

# The Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)

30 March / 12 April

Extracts from the Vigil Service:

*Today the grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us together, and we all take up Thy Cross and say: Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.*

*Today the Word and co-eternal Son of God the Father, whose throne is the heaven and whose footstool is the earth, humbles Himself and comes to Bethany, seated on a dumb beast, on a foal. Then the children of the Hebrews, holding branches in their hands, praise Him saying: 'Hosanna in the highest: blessed is He that comes, the King of Israel'.*

*Let us also come today, all the new Israel, the Church of the Gentiles, and let us cry with the Prophet Zechariah: Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem; for behold, thy King comes unto thee: He is meek and brings salvation, and He rides upon the colt of an ass, the foal of a beast of burden. Keep the feast with the children, and holding branches in your hands sing His praises: Hosanna to the highest; blessed is He that comes, the King of Israel.*

*1st, 2nd 3rd Stichera of 'Lord, I have cried'*



**Tropar of The Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, Tone 1:** In confirming the common Resurrection, O Christ God, Thou didst raise up Lazarus from the dead before Thy Passion. Wherefore, we also, like the children bearing the symbols of victory, cry to Thee, O Vanquisher of death: Hosanna in the highest, blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

**Another Tropar of The Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, Tone 4:** As by baptism we were buried with Thee, O Christ our God, so by Thy Resurrection we were deemed worthy of immortal life; and praising Thee, we cry: Hosanna in the highest; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

**Kondak of The Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, Tone 6:** Being borne upon a throne in heaven, and upon a colt on the earth, O Christ God. Thou didst accept the praise of the angels and the laudation of the children as they cry to Thee: Blessed is he that cometh to recall Adam.

**Vespers:** Gen 49:1-2, 8-12; Zeph 3:14-19; Zech 9:9-15

**Matins Gospel: Matthew 21:1-11, 15-17**

**Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9**

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

## IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND ... ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY—MEDITATE ON THESE THINGS

It is possible to grieve for our own sins and yet to rejoice in Christ. Or when your communion with God is not hindered, rejoice ...Is it best to envy, or to rejoice with one another? Let us search out all these things, and we will find that virtue, like a truly kind mother, places us in safety, while vice is a treacherous thing and full of danger ...That which is 'honourable' belongs to external virtue and that which is 'pure' to the soul ...If we will be at peace with each other, God will be with us ...Therefore we must make a beginning on our part, and then we will draw God towards us ...For he 'who digs a pit for his neighbour, falls into it' (Prov. 26:27) ...As we injure ourselves when we injure our neighbours, so by benefiting them, we benefit ourselves.

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily XIV on Philippians IV. B#57, pp. 246, 248, 249.*

## Gospel - John 12: 1-18

Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always." Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus. The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!" Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: "Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey's colt." His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him. Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign.

### THE ENTRY OF CHRIST INTO JERUSALEM

Brothers and sisters! So the Holy Church indicates for us spiritual spring. Winter is over. Ended is the state in which our heart was like ice, as if dead in languor, thirsting for Grace. And now, during the past six weeks the sun has been warming us more and more, and nature has gradually started to come back to life. And so our heart too should have come back to life.

Last night during the evening service, we sang, "Children were bearing the sign of Victory . . ." "What sign? Pussy willows, branches which had already budded, indicating that spring was coming, as if saying to us: Look here, joy is already beginning, happiness. So through the pussy willows, the Church has been saying to us: This is the beginning for you too; just be Christians, and think it over, and you will begin to see a sign. A sign of what? —that Christ is Risen.

And we, brothers and sisters, we close our eyes like an ostrich who puts his head under his wing. We don't want to think that a limit will come, just as it comes to old people: hands stop working, eyes stop seeing, ears stop hearing—a limit. The end will come. And it seems that in these moments, when we begin to recognize the approach of old age, we involuntarily compare it with winter, with snow. Yes, but after winter comes spring. And in a spiritual understanding: after our eyes close, then comes Eternal Life, the joy of Life with Christ. This is what last night's pussy willows were telling us about, "bearing the sign." Abide not in grief; turn to joy. And now comes the moment when the Lord, by a special mystery, through Passion Week which we are approaching, will give us the feeling of this joy of Eternal Life.

Now we worry about a piece of bread, about a roof over our heads, about our social conditions. And it seems to us that the meaning of life consists of this. But the Church says, Look at the pussy willows: leaves will sprout and later flowers and fruit. So it is even in a Christian soul. Everything we are busying ourselves with, all this will remain here. But with us there will go another stream of life—spiritual life. You should think about this. But is it so? Maybe it's not. Brothers, it is so! Today the Holy Church speaks to us through the Apostle. What does the Church say? She says: "Rejoice in the Lord always, (Phil. 4:4). Today, at the conclusion of Great Lent, she says to us, rejoice! Do you have this joy? If this is joy about Eternal Life, then yes, you will have this joy, because Christ is Risen. And all our sicknesses, our old age, our expectancy of death—all of this will dissolve. In what? In Christ. And when the moment of our departure comes (this is how we believe and what the Church says), God Almighty, the Giver of Life, will come to us and will perform for us the mystery of releasing our bonds, and we will enter eternal existence.

