

Thomas Sunday

Second Sunday of Pascha

18 April / 1 May

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 1: When the stone had been sealed by the Jews; / while the soldiers were guarding Thy Most Pure Body; / Thou didst rise on the third day, O Saviour, / granting life to the world. / The Powers of Heaven therefore cried to Thee O Giver of Life: / glory to Thy Resurrection O Christ! / Glory to Thy Kingdom; / Glory to Thy Dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind.

Troparion of Thomas Sunday, Tone 7: While the tomb was sealed, Thou, O Life, didst shine forth from the grave, O Christ God. And while the doors were shut, Thou didst come unto Thy disciples, O Resurrection of all, renewing through them an upright Spirit in us according to Thy great mercy.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 1: As God, Thou didst rise from the tomb in glory, / Raising the world with Thyself. / Human nature praises Thee as God, for death has vanished. / Adam exults O Master, Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage, and cries to Thee; / Thou art the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ.

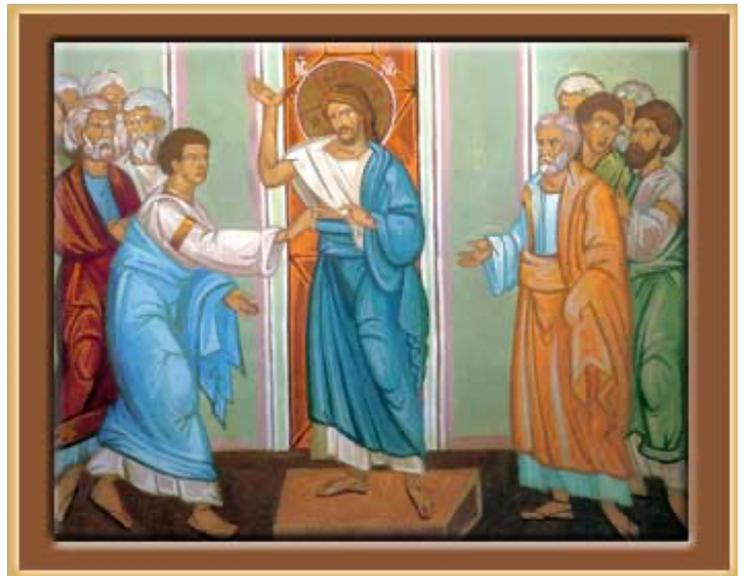
Kontakion of Thomas Sunday, Tone 8: With his searching right hand, Thomas did probe Thy life-bestowing side, O Christ God; for when Thou didst enter while the doors were shut, he cried out unto Thee with the rest of the disciples: Thou art my Lord and my God.

The Holy and Glorious Apostle Thomas - He was one of the twelve Great Apostles. Through his doubt of the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, a new confirmation was given of that wonderful and saving event, for the risen Lord appeared again to His disciples, to convince Thomas. The Lord said to Thomas: Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing', and Thomas cried: 'My Lord and my God! (John 20). After the descent of the Holy Spirit, when the apostles cast lots to see who would go where to preach the Gospel, it fell to Thomas to go to India. He was somewhat saddened at having to go so far away, but the Lord appeared to him and comforted him. In India, St Thomas converted many, both rich and poor, to the Christian faith, and founded a Church there, making priests and bishops. Among others, St Thomas converted two sisters, Tertiana and Mygdonia, wives of Indian princes. Both sisters were ill-treated for their faith by their husbands, who would not live with them after their baptism, and divorced them. Being freed from their marriages, they lived godly lives till their deaths. Dionysius and Pelagia, a couple at first betrothed to each other, heard the Apostle's teaching and did not live together, but devoted themselves to the ascetic life. Pelagia died a martyr for the Faith and Dionysius was made bishop by the Apostle. Prince Misdaeus, the husband of Tertiana, whose wife and son Iuzanes Thomas baptised, condemned the Apostle to death, and sent five soldiers who ran him through with their lances, and thus the holy Apostle Thomas gave his soul into the hands of his Christ. Before his death, he, with the other apostles, was miraculously borne to Jerusalem for the funeral of the most holy Mother of God. Arriving late, he grieved bitterly and, at his request, the tomb of the Most Pure was opened, but the body was not there; the Lord had taken His Mother to His heavenly home. Thus St Thomas first, by his unbelief, confirmed the faith in the Resurrection of the Lord and then, by his late arrival, revealed to us the wondrous glorification of the Mother of God.

