to them he has also assigned no small task, having before laid down that the whole is of God? ...For the field is not called the husbandman's, but the householder's .. Again, the building is not the workman's but the master's ...Upon this then let us build, and as a foundation let us cleave to it as a branch to a vine; and let there be no interval between us and Christ. For the branch by its adherence draws in the sustenance, and the building stands because it is cemented together ...Let us then not merely keep hold of Christ, but let us be cemented to Him (Cf. Ps.73:27)...Let us cleave to Him ...by our works ...He is 'the Head,' we are 'the body'...He is 'a foundation,' we are 'a building'; He 'a vine,' we 'branches'; He 'the Bridegroom' we 'the bride'; He 'the Shepherd,' we 'the sheep,' He is 'the Way,' we 'they who walk therein.' Again, we are 'a temple,' He 'the indweller,' He the 'first begotten,' we 'the brethren': He 'the Heir,' we 'the heirs together with Him' ...He 'the Resurrection,' we 'those who rise again'; He 'the light,' we 'the enlightened.' All these indicate unity, and they allow no void interval, not even the slightest. For he who removes but to a little distance will go on till he has become very far distant.

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily VIII on I Corinthians III, 6, 7. B#56, pp. 46-47.*

## The Gospel According To St. Matthew 14: 22-34

Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God." When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret.

St Seraphim tells us that Adam was created a living soul, he was not created dead and then brought to life, nor was he created like the animals and then raised to the image and likeness of God, but rather that "the Lord God breathed into Adam's face the breath of life, then according to Moses' word, Adam became a living soul, that is, completely and in every way like God, and, like Him forever immortal. Adam was immune to the action of the elements to such a degree that water could not drown him, fire could not burn him, the earth could not swallow him in its abysses and the air could not harm him by any kind of action whatever. Everything was subject to him as the beloved of God, as the king and lord of creation and everything looked up to him as the perfect crown of God's creatures. ... There never has been a man on earth wiser or more intelligent than he ... Adam could see and understand the Lord walking in paradise, and comprehend His words, and the conversation of the holy Angels, and the language of all beasts, birds and reptiles..." However all this was lost when Adam sinned. Because of his sin, he became more like the animals and became subject to the world of which he had previously been lord and master. And so, no longer was Adam immune to the action of the elements, now water could drown him, fire could burn him, the elements of the world would afflict him, animals would fear him and flee from him and could tear him. All this was lost to Adam and to all his descendents because of his sin.

But God did not abandon us entirely, but He, Himself, became incarnate, took on flesh as we have and became for us a second Adam, a new man, and opened to us the gates of paradise that by His grace we might not only regain our heritage for which we were created as the crown and lord of creation, but that we might surpass it becoming sons and heirs of God through Jesus Christ. In the Gospel over the past few weeks we see how it is that our Lord Jesus Christ, when He was bodily on the earth demonstrated His lordship over creation. Food multiplied at His command; at His word water turned into wine; at His touch, sickness and injury were banished; He walked upon the surface of the sea as if on dry land; at His word, the storm was calmed and the wind and the waves were stilled. At the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord which we celebrated just the other day, we heard how before the eyes of His closest disciples Jesus was transfigured and shone with His Heavenly glory and appeared to them in the midst of Moses and Elijah. And then descending from the mount following this revelation it was shown how even the spiritual world, personified by the demons who afflict man and who would destroy him, is subject to His command. This is Christ, this is the God Incarnate, this is the second Adam who has come into the world to pour out His grace upon us; to restore in Himself all those who would deny themselves and follow Him to their rightful place and lord and crown of creation and to adopt them as His own sons and daughters. He has come that we might have Life - His life, the life of the Holy Trinity - and that we might have it abundantly - that is in full and complete measure sufficient to transfigure each of us into His image and likeness. In the words of St Athanasius, "God has become man so that man might become god."