"Rejoice," says the Apostle, "and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). See how the Apostle is exhorting us. But what is this? There is a condition: "Let all men know your meekness," (trans. forbearance or moderation in English versions) continues the Apostle. Look here, spring has come to nature. But it will not stop here, it will go further; it will change into summer. And so it is with us—life goes on. "Let all men know your meekness." This means that our life should move in such a way that pride will depart. It should dissolve in Christ's patience, in Christ's meekness. The Apostle says: May your meekness be of the Lord. And further, "Have no anxiety about anything," but be always in prayer. Hear what promises the Lord gives. "Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your wishes (trans. requests in English version) be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). What daring is given to us!

But what kind of wishes should our prayers express? If they are the wishes which people experience in sitting rooms, theatres, worldly amusements—then of course, brothers, the Lord desires something else for us, because all of this will remain here. This senselessness, this commotion, this quarrelling, this adversity, this rage, all this will remain here. And only joy will depart with us. This is joy: if you wish for meekness, humility, prosperity, brotherly love, Christian living, quiet—then pray! The Lord will be with you. Rejoice! The Holy Day is approaching. Tomorrow there will come great moments when the Sacrament is being performed. And so in our hearts will be revealed this joy: Christ is Risen! May this joy abide with us in a joyous feeling of Eternal Life.

Let us hasten, O believers, moving from one divine festival to another; from palms and branches to the fulfilment of the august and saving sufferings of Christ. Let us watch Him, bearing His sufferings voluntarily for our sake; and let us sing unto Him with worthy praise, crying, O Fountain of mercy, O Haven of Salvation, O Lord, glory to You.

*Palm Sunday Evening Vespers.*

## Palm Sunday.

Commitment to the King (John 12:1-18).

**S**o they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him crying, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!'

Great crowds went forth on this day to meet Jesus. They waved palms. Thousands of men and women shouted with joy, "Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!" They hailed Jesus as King. The news that He had brought Lazarus back from the dead had spread like wildfire. They cast their robes for Him to ride over. They sang. They ran. They strewed the ground before Him with wild flowers.

Today, we, too, shall be given palm branches. For just as Christ entered Jerusalem many years ago, so He will make a triumphant entry into our hearts this Holy Week and Easter when we receive His precious Body and Blood in Holy Communion.

The important thing this Palm Sunday is not that Christ entered Jerusalem many years ago, but that He comes to us today; not how He was received 2,000 years ago on this day, but how He will be received by us.

"Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. . . the King of Israel" (John 12:13). When Christ entered Jerusalem He was hailed as a King. When He comes to us today, shall we receive Him as our King? "7 am a king," said Jesus, "and to this end was I born, that I should bear witness to the truth."

## The King's Appeal.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem he used a method of action which many a prophet of Israel had used before. The prophets had often used the method of dramatic and symbolic action. Men might refuse to listen, but they could hardly fail to see; and again and again the prophets had cast their message into the form of some vivid action, as if to say: "If you will not listen, you can at least see." Jeremiah, for example, forewarned the Jewish people of the slavery that was to fall upon them, by making yokes and wearing them on his neck. Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem on this Palm Sunday was a deliberately made claim on His part to be King. The donkey, for example, on which Jesus rode was the beast on which kings rode when they came in peace; only in war did they ride upon horses. No doubt Jesus was remembering the prophecy of Zechariah which Matthew cites: "Behold your king is coming to you ... mounted on a donkey." In that triumphant entry into Jerusalem Jesus, in a dramatic, symbolic action which spoke more loudly than any words, was making one last appeal to his people, and saying to them: "Will you not, even now, accept me as your Lord and King, and enthrone me in your mind, your heart and your will?"

## "King of the Jews."

Even the inscription on the Cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews" — written in the three great languages of the ancient world: Hebrew, Greek and Latin proclaimed Him King. Each of these three great nations stood for three great contributions to the world: Greece taught the world beauty of form and thought; Rome taught the world law and good government; the Hebrew nation taught the world religion and the worship of the true God. The fulfillment and consummation of all these things is seen in Jesus. In Him was the supreme beauty and the highest thought of God. In Him was the law of God and the Kingdom of God. In Him was the very picture and image of God: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." All the world's seekings and strivings found their fulfillment and consummation in Christ. It was symbolic that in the three great languages of the world men called Him king: "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews!"