Matins Gospel I

Epistle: St. Acts of the Apostles 5: 12 -20

And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, So that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed. Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, And laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."



MANY SIGNS AND WONDERS WERE DONE AMONG THE PEOPLE

For though the Apostles themselves modestly ascribe it all to this cause, declaring that they did these things in the name of Christ, yet at the same time the life and noble conduct of the men helped to produce this effect ...Observe how he now no longer tells the number of those who believe: at such a rate was the faith making way even to an immense multitude, and also widely was the Resurrection proclaimed. So then 'the people magnified them': but they were now no longer lightly to be despised as once they were: for in a little moment, at a single turn of the scale, such have been the effects produced by the fisherman and the publican! Earth had become a heaven, for manner of life, for boldness of speech, for wonders, for all: like angels they were looked upon with wonder.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XII on Acts V B#55. p. 78.

The Gospel According To St. John 20: 19-31

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

For great is the dignity of the priests. 'Whosoever sins,' it says, 'you remit, they are remitted unto them' ...And hold them very exceedingly in honour ...The priest, even if he rightly orders his own life, if he does not have an anxious care for yours, yes and that of all those around him, will depart with the wicked into hell; and often when not betrayed by his own conduct, he perishes by yours, if he has not rightly performed his part... 'For they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account' (Heb.13:17)...For this is the Faith, to receive things not seen, since 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen' (Heb. 11:1).

St. John Chrysostom. Homily LXXXVI, 4 and LXXXVII, 1 on John XX. B#58, pp. 326,327

A missionary was tortured for preaching Christ in pagan Burma. His fingernails were torn from the roots and he was hung by his fingers until his hands were twisted and scarred. Later when he asked to preach in a certain town, the pagan Prince of that town refused saying: "I would allow a dozen ordinary men to speak, but not you with those scarred hands. My people would never listen to what you say, for they could not help seeing your hands."

The inference was that the missionary's scarred hands would speak more convincingly of his love for Christ than any words he could say.

The Gospel lesson today spoke to us of the scars of Jesus. When the other disciples told Thomas that they had seen the Lord, Thomas said to them: "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe." Eight days later when the disciples were in the room and Thomas with them, the doors being shut, our Lord stood in the midst of them and said, "Peace be to you." Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it into my side; do not be faithless, but believing." Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!" Thomas believed when he saw the scars of Jesus. For him the scars were the greatest proof that this was the real Jesus, the Jesus who had suffered and died, the Jesus Who had risen from the tomb.

Through the Gospel lesson today the Risen Christ appears also to us. He shows us the scars in His hands and side! What do the scars of Christ teach us? What do they tell us about Him?

The Scars Speak.

First, the scars of Christ speak most eloquently of His love for us. St. Paul writes, "While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one would hardly die for a righteous man — though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8).

A little girl sat on her mother's knee, and as she looked into her mother's face she said: "Mummie, you've got the prettiest hair and the sweetest eyes I have ever seen. And Mummie, yours is the kindest face in all the world. But, Mummie, why are your arms so ugly?" The mother then explained to her daughter that when she was a tiny baby the house caught fire. She ran into the house and rescued her out of her crib. In the process her arms and hands were badly burned. When the little girl heard this, tears began streaming down her face. Looking once more into her mother's face she said, "Mummie, you've got the prettiest hair I have ever seen, and yours is the sweetest face, and your eyes are wonderful. But, Mummie, your hands and your arms are the most beautiful of all. I have loved you always, but I love you more than ever now."