How then is this transformation accomplished, how do we sinners regain our place as the king and crown of creation, how do we ascend to the heights revealed to us by Christ? The answer is given to us in the Gospel by our Lord Himself when he says to his disciples, "if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'remove hence to yonder place' and it shall move and nothing shall be impossible to you." It is by our faith, our firm belief in Christ, that we acquire for ourselves the grace of God and are transformed into His image and likeness. The root cause then of our helplessness, the thing that holds us back is our own unbelief. The greater our faith, the greater our power to be like Christ, the less the faith, the less the power. In the Gospel today we heard how the Apostle Peter's faith appeared at first to be strong, but then his weakness was revealed. He was bold to step out of the boat and onto the waves to walk on the water to the Lord. Everything was fine, until he took his eyes off of Christ and began to look around. Then the fear and doubt began to assail him and his faith crumbled. Peter was overcome by the wind and the waves and unbelief weakened his faith, and he began to sink. And so he called out to the Lord and Jesus was there reaching out to take his hand, to lift him up and place him back in the boat where his faith could be nurtured and could become stronger. Faith then is weakened by unbelief which is itself the result of the perversion or corruption of our created nature which in turn is the result of sin. The wages of sin is death and this death shows itself in our lives as corruption which is a state of having fallen away from God and corruption, brought about by sin, in turn produces unbelief.

Therefore this lost power, this lost nearness to God, can be regained only by faith, faith and more faith. How can we strengthen our faith and thereby overcome the sin and corruption which separate us from God. How can we heal this spiritual plague? This too our Lord answers in the Gospel, when He continues His teaching on faith. When Jesus reached out to Peter, He said to him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Jesus then placed Peter back in the boat, in the midst of the other apostles, symbolically in the embrace and protection of the Church, the ark of salvation. There, while he was cared for and protected, his faith could grow and become strong.

Later, when the disciples asked Jesus why it was they could not cast out a demon, he said to them, "Because of your unbelief...this kind cometh not out but by prayer and fasting." Fasting and prayer are two pillars of faith: two living fires that burn up the evil which afflicts us. "Through fasting, all bodily passions are calmed and destroyed, especially immorality; through prayer, all other passions of the soul, heart and mind are calmed and destroyed... By fasting, the vessels of the body and soul are cleansed of their filthy contents of worldly passions and vices; by prayer, the grace of the Holy Spirit is drawn down into the empty, cleansed vessel - and the fullness of faith consists in the abiding of God's Spirit in man.... Prayer is strengthened and extended by fasting; faith is confirmed by the one and the other - and faith moves mountains, drives out devils and makes the impossible, possible."

The Church gives to us ample opportunity to fast - the four major fasting seasons of the year and then between those seasons on the Wednesdays and Fridays of each week. If we neglect fasting, then we neglect one of the means that our Lord has clearly established for the building up of our faith. Without fasting, it is possible to build a strong faith, but it is much more difficult. And so we should take advantage of every opportunity that is provided to us by the Church to fast. It is one of the primary exercises by which the strength of our faith is built - and just as any exercise program benefits from a schedule to prevent too much or too little exercise (producing either harm or no benefit) so also the Church gives us a schedule of fasting - so that we avoid too much (and therefore harming ourselves) or too little (and therefore deriving no benefit.) Let us therefore endeavor to take advantage of the "exercise program" that the Church provides when she gives us opportunities to fast.

Prayer, on the other hand, is something in which we should engage constantly - as the Holy Apostle tells us, "pray without ceasing". There are many ways in which the Church teaches us to pray without ceasing - in each case though the goal is the constant remembrance of God and His presence with us. One of the most pervasive instructions of the Holy Fathers is to learn a short prayer and to use this prayer constantly in every situation. The most common prayer that is used for this purpose is the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ Son of God have mercy on me a sinner."

This prayer can be used in all places and at all times and for any purpose whatsoever. Even in the lengthy Church services, it is very easy and convenient to say the Jesus Prayer, and to do so for prolonged periods of time. No matter your situation, when it is impossible to do anything, "exercise" yourself in the Jesus Prayer. Stand in your heart in great reverence before God, and fully realizing your complete unworthiness even to utter the name of God, pronounce the words of the prayer with attention and fear, casting yourself upon God's mercy and condescension. The devil incessantly and in every way tries to dissuade man from this activity. One must be aware of this and fight against him, forcing oneself to say this wonderful prayer.