## Martyrs for the King.

When the aged Bishop Polycarp was brought to trial, the judge stood before him and shouted, "You are to renounce the faith! You are to curse the name of Christ!" St. Polycarp answered, "Fourscore and six years have I served Him, and He never did me wrong: how then can I revile my King, my Savior?" The result was that Bishop Polycarp was burned to death in the amphitheatre in Smyrna. When the young church set down in writing what happened for future generations to know, it wrote: "Polycarp was martyred, Statius Quadratus being proconsul in Asia, and Jesus Christ being King for ever!"

Out of the persecution of Christians by Diocletian has come the story of Genesius, an actor who was playing a part in a burlesque on the rites and customs of the hated Christians. In the midst of the play, as though the Holy Spirit suddenly shamed him for straying from the faith of the Christian home in which he was born, he cried out, "I want to receive the grace of Christ, that I may be born again, and be set free from the sins that have been my ruin!" The surprised crowd saw the mock baptism that was being pantomimed turn into a hallowed moment of conversion as Genesius, fearlessly proclaiming his faith, cried out towards Diocletian, "Illustrious emperor, and all of you who have laughed loudly at this parody, believe me, Christ is the true King!"

Unmoved, except to fury, Diocletian ordered that he first be ripped with claws, then burned with torches, and finally beheaded. Before the end he was heard to cry: "There is no King except Christ, whom I have seen and whom I worship. For Him I will die a thousand times. I am sorry for my sins, and for becoming so late a soldier of the true King."

## Not a Mere Symbol.

Someone said once, "Kings? Kings are only something to cheer for." He meant that the human heart loves parades, and that a king was merely a symbol. Christ is not that kind of King — a King we enclose in a decorated church with fragrant incense, stirring hymns and burning candles as if He were dead. He is a living King who says to us today, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." He is a King who challenges, who gives purpose and meaning to life; a King who forgives, strengthens, and heals. "No man ever spoke as this man," they said of Him. "Who is this man that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

## He Becomes My King Through Commitment.

Christ becomes King personally and existentially to those who submit to His Kingship through commitment.

What do we mean by commitment?

A certain author wrote, "Let us not fool ourselves. We will submit to some master, whether that master is work, sex, pleasure, liquor, or what-have-you. Our problem is to choose which master. The only Master worth serving is Jesus Christ, the Master we were created to serve."

We can be captured by the cheapest and the lowest in life, or we can be captured by the highest and the best that human experience knows: Jesus Christ. He can fulfill life. He can light the lamp no darkness can put out.

When Christ enters our life, we must abandon the throne of our will, our ego, our pride, and allow Him to step up to this royal chair. He will increase; we shall decrease. He will speak; we shall listen. He will command; we shall obey.

Yes, some people will object, but will I not lose my personality if I commit my life to Christ? Does the violin lose its personality when a great master takes it and runs the bow back and forth across its strings? Of course not! It becomes a symphony. Our lives, too, become symphonies when we commit them into the hands of God.

## What Makes a Christian.

Fr. John Meyendorff said once in a lecture to Sunday school teachers: "We are told in the Gospels that education implies a positive acceptance of Christ. This is the real conversion. // this marriage does not take place at some time during the life of a Christian, he is simply not a Christian. We have a very clear statement about this in the tradition of the Fathers. What makes a Christian a Christian is this personal commitment to Christ. One's formal belonging to the Church through Baptism and other sacramental participation remains a mere potential if the individual commitment does not take place. The sacramental gifts of Baptism and the Eucharist and of all the sacraments are essential for an objective membership in the body of Christ; but again they are pure potentials if they are not taken seriously, and if a conversion of the heart and mind does not occur at some point in one's life."

When we were baptized, God said to each one of us, "YES, I accept you as my son or daughter." There must come a time in our lives when we must say to Christ, "Yes, Jesus, I accept you as my Savior, my Lord, my King, and I commit my life to You."

## Committed Lives.

This is what commitment to Christ meant to former Governor Mark O Hatfield of Oregon, "I could not drift along as I had been doing; going to church because I had always gone. Either Christ was God, and Savior, and Lord, or He wasn't. And if He was, then He had to have all my time, all my devotion, all my life." This is what commitment to Christ should mean to us.

Tolstoy wrote, "I walked deep into the woods one day and there gave my life to the Lord. Suddenly the whole world came alive to me. All was new and different. I have come to the conclusion that God and real life are one and the same thing." Tolstoy discovered real life through commitment to God.

Ignatius Loyola was a soldier in the army of Ferdinand and Isabella in 1521. Severely wounded in a battle, he spent many months convalescing in a castle at Loyola. To help pass the time he asked for some books on romance. None was available, so he was given the lives of Christ and the Saints. These books changed his life. Instead of continuing in the service of an earthly king, he decided to devote his life to the service of his God and seek to win spiritual victories whose fruits would be everlasting. "Take, O Lord!" prayed Ignatius. "Take all — my liberty, my memory, my intellect, my will — all that I am and all that I have. You gave it all to me. I give it back again to You. All of me is Yours. Do with me whatever You will. Give me Your love and Your grace. That is enough for me."