The scars of Jesus speak eloquently of His love for us. Such eloquence should evoke in every true Christian the response it evoked in Thomas and in the little girl, "My Lord and my God, I loved you before but more than ever now.

Secondly, the scars of Jesus teach us that life is a struggle. Whoever got the idea that a good Christian never suffers? "God had one son without sin," said St. Augustine. "He has no sons without suffering." He has never promised us immunity from suffering — His own Son suffered — but He has promised us victory in our suffering. "In the world you have tribulation but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world," He said. The worst thing that evil can do is to kill God. Having been defeated in that, in its strongest moment, when evil wore its greatest armor, it can never be victorious again.

Thirdly, the scars of Jesus speak eloquently of His love, but they also speak to our scars. The hardest part of suffering for Christians is the dark hour when they are tempted to believe that God is not with them in their suffering; when they suppose that Jesus reigns in some far-off splendor, untroubled by their woe. This is simply not true! The first thing Jesus does when He comes to sufferers is to show them His scarred hands. What a password! When you are pouring out your passionate protests to Jesus and asking Him why this should happen to you, look! He is showing you His hands.

Finally the scars on the body of Jesus were caused by man's sin. If we were to choose a symbol for sin, perhaps the best one would be a nail. Each sin is a nail that continues to be driven into the body of Jesus. The best definition of sin is that it is not only the breaking of God's commandments, but even more so the breaking of God's heart.

There was a soldier who was with the occupying forces in Germany, far from wife and home and loved ones. One evening he was walking down a German street, where one of the few buildings remaining was a house of ill fame, its doorway decorated with suggestive photographs. He was greatly tempted. He reached into his pocket for his billfold. As he opened it his eyes fell on a picture of the crucified Christ which he always carried with him. He saw the scars on the hands of our Lord. He thought of the nails his sin would drive into those hands. Then, without hesitation, he walked away from temptation saying to himself, "I cannot sin against Him. I had forgotten the scars."

Footprints and Nailprints.

A Frenchman was crossing the desert with an Arab guide. Day after day the Arab knelt on the burning sand and called upon his God in prayer.

One evening when the Arab knelt to pray, the unbelieving Frenchman asked him: "How do you know there is a God?"

The guide fixed his eyes upon the scoffer for a moment and then replied: "How do I know there is a God? I'll answer that question, if you permit me to ask you one first. How did we know this morning that it was a camel and not a man that had passed our tent while we slept last night?"

The Frenchman laughed and said, "Why, we could tell it by the print of the hoof in the sand. That print was not from the foot of a man."

The Arab then looked to the West where the setting sun threw shafts of red and gold and purple into the vaulted canopy of heaven, and pointing toward the sun, he said: "Neither is that the footprint of a man."

The world about us is filled with the footprints of God! Every sunset, every sunrise, every tree, every flower, every lake, every blade of grass, every twinkling star in the diamond-studded ceiling which envelops this marvelous world of ours — is a footprint of our Maker.

The Bible tells us: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Psalms 19:1). He who can see the scarlet sun sink into its pool of purple, splashing the sky with streaks of gold and crimson — and still not see the footprint of his Maker — is like a pair of spectacles without a pair of eyes behind them.

But God has not left us to follow the path to Him by footprints. He has revealed Himself to us through the pages of His Word. The book of nature may tell us that there is a God, but only the Book of God can tell us who He is — and what He has done for us through Jesus Christ, His Son.

The footprints of the setting and the rising sun may tell us that God is. But only the nailprints in the hands of our Savior can tell us that God is — LOVE.

Jesus appeared to the disciples, and to Thomas, showing them the scars in His hands and side — scars that were proof of His love; scars that won for us the final Victory over death; scars that speak a compassionate word of understanding to our wounds; scars which if we have re-opened through our sin, we can hopefully re-close through our sincere and honest repentance.