These two pillars of faith - prayer and fasting - lift us up to the heights of heaven and through them our faith is strengthened quickening in us the image and likeness of God. Our creation, our purpose our calling are all to ascend to the presence of God as the crown and king of creation and there to worship Him in spirit and in truth. In order to fulfill this great purpose, in order to overcome the sin which drags us down and chains us to this earth, which robs us of our birthright and of the power to become the sons of God, we must increase our faith, we must cry out, "Oh Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief". We must build up our faith by prayer and fasting - not just as a compulsory exercise, but with zeal and purpose, in the knowledge and conviction that these things are the stepping stones by which we ascend to the Kingdom of Heaven.

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<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/propoved/info>

### **Saints of the Week**

**5 / 18 August - Forefeast of the Transfiguration - Dormition Fast — The Holy Martyr Eusignius** - he was a soldier under the Emperor Maximian, the Emperor Constantine the Great and Constantine's sons, and was present at the martyrdom of the holy martyr Basiliscus. He saw many angels, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as He received the soul of this holy martyr from the angel's hands. He was a general under Constantine, and saw the Cross that appeared to the Emperor. Spending a full sixty years in military service, he withdrew from it in the time of Constantine's sons and went to Antioch, his home town. There he lived a godly life of fasting, prayer and good works. In the time of Julian the Apostate, two men at variance in the street called him to judge between them. He adjudged right to the righteous, at which the one at fault became enraged, went to the Emperor and denounced Eusignius as a Christian. The Emperor summoned him to trial, at which he fiercely denounced the Emperor for his apostasy from the Faith and rebuked him by citing the shining example of the great Constantine. The proud Julian ordered that he be beheaded. Eusignius suffered in great old age, in the year 362, and went to the Kingdom of heaven; The Hieromartyr Fabian, Pope of Rome; The Holy Martyr Pontius;

**St. Oswald, king and martyr (642)** - In the year 617 the king of Northumbria was killed by King Redwald of the East Angles. His three sons, including Oswald, fled to Scotland, and there they became Christians They were baptised at Iona. Two brothers soon lost their faith, Oswald's persisted. And when his brothers were killed by the British King Cadwalla, Oswald gathered an army and marched against him. The day before the battle he made his soldiers construct a wooden cross. Oswald, himself knelt down, holding the cross in position until enough earth had been thrown in the hole to make it stand firm. Then he prayed, summoning his army to join him with the words, "Let us all kneel together and ask the true, living and almighty God in his mercy to protect us from the arrogant savagery of our enemies, for He knows that we fight in a just cause to save our nation." Oswald defeated Cadwalla, recovered his father's throne, and asked the monks of Iona to send missionaries to his kingdom. St Aidan was sent, and King Oswald gave him the island of Lindisfarne as his episcopal see. "The king always listened humbly and readily to Aidan's advice," says venerable Bede, "And while the Bishop, who was not yet fluent in English, preached the Gospel, it was delightful to hear the King himself interpreting the word of God to his nobles and leaders." Oswald invited other Scots to missionise his kingdom. He gave money and lands to establish monasteries and churches. The pagan

king of Mercia killed him at the battle of Maserfield, when he had reigned no more than seven years. His last prayer, as his enemies pressed around him, was "O God, be merciful to their souls." His head was placed in St. Cuthbert's coffin, and found there centuries later in 1827.



**6 / 19 August - Dormition Fast - The Holy Transfiguration Of Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ - the second "Feast of the Saviour" in August - Blessing of Grapes & Other Fruits** —Epistle: The Second Letter of Peter : 1:10-19 & The Gospel According to St. Matthew 17:1-9

In the Orthodox tradition today is reckoned as one of the Twelve Great Feasts. The Transfiguration is par excellence the feast of Christ's divine glory. Like Theophany, it is a feast of light: 'Today on Tabor in the manifestation of Thy Light, O Word, Thou unaltered Light from the Light of the unbegotten Father, we have seen the Father as Light and the Spirit as Light, guiding with light the whole creation' (exapostilarion). Nor is this the only parallel between the two feasts. Like Theophany, although less explicitly, the Transfiguration is a revelation of the Holy Trinity. On Tabor, as at the baptism in Jordan, the Father speaks from heaven, testifying to the divine Sonship of Christ: and the Spirit is also present on this occasion not in the likeness of a dove, but under the form of dazzling light, surrounding Christ's person and overshadowing the

whole mountain. This dazzling light is the light of the Spirit.