Ignatius founded the Society of Jesus which has given the world many scholars and saints. He wrote a little book "The Spiritual Exercises" which became a classic. He achieved such eminent holiness that the Roman Catholic Church declared him a Saint. His profound influence on the world began with the personal and complete commitment of his life to Jesus as Lord and King!

Fran Tarkenton, Vikings quarterback, said, "My father is a minister and I have always been in and about the church, yet I had never felt that my life had any real direction or power until August, 1958, when I made a complete and all-out dedication of my life to Jesus Christ ... Until that time my faith had largely been something I had inherited. The confrontation with Christ made it alive, personal, powerful. There is quite a difference between a faith you accept from others and a faith you reach out for yourself."

## Benefits of Commitment.

Commitment to Christ, says St. Paul, is our response to Christ for what He did for us on the cross: "He died for all that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for Him Who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Cor. 5:15).

Another benefit of commitment is expressed in Christ's words: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall have life everlasting," said Jesus. Not to all but only to those who commit their lives to Him — who live and believe in Him — does God bestow life eternal, life with God. In other words, Christ commits Himself only to those who commit themselves to Him. He cannot commit Himself to someone who does not want Him.

Buffeted by the trials of this world a certain Christian prayed: "Lord, tie me to something eternal. I tie myself to houses and lands and stocks and bonds and by some turn of fate, I lose them. I tie myself to a loved one and a single microbe comes and death snatches her away. I tie myself to a friend and the friendship vanishes. Lord, tie me to Your program, to service in Your Kingdom, to You, God, that I might be tied to the Eternal." Commitment is that which ties us to the Eternal!

If you make Christ your King through commitment, then you are the child of a King. He will let nothing — not even death — snatch you from His hands. He will give you power to be king of yourself and your passions. He will bestow upon you one day the Crown of righteousness. He will grant you life eternal and will make you heir to the greatest kingdom in the universe.

The significance of receiving palms today is to help us renew our commitment to Christ, to salute Him as Lord and King of our lives. May this be for us the meaning of the palms we receive today: a symbol of our personal commitment to Christ as Lord of our lives. For — let us remember — the first commitment was His. He first committed Himself to us, not part of the time or with half a will, but so much so that He went to the cross!

## Saints of the Week

**30 March / 12 April — Our Holy Father John Climacus (of the Ladder)** - The author of the famous 'Ladder', he came from an unknown place to Mount Sinai as a sixteen-year-old boy and remained there, first as a novice, then as a hermit and finally as abbot of Sinai, until he died at the age of eighty, in about 649. His biographer, the monk Daniel, says of him: 'He brought his body up to Mount Sinai, but his spirit he brought to the Mount of Heaven'. He spent nineteen years in obedience to his spiritual father, Martyrios. Anastasius of Mount Sinai, who saw John once as a young man, foretold that he would be abbot of Mount Sinai. After the death of his spiritual father, John took himself off to a cave, where he lived for twenty years in strict asceticism. His disciple, Moses, fell asleep one day in the cool shade of a huge rock. John was at prayer in his cell, and, perceiving that his disciple was in danger, began to pray for him. Moses came up to him later, fell to his knees and began to thank him for saving him from certain death. And he related how he had heard John calling him in his sleep and had jumped up at the very moment that a rock fell. Had he not jumped out of the way, the rock would certainly have killed him. At the importunate urging of the brethren, John accepted the abbacy, and guided their souls to salvation with loving zeal. He once heard a monk reproach him for being too verbose. He was not in the least angered, but was silent for an entire year, not uttering a single word until the brethren begged him to speak. He then began to instruct them with the wisdom with which God had endowed him. Once 600 pilgrims came to Mount Sinai. At supper they all noticed an agile young man dressed as a Jew who was serving at table and giving orders to the other servants, taking charge of everything. Suddenly, he disappeared. While everyone was pondering this and asking questions among themselves, John said: 'Do not bother to look for him; that was the prophet Moses serving you in his own home.' During the time that he was silent in his cave, John wrote many instructive books, of which the most famous, 'The Ladder', is much read to this day. It describes the way to raise the soul to God as if on a ladder. Before his death, John appointed his own brother, George, to the abbacy, but George began to grieve greatly at the approaching parting with John. Then John said that, if he were found worthy to stand close to God in the next world, he would pray that George be taken up to heaven in the same year. And so it came to pass. After ten months, George also fell asleep and departed to take his place among heaven's citizens alongside his brother John; Commemoration of an Uncondemning Monk; St. Osburga of Coventry, virgin (c.1015)

