

# Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

## Fifth Sunday of Pascha

17 / 30 May



**Resurrection Tropar, Tone 4:** When the women disciples of the Lord / learned from the Angel the joyous message of Thy Resurrection / they cast away the ancestral curse / and elatedly told the Apostles / death is overcome / Christ God is risen / granting the world great mercy.

**Resurrection Kondak, Tone 4:** My Saviour and Redeemer / as God rose from the tomb and delivered the earth-born from their chains / He has shattered the gates of hell, / and as Master, / He has risen on the third day.

**Kontakion of St. George Tone 4:** Thou wast cultivated by God/ and didst become a most wonderful cultivator of piety,/ and didst harvest for thyself the sheaves of virtue,/ for having sown in tears thou didst reap in joy/ and having withstood to death thou art garnered for Christ./ By thy intercessions, O Saint,/ thou dost obtain for us all remission of our sins.

**Kondak of the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, Tone 8:** Having come to the well in faith, the Samaritan woman saw Thee, the Water of Wisdom, whereof having drunk abundantly, she, the renowned one, inherited the kingdom on high forever.

### Matins Gospel VII

#### Epistle: The Acts of the Apostles 11: 19-26 & 29-30

Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

#### BARNABAS AND SAUL TO ANTIOCH

The persecution turned out to be no slight benefit, as 'to those who love God all things work together for good' (Rom.8:28). If they had made it their express study how best to establish the Church, they would have done nothing else but this: they dispersed the teachers ...When Stephen was slain, when Paul was twice in danger, when the Apostles were scourged, then the Gentiles received the word, and also the Samaritans. Paul declared: 'It was necessary that the Word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles' (ch.13:46) ... 'And the hand of the Lord', it says, 'was with them,' that is, they wrought miracles ...Even so, it is no small part of providential management for Paul to be there ...In this way that Voice of the Gospel, that Trumpet of Heaven is not shut up in Jerusalem ...Truly this is the reason why it was there they were appointed to be called Christians, because Paul spent so long a time in Antioch!

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXV on Acts XI. B#55, pp.162-163.*

#### The Gospel According To St. John 4: 5-42

So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" Jesus answered and said to her,

"Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' For you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?" The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Then they went out of the city and came to Him. In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not laboured; others have laboured, and you have entered into their labours." And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did." So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

### Homily

All four Gospels speak of the Lord's departure to Galilee. Sts Matthew and Mark note that this took place after John had been imprisoned, while St John adds that the reason for this was the rumor that Jesus was receiving and baptizing more disciples than John the Baptist, although the Evangelist explains that it was not He Himself Who was baptizing, but His disciples. After John's imprisonment, the Pharisees' entire hatred focused on Jesus, Who began to seem to them more dangerous than the Baptist. As the time of His suffering had not yet arrived, Jesus leaves Judea and goes to Galilee, in order to avoid persecution by His envious enemies. Only one Evangelist, St John, relates Christ's conversation with the Samaritan woman that took place on the way to Galilee.

The Lord's way lay through Samaria — the district located to the north of Judea and formerly belonging to three tribes of Israelites: Dan, Ephraim, and Manasseh. There was a city in this district called Samaria, the former capital of the Israelite government. The Assyrian king Salmanassar had conquered the Israelites and led them into captivity, replacing the population with heathens from Babylon and other places. It was from the mixing of these settlers with the remaining Jews that the Samaritans originated. They accepted the Five Books of Moses, worshipping Yahweh — but did not forget their own gods. When the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity and began to restore the temple of Jerusalem, the Samaritans also wanted to take part. However, the Jews rejected them, so they erected their own temple on Mount Gerizim. While accepting the Books of Moses, the Samaritans, however, rejected the writings of the Prophets and the entire tradition. Because of this, the Jews' attitude towards them was worse than to heathens, avoiding any contact with them whatsoever, loathing and despising them.