The Transfiguration, then, is a feast of divine glory - more specifically, of the glory of the Resurrection. The ascent of Mount Tabor came at a critical point in Our Lord's ministry, just as he was setting out upon His last journey to Jerusalem, which He knew was to end in humiliation and death. To strengthen His disciples for the trials that lay ahead, He chose this particular moment to reveal to them something of His external splendour, 'as far as they were able to hear it' (Troparion of the feast). He encouraged them - and all of us - to look beyond the suffering of the Cross to the glory of the Resurrection. The light of the Transfiguration, however, foreshadows not only Christ's own Resurrection on the third day, but equally the Resurrection glory of the righteous at His Second Coming. The glory which shone from Jesus on Tabor is a glory in which all mankind is called to share. On Mount Tabor we see Christ's human nature - the human substance which He took from us - filled with splendour, 'made godlike' or 'deified'. What has happened to human nature in Christ can happen also to the humanity of Christ's followers. The Transfiguration, then, reveals to us the full potentiality of our human nature: it shows us the glory which our manhood once possessed and the glory which, by God's grace, it will again recover at the Last Day.

This is a cardinal aspect of the present feast, to which the liturgical texts frequently revert. At His Transfiguration, it is said, the Lord 'in His own person showed them the nature of man, arrayed in the original beauty of the Image' (Great Vespers, postiche). 'Today Christ on Mount Tabor has changed the darkened nature of Adam, and filling it with brightness He has made it godlike' (Small Vespers, aposticha). 'Thou wast transfigured upon Mount Tabor, showing the exchange mortal men will make with Thy glory at Thy second and fearful coming, O Saviour' (Matins, sessional hymn).

The feast of the Transfiguration, therefore, is not simply the commemoration of a past event in the life of Christ. Possessing also an 'eschatological' dimension, it is turned towards the future - towards the 'splendour of the Resurrection' at the Last Day, towards the 'beauty of the Divine Kingdom' which all Christians hope eventually to enjoy. It is the custom to bring grapes and fruit to the church on this day. They are placed on a table in the centre of the church and blessed by the priest at the end of the Liturgy.

**Troparion tone 7:** When Thou wast transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God,/ Thou didst show Thy glory to Thy disciples as far as they could bear it./ Let Thy everlasting light illumine also us sinners/ through the intercessions of the Mother of God./ Giver of Light, glory to Thee.

**Kontakion tone 7:** Thou wast transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God,/ and Thy disciples beheld Thy glory as far as they were capable,/ that when they should see Thee crucified,/ they might know that Thy suffering was voluntary/ and might proclaim to the world/ that Thou art indeed the reflection of the Father.

**Priest:** O God our Saviour who wast pleased to call Thine Only-begotten Son, our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Vine, and in Him hast granted us the fruit of immortality: do Thou now bless this fruit of the vine lying here, and make us Thy servants, who eat of it, partakers of the True Vine. Keep our lives from harm and ever give us peace, and adorn us with the eternal gifts of grace that none can take away: at the intercessions of our most pure Lady, the Theotokos and ever Virgin Mary, and all of Thy saints who have pleased Thee down the ages. For Thou art a good God who lovest mankind, and unto The Father without beginning, together with Thine Only-begotten Son and Thy most holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, do we ascribe glory, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen

**7 / 20 August - The Venerable Martyr Dometius** - born in Persia as a pagan during the reign of Emperor Constantine. He became acquainted with the Faith of Christ as a young man, abandoned paganism and was baptized. So much did Dometius love the True Faith that he left everything worldly and was tonsured a monk in a monastery near the town of Nisibis. He lived for some time among the brethren and then withdrew to a life of silence to be with an a certain elder Archmandrite Urbel, about whom it is said that he did not eat anything cooked for sixty years. The elder Urbel ordained Dometius a deacon and when he wanted to compel him to receive the rank of a priest, Dometius withdrew to an isolated mountain and settled in a cave. He attained such a high degree of perfection through fasting, prayer, all night vigils and godly-thoughts that he cured the sick. When Julian the Apostate came to those regions, he heard of Dometius and sent men, who sealed him alive in the cave along with two of his disciples. Thus, this saint of God died and took up habitation in the Kingdom of God in the year 363 A.D. **The Venerable Or, Hermit of Thebaid** - Or attained great perfection through the greatest mortification. When he firmly established himself and attained holiness in solitude, he then gradually established several monasteries and was a superb