**31 March / 13 April — Metropolitan Innocent, Enlightener of Siberia and Alaska** - born John in the Irkutsk district in 1797 the son of a poor sacristan. His father died when he was seven leaving him and his family in great poverty. Fortunately his uncle took him in, provided for his education and taught him manual crafts himself. He entered seminary at age 9 and was a good student. Whilst there the rector changed his surname to Veniaminov. John married in 1817 at the age of 20 and became a deacon in Irkutsk. After a year he was ordained priest and in 1823 the Bishop sought a priest to undertake missionary work in the islands between Siberia and Alaska. Although at first unwilling, Father John was seized with the desire to preach the Gospel of Christ to the unenlightened. His bishop consented, and although his family were at first opposed they began the long journey. In the following year they arrived on the island of Unalaska. He began to teach the natives carpentry and building, and with their help erected a church and dwellings. He then began to study the native language, hoping to translate the Gospel and divine services. He preached to the natives in their own language, adapting concepts to their understanding. He travelled widely throughout the diocese, which stretched over several thousand kilometres, serving, preaching, and baptising. He sometimes traversed great distances on the open sea in a small canoe. He developed an alphabet for the Aleutian language and translated the catechism and the Gospel of St. Matthew. At this time he wrote his most famous work - Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven. He opened a school and himself taught the children to read and write. He spent 10 years in Unalaska, in which time he converted all the inhabitants to Christianity. He was then transferred to Sitka, an island port close to the mainland of Alaska. He laboured there for five years, learning the language and translating, preaching and baptising, and teaching the natives manual trades. He was greatly loved by the native peoples. 1938 returned to Russia to seek help for his work and for a blessing to print his translations. He was raised to Archpriest and at the same time his wife died. He accepted monasticism and 1840 was tonsured with the name of Innocent eventually becoming Bishop Innocent and returning to Alaska to finish his work. In 1850 he was elevated to Archbishop and in 1857 was recalled to Russia where he laboured greatly for the conversion of the unenlightened peoples on the Russian-Chinese border. Finally in 1867, he was chosen to succeed the newly reposed Metropolitan Philaret. By now an old man he accepted this great burden with humility, fulfilling his duties to the glory of God until his repose on 31 March, 1879. This great worker planted the Faith of Christ amongst a great many pagan tribes, labouring for their salvation with true patience, humility and simplicity. For his labours, the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad resolved in May 1993 to recognise Metropolitan Innocent as a saint on January 17/30, 1994.

**Archbishop Averky of Jordanville** - the world known as Alexander Pavlovich Taushev) was born on October 19, 1906, in the city of Kazan. His father was employed by the government until the Revolution of 1917 and was required to travel widely. Thus Vladika, although only 14 when he was forced to leave Russia, knew a great deal of his beloved homeland. He read widely from a young age, and was especially moved by spiritual books which he father obtained from the Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mt. Athos. In 1920 the family settled in Bulgaria amongst many other Russian refugees. Then in 1925, he met Archbishop Theophan who had a tremendous influence on this young man, and it was at this time he became firm in his desire for monasticism. He entered theological Academy and graduated in 1930 with top marks. Desiring greatly to labour for the Russian people, he decided to travel to Czechoslovakia, where many were returning from the Unia to Orthodoxy. Vladika Theophan blessed him, and Alexander was appointed secretary to the Diocesan Administrator. In 1931 he was tonsured a monk with the name Averky. The next day he was ordained to the diaconate, and in the next year was ordained priestmonk. In 1937 he was made Abbot before in 1940 he was forced as a result of World War II to move to Belgrade where he taught and laboured in the serve of the Synod. In 1951 he moved to America and was invited to teach at Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville. In 1961 he was made Archbishop - a great preacher and zealot of True Orthodox Christianity, Vladika suffered



greatly as a result of the attacks of modernism and ecumenism on the Orthodox Faith. It was said that he was one of the last giants of 20th Century Orthodoxy. May his memory be eternal! The Hieromartyr Hypatis, Bishop of Gangra; St. Jonah, Metropolitan of Moscow; The Hieromartyr Audas; Our Holy Father Apollonius.