Too long have we been hard on Thomas. He is now our spokesman. Surrounded by scars we, too, say: "Until I see in His own hands the mark of the nails, and put my finger into the nailmarks and my hand into His side, I will never believe." Having seen the scars, we cannot but say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!"

Fr Anthony Coniaris

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe (Jn. 20:24-25).

What does this mean, his "I will not believe"? Is it possible he could not believe the other eleven Apostles, his brothers? Is it possible they could lie to him? The whole evangelical life of Christ, all His miracles, Golgotha, the death on the Cross, they had experienced together. And now this joy which they all had experienced they wanted to share with him. No, this was not a lie.

But He, Whom they had seen, was He really the same Christ? Was this not a vision or some other Christ? Was this not a mistake? And Thomas was afraid to lose what he had. And what did he have? This is what: during the years of fellowship with Christ, he had absorbed His teaching, the entire makeup of His life; and by now he was incapable of living any other way. It was painful for him not to have personal fellowship anymore with Christ; but by this time he understood that Christ came to earth in order to teach us the main commandment of God: love for God and neighbour, to perform it Himself, and to give us the strength to fulfill it.

In Paradise the first man fulfilled the commandment of God. The strength to fulfill this commandment of God he drew from eating the fruits of the Tree of Life. But then came the Fall. Paradise was lost, the Tree of Life was lost, and together with it, the strength for a godly life. And Christ came in order to give us the New Testament Tree of Life—His Body and Blood. “This do in remembrance of Me,” He said at the Last Supper (Lk. 22:19).

Thomas knew the commandments of Christ, and he knew where to draw the strength to fulfill them. He lived this. Although he lived without the human presence of Christ, he lived in Christ. He was afraid to make a mistake. What if another Christ had appeared to the disciples, not the One in Whom he lived and continued to live? This is what his “I will not believe” meant. And on the eighth day after His Resurrection, the Lord again appeared to His disciples, while Thomas was also in the house, and allowed him to touch His wounds. And here resounded Thomas’s triumphant cry, which even now stirs our hearts: “My Lord and my God!” (Jn. 20:28). And here are the words of Christ which relate to you and me, opening a new era of faith which will remain until the end of the world: “Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed... But these are written,” adds the Apostle John the Divine, “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name” (Jn. 20:29, 31).

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei

Saints of the Week

18 April / 1 May — Our Holy Father John - He was a disciple of St Gregory of Decapolis. In the time of the iconoclast heresy, the Emperor Leo the Armenian put John to torture, together with his teacher, Gregory, and Joseph the Hymnographer. When Gregory finished his earthly course, John became abbot of the Decapolite monastery in Constantinople. Becoming abbot, he intensified his asceticism for the sake of the Kingdom of God. He died peacefully in about 820. After his death, St Joseph buried him near the grave of St Gregory.

The Holy Martyr John the New of Ioannina - born in Ioannina, once the capitol city of the Emperor Pyrrhus. When his impoverished parents died, the young John moved to Constantinople and there continued his occupation, for he was a craftsman. Not long before that, the Turks surrounded Constantinople and many Christians, out of fear, denied Christ and embraced the Islamic faith. St. John had his workshop in the midst of these converts to Islam. The more the young John burned with love for Christ the Lord, the more openly he exposed himself as a Christian before these traitors of Christ. He began to argue with them about faith and, finally, rebuked them for their betrayal of Christ. They dragged him before the judge and falsely accused John, alleging that he had earlier embraced Islam, and that he again reverted to Christianity. After he was tortured and beaten with rods and iron ramrods, they cast him into prison. The next day was the Feast of the Resurrection of Christ and, again, they brought him out for further torture and John emerged singing: “Christ is risen from the dead!” To his torturers, he bravely said: “Do what you want in order to send me as soon as possible from this transient life to eternal life. I am Christ’s slave, I follow Christ, for Christ I die that I may live with Him!” After that, John was bound in chains and brought to the place of burning. Upon seeing a large fire prepared for him, John ran and leaped into the flames. His torturers seeing how he loved death in the fire removed him from the fire and sentenced him to be beheaded. After they beheaded him, they threw his head and body into the fire. Later on, Christians leafed through the ashes and gathered some of the remains of his honourable and wonder-working relics and interred them in the Great Church [Agia Sophia - Church of the Holy Wisdom] in Constantinople. Thus, St. John of Ioannina died a martyr’s death and received the glorious martyr’s wreath on April 18, 1526 A. D.; The Holy Martyrs Victor, Zoticus, Zeno, Acyndinus and Severian; New Martyr Priests Nicholas (1937) and Basil (Derzhavin) (1930) and lay people of the city of Gorodets, Nizhni-Novgorod.