Passing through Samaria, the Lord and His disciples stopped to rest near a well that, according to tradition, had been dug by Jacob near a town named Sychem, which Saint John calls Sychera. It is possible that the Evangelist employed this name in mockery, restructuring it from the word "shikar" — "ply with wine," into "sheker" — "lie." Saint John points out that it was "about the sixth hour" (noon, according to our time), the time of the maximum heat, which was most likely necessitated taking a rest. "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water." While the disciples of Jesus had gone to town to buy food, He turned to the Samaritan woman with a request: "Give Me to drink." Seeing, probably, by clothing or manner of speech that the one addressing her was a Jew, the Samaritan woman expressed her surprise that He, being a Jew, would ask her, a Samaritan, for water, having in mind the hatred and contempt the Jews had towards the Samaritans. But Jesus, having come to the world to save all, and not only the Jews, explains to the woman that she would not have posed such questions if she had known with Whom she was speaking and what good fortune ("the gift of God") God had sent her through this meeting. If she only had known Who was asking her for a drink, then she herself would be asking Him to quench her spiritual thirst and to reveal to her the truth that all people seek to know; and He would have given her "living water," which should be understood as the grace of the Holy Spirit (c.f., Jn 7:38).

The Samaritan woman did not understand the Lord: she thought the living water meant the water found at the bottom of the well. That was why she asked Jesus how He could get the living water if He did not have anything to draw it up with, for the well was deep. "Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?" (Jn 4:12). She recalls the Patriarch Jacob with pride and love, as the one who left use of this well to his offspring. Then the Lord raises her mind to the highest understanding of His words: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (Jn 4:13-14). In the spiritual life, the grace-filled water

has a different effect than that of physical water in earthly life. He who is filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit will never experience spiritual thirst, inasmuch as all his spiritual needs have already been satisfied; meanwhile, he who drinks physical water, just as when he satisfies some other earthly needs, quenches his thirst for some time only, and soon after "shall thirst again."

Moreover, the grace-filled water will remain in man, establishing a source within him, springing up (skipping — the literal translation from Greek) into eternal life, that is, making that person a communicant of eternal life. Still not understanding the Lord, thinking that He is speaking about ordinary water — only some special type that quenches thirst forever — she asks the Lord for some of this water, so as to avoid the need of coming to the well for water. In order to make her realize, finally, that she is speaking with no ordinary man, the Lord initially orders her to call her husband, and then directly accuses her that, while she had had five husbands, she was now, too, living in an adulterous union.

Seeing that before her was a Prophet Who knows everything that is concealed, the Samaritan woman turns to Him for the resolution of the problem that greatly troubled the Samaritans in their relations with the Jews: who is correct in the argument about the place for worshipping God? The Samaritans who, following their fathers, built a temple on Mount Gerizim, and worshiped God there? Or the Jews, who affirmed that one could worship God only in Jerusalem? Basing themselves on Moses' order to deliver a blessing on this mountain, the Samaritans chose Mount Gerizim for their worship. Although John Hyrcanus destroyed their temple that was erected there in the year 130 BC, they continued to offer their sacrifices on the location of the ruined temple. Responding to the woman's question, the Lord explains that it would be wrong to think that one can worship God only in one specific place, and that the disputed question between the Samaritans and the Jews will soon lose its meaning by itself, because both types of Divine service — both the Jewish and the Samaritan — will cease in the nearest future. This prophecy was fulfilled when the Samaritans, decimated by soldiers, became disillusioned with the importance of their mountain, while the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple was burnt in the year 70 AD.

Nonetheless, the Lord gives His preference for Jewish worship, having in mind, of course, the fact that the Samaritans accepted only the Five Books of Moses, rejecting the Prophetic writings, which contained the detailed description of the Person and Kingdom of the Messiah. For "salvation is of (will come from) the Jews," inasmuch as the Redeemer of mankind will come from the Jewish people. Further, the Lord, elaborating His previous thought, points out that the "hour cometh, and now is" (since the Messiah had already appeared), the time of the new, highest worship of God, which will not be limited to any one location, but will be everywhere, for it will be in spirit and in truth. Only this type of worship is genuine, inasmuch as it corresponds to the nature of God Himself, Who is Spirit. To worship God in spirit and in truth means to strive to please God, not in outward form alone, but by the means of true and openhearted striving for God as Spirit with all the strength of one's spiritual being; that is, not by means of sacrificial offerings, which both the Jews and Samaritans made, supposing that this was the only way to honor God, but to know and love God, genuinely and un-hypocritically wishing to please Him through the fulfillment of His commandments. Worshiping God in "in Spirit and in truth" by no means excludes the outward, ritual side of honoring God, like some false teachers and sectarians attempt to affirm, but the main force is not contained in this outward side of honoring God. The actual order of honoring God should not be seen as anything prejudicial: it is both essential and unavoidable, for a human consists not only of the soul, but of the body. Jesus Christ Himself worshiped God the Father physically, kneeling and prostrating Himself to the ground, not rejecting similar worshiping of Himself from various people during His earthly life (c.f., for example: Mt 2:11, 14:33, 15:25; Jn 11:32, 12:3; and many other examples in the Gospels).