**1 / 14 April — St Mary of Egypt** - The recorder of the life of this wonderful saint was St Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem. A hieromonk, the elder Zossima, had gone off at one time during the Great Fast a twenty-days' walk into the wilderness across the Jordan. He suddenly caught sight of a human being with a withered and naked body and with hair as white as snow, who fled in its nakedness from Zossima's sight. The elder ran a long way, until this figure stopped at a stream and called: 'Father Zossima, forgive me for the Lord's sake. I cannot turn round to you, for I am a naked woman.' Then Zossima threw her his outer cloak, and she wrapped herself in it and turned round to him. The elder was amazed at hearing his name from the lips of this unknown woman. After considerable pressure on his part, she told him her life-story. She had been born in Egypt, and had lived as a prostitute in Alexandria from the age of twelve, spending seventeen years in this way of life. Urged by the lustful fire of the flesh, she one day got into a ship that was sailing for Jerusalem. Arriving at the Holy City, she tried to go into one of the churches to venerate the Precious Cross, but some unseen power prevented her from entering. In great fear, she turned to an icon of the Mother of God that was in the entrance, and begged her to let her go in and venerate the Cross, confessing her sin and impurity and promising that she would then go wherever the Most Pure led her. She was then allowed to enter the church. After venerating the Cross, she went out again to the entrance and, standing in front of the icon, thanked the Mother of God. Then she heard a voice: 'If you cross the Jordan, you will find true peace.' She immediately bought three loaves of bread and set off for the Jordan, arriving there the same evening. She received Communion the following morning in the monastery of St John, and then crossed the river. She spent forty-eight whole years in the wilderness in the greatest torments, in terror, in struggles with passionate thoughts like gigantic beasts. She fed only on plants. After that, when she was standing in prayer, Zossima saw her lifted up in the air. She begged him to bring her Communion the next year on the bank of the Jordan, and she would come to receive it. The following year, Zossima came with the Holy Gifts to the bank of the Jordan in the evening, and stood in amazement as he saw her cross the river. He saw her coming in the moonlight and, arriving on the further bank, make the sign of the Cross over the river. She then walked across it as though it were dry land. When she had received Communion, she begged him to come again the following year to the same stream by which they had first met. Zossima went, and found her dead body there on that spot. Above her head in the sand was written: 'Abba Zossima, bury in this place the body of the humble Mary. Give dust to dust. I passed away on April 1st, on the very night of Christ's Passion, after communion of the divine Mysteries.' Zossima learned her name for the first time, and also the awe-inspiring marvel that she had arrived at that stream the previous year on the night of the same day on which she had received Communion—a place that he had taken twenty days to reach. And thus Zossima buried the body of the wonderful saint, Mary of Egypt. When he returned to the monastery, he recounted the whole story of her life and the wonders to which he had been an eyewitness. Thus the Lord glorifies repentant sinners. St Mary is also commemorated in the Fifth Week of the Great Fast. The Church holds her up before the faithful in these days of the Fast as a model of repentance. She entered into rest in about 530.

**St Meliton, Bishop of Sardis** - A well-known pastor of the Church in the second century, he was a man of great learning and laboured to codify all the books of Holy Scripture. He laboured also in meekness and devotion to bring peace to the Church in Laodicea, involved in a quarrel about the celebration of Easter. Apart from this, he defended Christianity against the pagans. He travelled to Rome in about 170, bringing a written apologia on the Faith and the Christian Church to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. St Meliton, this learned, devout and zealous man, entered peacefully into rest in the Lord in about 177;

**2 / 15 April — Our Holy Father Titus the Wonderworker** - He conceived a love for Christ from his earliest years, and despised the vanities of the world. For His sake, he left the world, went off to a monastery and received the angelic habit. With not a backward glance, he gave himself to the sober and narrow way of monasticism. Through great patience, he attained the two basic virtues of humility and obedience, and in these virtues he exceeded 'not only the brethren, but all men'. He preserved his purity of soul and body right from his youth. In the time of the iconoclast heresy, he was seen to be a steadfast pillar of the Church of God. For his great humility and purity, he was endowed by God with the gift of wonderworking, both in his lifetime and after his death. And when he went to the Lord, he left a large number of disciples behind him. He entered peacefully into rest in the 9th century;

**The Holy Martyrs Amphianus, and Edesius** - These two young men were blood brothers from the city of Patara of distinguished but pagan parents. While they were studying the secular sciences in the city of Beirut, they were enlightened by the Spirit of God, and acknowledging the falsehood of paganism, discerned the truth of Christianity. When they returned home they could no longer live with their pagan parents and kinsmen and secretly fled to Caesarea in Palestine to the presbyter Pamphilius, renown for his sanctity and spiritual learning. With Pamphilius, they studied the Law of God day and night and practiced Christian asceticism. It is said of Pamphilius that he was twenty years old according to the flesh but, in understanding and generosity, he was a hundred years old. When a persecution began during the reign of Maximian, many Christians fled the city and hid themselves. Others, willingly and rejoicfully, gave themselves into the hands of the persecutors in order to suffer for the Name of Him, Who first suffered for them. Amphianus was among the latter. Unafraid, he entered a pagan temple where Prince Urban was offering sacrifices to the idols, grabbed the prince by the hand which was holding the sacrifice and cried to him to refrain from serving and making sacrificial offerings to dead idols and to acknowledge the True God. Some of the pagans who heard these words and witnessing the great courage of Amphianus, repented and embraced the Faith of Christ. The enraged prince subjected Amphianus to torture. Among the other tortures, they wrapped the legs of Amphianus with cotton and set them on fire. When he remained alive, they tossed his body into the sea with a stone around his neck. The sea became turbulent and hurled his martyred body back into the city. At first, Edesius was sent to a cooper mine in Palestine and was later taken to Egypt. In Alexandria, Edesius was filled with holy zeal against a certain Prince Hierocles who, in the market place, assembled Christian nuns, maidens and virtuous women and handed them over to the most shameful perverts for derision. Edesius, filled with holy zeal, struck the disgraceful prince. For that, he was tortured and

drowned in the sea as was his brother Amphianus. As two innocent lambs, they were sacrificed for Christ about the year 306 A.D. and were translated to the glorious mansions of the Lord.