spiritual leader and teacher of many monks. Rufinus, who visited him describes Or in the following way: "In his dress [habit], he resembled an angel of God; a ninety-year old elder with a long beard, as white as snow; externally was very pleasant. His gaze shone with something super human." Often times, he saw the angels of God. He especially endeavoured never to speak an untruth. He had great temptations from the demons but overpowered them all soberly and courageously. He received Holy Communion daily. On one occasion, one of his disciples reminded him that the Feast of the Resurrection had come and that it should be celebrated. Hearing this, Or came out, raised his hands to heaven and spent three days in prayer without rest. He explained to his disciple: "For the monk, this is the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ: to elevate his mind and to unite it with God." He rested in deep old age about the year 390 A.D.

**The Holy Martyrs Marinus and Asterius** - Marinus was a soldier and Asterius was a Roman senator. At the time of Emperor Gallienus, St. Marinus served as a soldier in Caesarea in Palestine. Marinus was beheaded for the sake of the Faith of Christ. Asterius, the senator, also a Christian, was present at his martyrdom. He removed his dolman and, with it, wrapped the body of the martyr, placed it on his shoulders, took it and honourably buried it. Seeing this, the pagans beheaded him also. They both died honourably for Christ about the year 260 A.D.

**8 / 21 August - Dormition Fast - SAINT EMILIAN THE CONFESSOR, BISHOP OF CYZICUS** - Emilian served as bishop in Cyzicus during the reign of the nefarious Emperor Leo the Armenian, the iconoclast. Since he did not want to submit to the decrees of the emperor concerning the removal of icons from the churches, Emilian and other Orthodox bishops were banished into exile. He spent five years in exile, enduring much pain and humiliation for the sake of Christ. Emilian died in they year 820 A.D. and took up habitation among the citizens of heaven.

**SAINT MYRON, MIRACLE-WORKER AND BISHOP OF CRETE** - At first, Myron was married and engaged in farming. Myron, gladly and abundantly distributed the fruits of his land to needy people. At one time, he encountered unknown thieves stealing wheat from his threshing floor. Not telling them who he was, St. Myron helped the thieves fill the sacks, lift them on their backs and to escape. Because of his exceptional virtues, Myron was ordained a presbyter and after that consecrated a bishop. He was a great miracle-worker and performed many good and mighty works in the name of the Lord Jesus. Myron died about the year 350 A.D. in the hundredth year of his life.

**THE HOLY NEO-MARTYRS TRIANDAPHYLLUS AND SPASO** - Triandaphyllus was born in Zagora and Spaso was born in Radoviste in the Diocese of Strumica. They were both Slavs. Both were young and simple men. But their love for Christ was more precious to them than this world or this life. They gave their lives and did not betray Christ. They suffered at the hands of the Turks for the Faith of Christ: Triandaphyllus in Constantinople in the year 1680 A.D. and Spaso in Thessalonica in the year 1794 A.D.

**9 / 22 August - Afterfeast of the Transfiguration - Dormition Fast - Wine & Oil Allowed — The Holy Apostle Matthias** - Epistle: The Acts of St. Apostles 1:12-17 & The Gospel According to St. Luke 9:1-6

Tropar of St. Matthias, Tone 3: Thy divine Spirit choose thee to fill the twelve-numbered rank of the apostles, O glorious one. And with them thou didst proclaim the kenosis of the Word, and wast made wondrous, O Apostle Matthias. Therefore, intercede for them that honour thee, that they be granted forgiveness of sins and great mercy.

Kondak of St. Matthias, Tone 4: Like the rays of the sun hast thy word gone forth unto all the world, and it enlighteneth with grace the Church of the nations, O wondrous Apostle Matthias.