19 April / 2 May — Our Holy Father John of the Ancient Caves - lived a life of asceticism in the so-called “old caves,” the “old Lavra” of Chariton the Great in Palestine. Having loved Christ the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his mind, John, at an early age, began to travel to the holy places and to listen to the instructions and counsels of the holy men. Finally, he settled in the Caves of Chariton, where he gave himself to rigorous asceticism spending days and years in fasting, prayer, vigils, continuously meditating on death, and teaching himself humility. As a good ripened fruit, he was plucked by death and took up habitation in Paradise. He lived and died in the eighth century;

The Holy Martyrs Christopher, Theonas and Antoninus - young officers serving under Emperor Diocletian. When St. George the Great Martyr was being tortured, they witnessed his sufferings as well as the miracles which occurred at that time. Seeing all of this, they came before the emperor, laid down their arms, removed their military belts and bravely confessed the Name of the Lord Jesus. For that, they were subjected to great torture and finally were tossed into the fire, where their bodies were consumed while their souls went to God into eternal joy. They honourably suffered in Nicomedia in the year 303 A.D.;

St Tryphun, Patriarch of Constantinople - The Emperor Romanus, who reigned over Byzantium at the beginning of the tenth century had a son, Theophylact, who was sixteen years old when Patriarch Stephen died. The emperor wanted his son to be elevated as patriarch for he had promised him [his son] this spiritual calling from his youth. Because his son was a minor, the emperor was ashamed to do this. The patriarchal throne was assumed by Tryphun a simple but chaste and pious old man. Tryphun remained on the throne for three years. When the son of the emperor reached his twentieth year, the emperor thought, to remove Tryphun at any price and to install his son as patriarch. The saint of God, Tryphun, did not want to relinquish his throne voluntarily, for no other reason, because he considered it to be a great scandal that such a young man be elevated to such a responsible and burdensome position as that of being patriarch. Through the intrigue of a nefarious bishop, the signature of the innocent Tryphun was extracted on a blank sheet of paper. Later on, in the imperial court, above that signature, the alleged resignation of the patriarch was written which the emperor decreed. As a result of this, there arose a great confusion in the Church, for the laity and the clergy stood by Tryphun, the godly man. The emperor then forcibly removed the aged patriarch and sent him to a monastery and, his son, Theophylact, was elevated as patriarch. St. Tryphun lived as an ascetic in this monastery for two years and five months and presented himself before the Lord in the year 933 A.D.. Our Holy Father, the Martyr Agathangelos; Our Holy Father Simeon the Barefoot;

Hieromartyr Alphege, archbishop of Canterbury (1012) - he became a monk at Deerhurst but after some years retired to be a hermit in Somerset. In 984 he became bishop of Winchester and he became known for his personal austerity and lavish almsgiving. In 994 King Ethelred sent him to parley with the Danes Anlaf and Swein, who had raided both London and Wessex. The Anglo-Saxons paid tribute but Anlaf became a Christian and promised he would never again come to England 'with warlike intent.' This promise was kept. In 1006 he succeeded Aelfric as archbishop of Canterbury. Meanwhile the Danes continued to overrun southern England. They besieged Canterbury and imprisoned Alphege and others and demanded a ransom of 3000 pounds. Alphege refused to pay and forbade his people to do so. The Danes were so infuriated that, after a feast at which they got drunk, and killed him with the bones of oxen: an axeman delivered the final blow. His was originally buried in St. Paul's Cathedral, London however in 1023 his body was translated to Canterbury Cathedral. In 1105 his body was found to be incorrupt.