**3 / 16 April — St Nicetas the Confessor** - He was born in Bithynia, in the town of Caesarea. His father, Philaret, losing his wife, became a monk. Nicetas remained with his paternal grandmother. After he had grown up and finished his schooling, he went to a monastery in Midikion, where Nicephorus, the abbot, tonsured him as a monk. After seven years of toil and asceticism, he was ordained hieromonk by Patriarch Tarasius. After the deaths of Nicephorus and Nicetas's great friend, Athanasius, the brethren chose Nicetas as abbot, much against his will. St Nicetas was a holy example of life and asceticism to his brethren for many years. But when Leo V, the Armenian, came to the throne, following the devout Empress Irene and the pious Emperors Nicephorus and Michael, the iconoclast heresy sprang up again. The Emperor deposed Patriarch Nicephorus and sent him into exile, and in his place put a heretic, Theodotus Cassiteras, a man of impure life. Nicetas was imprisoned and tortured, but remained unwavering in his Orthodoxy. He was taken from prison to prison and tortured by hunger and thirst, by cold and heat and malice. But he remained utterly unwavering. A certain Nicolas pestered him particularly with his derision and malice. But one night the dead father of this Nicolas appeared to him in a dream and said: 'Leave that servant of God alone!' From that moment Nicolas repented, and not only refrained from pestering him but prevented others doing likewise. When the Emperor Leo the Armenian had made an evil end, the throne passed to the Orthodox Emperor Michael Balbus, who freed all the Orthodox sufferers. Nicetas retired to a lonely place near Constantinople, where he spent the remaining days of his earthly life in prayer and thanksgiving to God. When he died, his body was taken to his monastery and, during that journey, many of the sick, on touching his body, were healed. His relics were placed close to the graves of his spiritual father, Nicephorus, and his friend Athanasius. This great hierarch entered into rest in 824; **St Paul the Wretched; The Holy Martyr Ulphianus** - a young man from the city of Tyre. He suffered for Christ at the hands of Urban, the mayor of the city of Tyre, who also was the torturer of Amphianus [April 2]. Finally, he was tied in a sack along with a dog and a snake and tossed into the sea. He suffered and was glorified in the year 306 A.D.

**4 / 17 April — Our Holy Father Joseph the Hymnographer** - He was born in Sicily of devout and virtuous parents, Plotinus and Agatha. After the death of his parents, he moved to Salonica, where he became a monk. As a monk, he was an example to all in fasting, restraint, ceaseless supplication, psalmody, vigils and toil. The Bishop of Salonica ordained him hieromonk. The famous Gregory of Decapolis, visiting Salonica, loved Joseph with heart and soul for his rare character, and took him back with him to his monastery in Constantinople. When the flame of iconoclasm sprang up again under Leo the Armenian, Joseph was sent to Rome to call the Pope and the Roman Church to battle for the true Faith. But pirates captured him on the way and took him to Crete, where he was kept in prison for six years by the heretics. Joseph rejoiced that he was made worthy to suffer for Christ, and thanked God constantly, regarding the iron chains with which he was bound as golden ornaments. In the sixth year, around Christmas, the wicked Emperor was murdered at the morning service in church. At the same moment, St Nicolas appeared to Joseph in the prison and said to him: 'Get up and follow me.' Joseph felt himself lifted up in the air, and found himself all at once in Constantinople. His arrival was a source of rejoicing to all the Orthodox faithful. He composed Canons and hymns for many of the saints. He had the gift of insight, because of which Patriarch Photius made him spiritual father and confessor to his priests, recommending him as 'a man of God, an angel in the flesh, a father of fathers'. In great old age, he gave his soul into the hands of the God he had served so faithfully in work and song. He died peacefully on the eve of Holy Thursday in 883;