Born in Bethlehem of the tribe of Judah, he was a pupil of St Simeon the Host of God in Jerusalem. When the Lord began preaching the Kingdom of God, Matthias was among those who loved the Lord with all their hearts, heard His words and saw His works with delight. Matthias was at first included among the seventy, lesser apostles of Christ, but, after the Lord's Resurrection, because the place of Judas the betrayer fell vacant, the apostles chose this Matthias by lot in Judas's place as one of the twelve Great Apostles (Acts 1: 23) . Receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Matthias began to preach the Gospel, first in Judea then in Ethiopia, where he suffered greatly for the sake of Christ. It is held that he preached also in Macedonia, where they tried to bind him, but he became invisible to his tormentors and thus escaped danger. When he was imprisoned, the Lord appeared to him, gave him courage and set him free. He finally returned to work in Judea. There he was arrested and taken for trial before Ananias the High Priest, before whom he fearlessly witnessed to Christ. Ananias (the same who had earlier killed the Apostle James) condemned Matthias to death. They took Matthias out and stoned him to death, then cut off his head with an axe (the Roman way of executing those condemned to death. The hypocritical Jews used this method on the dead man, to prove to the Romans that he had opposed Rome). So died this great apostle of Christ, and went to the eternal joy of his Lord

**The Holy Martyr Antony** - Anthony was a citizen of Alexandria. Brought before the pagan prince, he freely confessed his faith and was tortured, flogged and scrapped but he would not deny Christ. Finally, he was thrown into a fire and, from the midst of the fire, he spoke to the people: "My beloved brethren, do not be a slave to the body but rather concern yourself more about the soul which is given to you by God and is kindred to God and to the heavenly hosts." And so, instructing his people and burning in the fire, Anthony gave up his holy soul to God.; The Holy Martyrs Julian and Marcian, and others with them.

**10 / 23 August - Afterfeast of the Transfiguration - Dormition Fast — The Holy Martyrs Laurence the Archdeacon (who was broiled to death under Decius) and Pope Sixtus, and others with them** - When Pope Stephen was killed, St Sixtus was installed in his place. Sixtus was an Athenian, first a philosopher and later a Christian. At that time, the Roman bishops were being killed one after the other in such quick succession that to be made Bishop of Rome was tantamount to a death sentence. The Emperor Valerian was determined to stamp out Christianity, and Pope Sixtus was quickly brought to trial with two of his deacons, Felicicius and Agapitus. When they were being taken off to prison, Laurence said to the Pope: 'Where are you going, Father, without your son? Whither, O Bishop, without your archdeacon?' The Pope consoled him with the prophecy that he would undergo yet greater suffering for Christ, and follow him very soon. And indeed, as soon as Sixtus and

the two deacons had been beheaded, Laurence was arrested. He had been inspired to set in order both his own affairs and those of the Church. As treasurer, he had taken all the Church's valuables to the house of a widower, Cyriacus. At that time, he healed Cyriacus of terrible pains in the head by the touch of his hand, and restored the sight of a blind man, Crescention. Thrown into prison, Laurence there healed an elderly prisoner, Lucillus, of blindness and baptised him. Seeing this, the warder, Hippolytus, also received baptism, and later suffered for Christ. As Laurence would not deny Christ, but strongly counselled the Emperor Valerian to abandon his false gods, he was beaten on the face with stones and on his body with scorpions (chains with poisoned teeth). A soldier, Romanus, who was present at the torture, came to belief in Christ and was immediately beheaded. They finally put Laurence on an iron grid and lit a fire underneath. Roasting in the fire, Laurence gave thanks to God, and mocked the Emperor for his paganism. When he had given his pure and heroic soul to God, Hippolytus took his body by night, first to the house of Cyriacus and then to a cave, where he buried it. St Laurence suffered, together with the others, in 258; St Hiron.

**11 / 24 August - Afterfeast of the Transfiguration - Dormition Fast - The Holy Martyr Euplus** - a deacon from Catania in Sicily. The Emperor Diocletian sent a commander, Pentagurus, to Sicily to exterminate any Christians that he found there. Pentagurus did not find a single Christian, for they had hidden from the persecutor and did not show themselves. Then someone accused Euplus of taking a book to some secret Christians and reading to them. This book was the holy Gospel. He was therefore soon taken for trial, and, with the book hung round his neck, put in prison. After seven days of imprisonment and hunger, he was put to torture. When they whipped him with iron flails, Euplus mockingly said to the torturing judge: 'You fool; don't you see that these tortures are, to me, like a cobweb? If you can, find other, harsher tortures, as these are like playthings.' Finally, they led Christ's martyr to the scaffold. Then St Euplus opened the holy Gospel and read from it to the people for a long time. Many turned to the Christian faith, and St Euplus was beheaded, in the year 304, and went to the heavenly Kingdom. His wonderworking relics lie in a village near Naples called Vico della Batonia;