20 April / 3 May — Our Holy Father Theodore Trichinas - A citizen of Constantinople, he was the son of wealthy parents. He left parents, home and riches while still a young man and settled in a remote monastery in Thrace, where he undertook the most rigorous ascetic life. He slept on a stone so that he might have less sleep; he was always bareheaded and dressed in a hair-shirt, from which he was called 'Trichinas' or 'hairy'. Because of his great and self-inflicted sufferings for the sake of his soul's salvation, God granted him the gift of working miracles, both in his lifetime and after his death, and he died peacefully in about 400. Healing myrrh flowed from his relics.

The Holy Apostle Zacchaeus - At first, Zacchaeus was a tax collector and a sinner. When our Lord saw him in Jericho in a tree and entered his home, Zacchaeus was brought to repentance. Later on, Zacchaeus followed the Apostle Peter who appointed him bishop of Caesarea in Palestine where he faithfully served the Gospel and died peacefully; Blessed Anastasius the Sinaite, Patriarch of Antioch; Blessed Gregory, Patriarch of Antioch; Our Holy Father Anastasius of Sinai; Our Holy Father Athanasius of Meteora;

St. Caedwalla, king of the West Saxons (689) - he became king by conquest being notoriously violent but then abdicated and went to Rome to become a Christian. He was baptised on Holy Saturday 689 being given the name Peter by Pope Sergius. Soon afterwards he was taken ill and died, still wearing his white baptismal robes. He was aged 30.

April 21 / May 4 — Fast Day - The Hieromartyr Januarius and those with him - This saint was Bishop of Benevento in Italy. In the time of a persecution under Maximian, he was brought before the judge and tormented with various tortures, which he endured patiently. When they threw him into the flames, they were cooled by an invisible dew and the martyr stood uninjured in it and sang the praises of God. Then they flayed his body with iron flails until the bones showed white, but the martyr patiently endured all. His deacon, Faustus, and his reader, Desiderius, were watching the torture and wept for their spiritual father. Then they too were bound and taken with their bishop to the town of Pozzuoli, and cast into prison. There were in the same prison for the sake of Christ the Puetolian deacons Proclus and Sossus and two simple, Christian men, Eutychius and Acutius. All seven were thrown next day to the wild beasts, but the beasts would not touch them. They were all then beheaded, and the Christians of the city of Naples secretly took the body of St Januarius to their city and buried it in the church. To this present day innumerable wonders are worked at this saint's grave. One among many remembered is this: a poor widow, whose only son had died, took the icon of St Januarius out of the church and laid it on her dead son, weeping and imploring the saint's aid, and her son was restored to life. St Januarius suffered with honour in 305; The Holy Martyr Theodore;

St. Beuno, abbot of Clynnog Fawr, England (c.640) - born and educated in Herefordshire before founding his main monastery. When he died a stone oratory was built over his tomb; later his relics were translated to a new church (Eglwys y Bedd) where miracles were reported. He is considered to be the most important local saint of North Wales. Remains of the primitive oratory were excavated in 1914.

St. Maelrubba (642-722) Apostle of the Picts - born in Ireland he became a monk at Bangor; later founded a monastery at Applecross on the west coast of Scotland. From there he evangelised Skye and penetrated as far north as Loch Broom. He also build a church on an island in Loch Maree, where his spring was famous for its healing properties.