**The Holy Martyr Pherbutha** - During the reign of the Persian Emperor Saborius, St. Simeon, the bishop, was slain. At the wish of the empress, Pherbutha, the sister of Bishop Simeon, was taken to the palace. Pherbutha was exceptionally beautiful and because of that many suitors thronged to her among whom were many pagan priests and soothsayers. Pherbutha rejected them all and provoked much anger against herself. At that time, the empress became ill and all the pagan priests explained to the emperor that the empress was poisoned by Pherbutha and, as a cure for the ailing empress, they recommended the following: that Pherbutha, her sister and their slave, as Christians, be sawn and that three parts of their bodies be placed on one side and three parts on the other side and that the empress should be borne between them. The emperor agreed to the recommendation of these blood-thirsty pagan priests. Pherbutha, together with her sister and their slave, suffered for Christ in the year 343 A.D., thereby earning the incorruptible wreath in the eternal kingdom of their Lord; **Our Holy Father Zossima; Our Holy Father, the Martyr Nicetas** - a Slav from Albania. As a monk of the Holy Mountain (Mt. Athos), he went to Serres where he debated with the Mullahs about religion. Being that they could not overcome him with reason, the Turks subjected him to torture under which Nicetas, the holy one, died and gave up his soul to his God in the year 1808 A.D.

**5 / 18 April — The Holy Martyrs Agathopous and Theodulus** - The first was a deacon and the second a reader in the Church in Salonica; the first adorned with the white hairs of age and the second with the chastity of youth. In the time of Diocletian's hunting of Christians, these two were summoned for trial. They went there joyfully, and, each holding the other by the hand, went in crying: 'We are Christians!' The whole court's urging them to deny Christ and worship idols was in vain. After long imprisonment and starvation, they were condemned to death by drowning in the sea. Their hands were bound behind them and a large stone tied to their necks, and they were taken off to be drowned. When they went to throw Agathopous into the depths, he cried out: 'Lo, by a second baptism we are washed from all our sins, and will go cleansed to Christ Jesus!' The sea quickly threw their drowned bodies onto the shore, and Christians gave them burial. St Theodulus appeared to his friends in the form of a shining angel in white raiment and commanded them to distribute all his remaining goods to the poor. These great soldiers of Christ suffered with honour under the Emperor Diocletian and Faustinus, the governor of Salonica, in the year 303;

**Our Holy Father Mark of Trache** - also called "Mark the Athenian" because Athens was the place of his birth. His parents died after he completed his higher education in Athens. He thought to himself that death, even for himself, was unavoidable and that one should sufficiently prepare beforehand for that honourable departure from this world. Distributing all of his possessions to the poor, he sat on a plank in the sea and with a tenacious faith in God's help, prayed that God direct him wherever He wills. God, in His Providence, protected him and brought him to Lybia (or Ethiopia) to a mountain called Trache. Mark lived an ascetical life on this mountain for ninety-five years, seeing neither man nor beast. For thirty years, he waged a violent combat with evil spirits and suffered from hunger, thirst, frost and heat. He ate dirt and drank sea water. After thirty years of the most vehement suffering, the defeated demons fled from him and an angel of God began to bring him food daily in the form of bread, fish and fruit. St. Serapion visited him before his death and, afterward, made known the miraculous life of Mark. Mark asked St. Serapion: "Are there any Christians in the world now, who, if they were to say to this mountain, 'Arise from here and hurl yourself into the sea,' would it be so?" At that moment, the mountain upon which they stood moved in the direction of the sea. Mark raised his hand and stopped it. Such was the miracle-working power which this man of God possessed. Before his death, he prayed for the salvation of mankind and then gave up his soul to God. St. Serapion saw angels as they bore Mark's soul and he also saw an extended hand from heaven which received it. St. Mark lived to be one-hundred thirty years old and died about the year 400 A.D.

### **The Passion Gospels:**

- 1) Jn. 13:31-18:1 (Farewell conversation of the Saviour with His disciples and His high-priestly prayer for them).
- 2) Jn. 18:1-28 (the Seizure of the Saviour in the Garden of Gethsemane and His suffering at the hands of the high priest Annas).
- 3) Mt. 26:57-75. (Suffering of the Saviour at the hands of the high priest Caiaphas and Peter's denial of Christ).
- 4) Jn. 18:28-19:16 (Suffering of the Lord in the court of Pilate).
- 5) Mt. 27:3-32 (The despair of Judas by the new suffering of the Lord by Pilate and the judgment for His crucifixion).
- 6) Mk. 15:16-32 (Leading the Lord to Golgotha and his suffering on the cross).
- 7) Mt. 27:33-54 (The continuation of the narrative about the Lord's suffering on the cross, the wonderful signs accompanying His death).
- 8) Lk. 23:32-49 (The Prayer of the Saviour on the cross for His enemies and the repentance of the wise thief).
- 9) Jn. 19:25-37 (Words of the Saviour from the cross to the Theotokos and Apostle John and the repetition of the narrative of His death and perforation).
- 10) Mk. 15:43-47 (Removal of the body of the Lord from the cross).
- 11) Jn. 19:38-42 (Participation of Nicodemus and Joseph in the burial of the Saviour).
- 12) Mt. 27:62-66 (Posting of the guards at the tomb of the Saviour and the sealing of the tomb).