**The Holy Martyr Susanna the Virgin, and others with her** - the daughter of a Roman presbyter Gavinius and the niece of Pope Gaius. Gaius and Gavinius were of royal lineage and kinsmen to the then Emperor Diocletian. Emperor Diocletian had an adopted son Maximian Galerius, whom he [Diocletian] wanted to marry Susanna. But Susanna, completely dedicated to Christ the Lord, did not want to hear at all about marriage and particularly not about marriage with an unbaptized man. Those who asked her to marry the emperor's son, the aristocrats, Claudia and Maxima, Susanna converted to the Christian Faith along with their entire household. Enraged by this, the emperor ordered that the executioners take Claudia and Maxima, with their families to Ostia where they were burned alive and their ashes thrown into the sea. However, Susanna was beheaded in the home of Gavinius. The emperor's wife Serena, secretly a Christian, removed Susanna's martyred body at night and honourably buried it, and Pope Gaius converted that house where Susanna was slain into a church and celebrated services there. Shortly following the suffering of this bride of Christ, her father Gavinius and her uncle Pope Gaius also suffered. They all suffered honourably for the Lord and received the wreath of glory in the years 295 A.D. and 296 A.D.

**St Niphon, Patriarch of Constantinople** - born in Greece. He was tonsured a monk in his youth and, at first, lived a life of asceticism outside the Holy Mountain [Athos] and, after that, on the Holy Mountain in various monasteries, remaining the longest in Vatopedi and Dionysiou. He was loved by all the holy Agiorites as much for his rare wisdom, as well as for his unusual meekness. He became the Bishop of Thessalonica against his will. Two years later, he journeyed to Constantinople on business and there, was elected to the vacant throne of the patriarchate. He was banished by the Sultan to Jedrene where he lived in exile. The Wallachian [Romanian] Prince Radul besought him from the Sultan and named Niphon as archbishop of the Wallachians. Because of Radul's transgressions, Niphon departed Wallachia and returned to Mount Athos to the community of Dionysiou where he lived a life of asceticism until his ninetieth year, when he took up habitation in the Kingdom of God in the year 1460 A.D. He composed the "Prayer of Absolution" read at the Burial Service: [O Lord Jesus Christ, by His divine grace, as also by the gift and power vouchsafed unto His holy Disciples and Apostles, that they should bind and Loose the sins of men: (For He said to them: Receive ye The Holy Spirit: whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted; and whosoever sins you retain they are retained. And whatsoever you shall bind or loose upon earth shall be bound or loosed also in Heaven. By the same power, also, transmitted to us from them, this my spiritual child, [Name], is absolved through me, unworthy though I be, from all things wherein, as mortal [He-She] have sinned against God, whether in word or deed or thought and with all [His-Her] senses, whether voluntary or involuntary; whether with knowledge or through ignorance. If [He-She] be under the ban or excommunication of a bishop or if a priest; or has sinned by any oath; or has been bound, as a man, by any sins whatsoever, but has repented him thereof, with contrition of heart: [He-She] is now absolved from all those faults and bonds. May all those things which have proceeded from the weakness of [His-her] mortal nature be consigned to oblivion and be remitted to [Him-Her]: Through His loving-kindness; through the prayers of our Most-holy and Blessed and Glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary; of all the holy, glorious and all-laudable Apostles and all of the Saints. Amen.]

Our Holy Fathers Basil and Theodore of the Kiev Caves; in Ireland

**St. Blane, bishop of Bute (Dunblane)** - Bishop and Confessor in Scotland, born on the island of Bute, date unknown; d. 590. His feast is kept on 10 August. He was a nephew of St. Cathan, and was educated in Ireland under Sts. Comgall and Kenneth; he became a monk, went to Scotland, and eventually was bishop among the Picts. There can be no doubt that devotion to St. Blane was, from early times, popular in Scotland. His monastery became the site of the Cathedral of Dunblane. There was a church of St. Blane in Dumfries and another at Kilblane. The saint died in 590. The ruins of his church at Kingarth, Bute, where his remains were buried, are still standing and form an object of great interest to antiquarians; the bell of his monastery is preserved at Dunblane.