St. Ethilwald, hermit of Farne (d. 699) - he was a monk and a priest of Ripon, who succeeded Cuthbert in the Inner Farne hermitage in 687. Almost nothing is known of him. Once Guthrid, the future abbot, with two monks of Lindisfarne, visited him by boat; on the return journey they were saved from shipwreck in a sudden storm by his prayers. Many miracles have been reported due to his intercession.

April 22 / May 5 — Our Holy Father Theodore the Sykeote - His birthplace was the village of Sykeon in Galatia, because of which he was named 'the Sykeote'. While still a ten-year-old boy, Theodore gave himself to strict fasting and night-long vigils under the eye of an elder, Stephen, who lived in his house. His mother, Maria, was a rich widow and intended her son to devote himself to a soldier's calling. But St George appeared to her in her sleep and told her that Theodore was destined for the service, not of an earthly king, but of the King of heaven. St George also appeared to Theodore many times, either to instruct him or to save him from some danger in which the evil demons had placed him. He also had several visions of the most holy Mother of God. Theodore's asceticism exceeded in its severity the asceticism of all the other ascetics of his time. He tormented his body in hunger and thirst and iron girdles and standing all night in prayer. All this—only to link his soul in love to God and to achieve total mastery over his body. The merciful Lord's love responded to Theodore's love. He gave him great power over evil spirits and over all the ills and pains of men. He became known on all sides as a miraculous healer. For his great purity and devotion, he was chosen against his wishes as Bishop of Anastasioupolis. He spent eleven years in episcopal service, and then begged God to release him from this service in order to devote himself again to his beloved asceticism. After that, he returned to his monastery, where, in old age, he gave his soul to the Lord for whose sake he had undergone so much voluntary suffering. He died at the beginning of the reign of the Emperor Heraclius, in about 613. The Holy Martyr Leonidas; **Our Holy Father, the Monk Vitalis** - During the time of the Alexandrian Patriarch John the Merciful, a young monk appeared who, as soon as he arrived, compiled a list of all the prostitutes in Alexandria. The mortification (asceticism) of this young

monk was exceptional and unique. During the day he would offer himself for hire to do the most difficult jobs and at night, he would enter the houses of ill repute, gave the earned amount of money to some prostitute and close himself in the room with her the entire night. As soon as they were locked up, Vitalis would beg the woman to lie down and sleep and he would spend the entire night in a corner of the room in prayer to God for that sinner. Thus, he would save the woman from sinning at least one night. The second night, he would go to a second, the third night to a third and so on until he had visited them all, and then, he again returned to the one with whom he started. By his counselling, many of the sinners abandoned their sullied trade. Some of them married, others entered convents and still others turned to a respectable work and income. Vitalis forbid all of these women to reveal the reason why he was visiting them. Because of this, Vitalis became a scandal for all of Alexandria. The men began to scold him, spit upon him and to openly beat him on the streets. He bore all patiently, making known his good works to God and concealing them from men. When he died, everything about him became known. Many miracles of healing occurred over his grave. People from different places began to bring their sick to his grave. Spat upon by men, he was and remained glorified by the Omniscient God.

April 23 / May 6 — Fast Day - The Holy and Great Martyr George - This renowned and glorious martyr was born in Cappadocia, the son of rich and God-fearing parents. His father suffered for Christ, after which his mother moved to Palestine. When George grew up, he went into the army, in which he rose, by the age of twenty, to the rank of tribune, and as such was in service under the Emperor Diocletian. When this Emperor began a terrible persecution of Christians, George came before him and boldly confessed that he was a Christian. The Emperor threw him into prison, and commanded that his feet be put in the stocks and a heavy weight placed on his chest. After that, he commanded that he be bound on a wheel, under which was a board with great nails protruding, and thus be turned. He then had him buried in a pit with only his head above the ground, and left there for three days and nights. Then, through some magician, he gave him deadly poison, but in the face of all these tortures, George prayed unceasingly to God, and God healed him instantly and saved him from death, to the great amazement of the people. When he also raised a dead man to life by his prayers, many embraced the Christian faith. Among these was the Emperor's wife, Alexandra, and the chief pagan priest, Athanasius, the governor Glycerius and Valerius, Donatus and Therinus. Finally, the Emperor commanded that George and the Empress Alexandra be beheaded. Blessed Alexandra died on the scaffold before being killed, and St George was beheaded. This happened in the year 303. The miracles that have been performed at his grave are without number. Also are his appearances in dreams to those who, thinking on him, have sought his help, from that time up to the present day. Consumed by love for Christ, it was not difficult for holy George to leave all for this love—his status, wealth and imperial favour, his friends and the whole world. For this love, the Lord rewarded him with a wreath of unfading glory in heaven and on earth, and with eternal life in His Kingdom. The Lord further endowed him with the power to help in need and distress all who honour him and call on his name; The Holy Martyr Lazarus the New.

St. Ethelbert, king of East Angles - he was venerated as a martyr because of his violent death for political reasons at the hand of Offa, king of Mercia, whose daughter Aelfthryth he visited with a view to marriage. The body was buried by the river Lugg at Marden and later translated to Hereford where it remained until the Danes burnt it in 1050. Fragments of the original shrine at Hereford still remain - it was the second most popular pilgrimage centre of the times.

April 24 / May 7 The Holy Martyr Sabbas Stratelates - This famous Sabbas lived in Rome in the time of the Emperor Aurelian, and held a general's rank. He was of a noble Gothic family. He often visited Christians in prison, helping them from his abundance. Through his great purity and fasting, God gave him power over unclean spirits. When he was charged with being a Christian, he stood courageously before the Emperor, cast his officer's belt before him and publicly confessed Christ the Lord. He was tortured in various ways: flogged, flailed with iron rods, burned with torches. But he did not succumb to these deadly tortures, and was seen to be alive and well. His comrades, the soldiers, seeing clearly that God was helping Sabbas, accepted the Christian faith, and seventy of them were immediately beheaded at the Emperor's command. Christ the Lord Himself appeared to Sabbas in the prison in great light, and strengthened His martyr. Then Sabbas was condemned to death by drowning. He was thrown into a deep river, where he gave his soul to God in the year 272. And his soul went to the Lord to whom he had remained faithful under many tortures; Our Holy Mother Elisabeth; The Holy Martyrs Eusebius, Neon, Leontius and Longinus; The Holy Martyrs Pasicrates and Valentine; Our Holy Father Thomas the Fool for Christ; The Holy New Martyrs Luke and Nicolas;

St. Egbert of Lindisfarne (729) - a Northumbrian monk, born of noble parentage c. 639; d. 729. In his youth he went for the sake of study to Ireland, to a monastery, says the Venerable Bede, "called Rathmelsigi", identified by some with Mellifont in what is now County Louth. There, when in danger of death from pestilence, he prayed for time to do penance, vowing amongst other things to live always in exile from his own country. In consequence he never returned to England, though he lived to the age of ninety, and always fasted rigorously. Having become a priest, he was filled with zeal for the conversion of the still pagan German tribes related to the angles, and would himself have become their apostle, if God had not shown him that his real calling was to other work. It was he, however, who dispatched to Friesland St. Wigbert, St. Willibrord, and other saintly missionaries. St. Egbert's own mission was made known to him by a monk, who, at Melrose, had been a disciple of St. Boisil. Appearing to this monk, St. Boisil sent him to tell Egbert that the Lord willed him instead of preaching to the heathen to go to the monasteries of St. Columba, "because their ploughs were not going straight", in consequence of their schismatic practice in the celebration of Easter. Leaving Ireland therefore in 716, Egbert crossed over to Iona, where the last thirteen years of his life were spent. By his sweetness and humility he induced the Iona monks to relinquish their erroneous mode of computation; in 729 they celebrated Easter with the rest of the Church upon 24 April, although their old rule placed it that year upon an earlier day.