The Samaritan woman begins as it were to understand the meaning of Jesus' words, saying in her deliberation: "I know that Messiah cometh, Which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things." The Samaritans were also awaiting the Messiah, calling Him, in their own way, Gashageb, basing this expectation on the words of Genesis 49:10, and especially on Moses' words in Deuteronomy 18:18. The Samaritans' understanding of the Messiah was not as corrupted as that of the Jews, inasmuch as they awaited Him as a prophet and not as a political leader. That was why Jesus, not calling Himself the Messiah among the Jews for a long time, says directly to this simple Samaritan woman that He is the Messiah-Christ promised by Moses: "I that speak unto thee am He" [the Messiah]. Elated with joy from having seen the Messiah, the woman drops her water-pot at the well and hurries to the city to announce to everybody about the coming of the Messiah, Who, as the Seer-of-hearts, revealed to her everything she had done. His disciples, arriving just then, were surprised that their Teacher was talking to a woman, inasmuch as this was condemned by the rules of the Jewish rabbis, who instructed: "Do not speak for long with a woman" and "nobody should converse with a woman on the road, even with one's lawful wife" and likewise: "It is better to burn the words of the law, than to teach them to a woman." However, being reverent before their Teacher, the disciples did not in any way express their amazement and simply asked Him to try the food they had brought.

Although Jesus the Man's natural feeling of hunger stifled His joy about the Samaritan people's conversion to Him and their salvation, He was joyful that the seeds sown by Him had begun to produce a crop. Therefore He refused to satisfy His hunger, replying to His disciples that the true food for Him was fulfilling the task of people's salvation conferred upon Him by God the Father. The Samaritan inhabitants that came to Him seemed to Jesus like a cornfield, ripe for the harvest — while in the fields, the harvest is ready only in four months. Ordinarily, the one who sows the seeds reaps the harvest; with the sowing of seeds into souls, the spiritual harvest more often than not is left to others, but together with that, the sower himself rejoices with the harvester, inasmuch as he did not sow for himself but for others. Therefore Christ says that He is sending the Apostles to reap the harvest in the spiritual field, which initially was not prepared and sown by them, but by the others — the Old Testament Prophets and by He Himself. During these explanations, the Samaritans approached the Lord. While many believed in Him "for the saying of the woman," many more of them believed "because of His own word," when, by their invitation, He stayed with them in the city for two days. Listening to the Lord's teachings, they were convinced, according to their own acknowledgment, that "this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

## Saints of the Week

**17 / 30 May — The Holy Apostle Andronicus** - One of the Seventy, he was a kinsman of the Apostle Paul, as Paul wrote (Rom. 16:17), remembering also St Junia, Andronicus's helper. Andronicus was made Bishop of Pannonia, and did not stay in one place, but preached the Gospel throughout the whole of Pannonia. With St Junia, he was successful in bringing many to Christ and in demolishing many temples of idolatry. Both of them had the grace of wonder-working, by which they drove out demons and healed every sort of sickness and disease. They both suffered for Christ, and thus received a twofold crown: of apostleship and of martyrdom. Their holy relics were found in the excavations in Eugenius; The Holy Martyr Solochon; St Stephen, Patriarch of Constantinople;

**St. Melangell, virgin hermitress of Wales** - Imagine a party of huntsmen in the thick, green undergrowth of a small, wooded valley. The dogs are barking as they begin to follow the scent of a hare. One of the huntsmen sounds the horn. Riding at the front is the local prince. The time is 607 A.D. The place is the Pennant Valley in the kingdom of Powys, in central Wales. The hare disappears into a huge thicket of undergrowth, and the hunters prepare to follow. Then suddenly strange things begin to happen. The dogs turn back in fear. The huntsman with the horn finds he cannot sound a blast, yet he cannot take the horn from his lips. The prince, brave and proud, leaps from his horse. He will not show fear in the face of magic. He draws his sword and begins to cut his way through the brambles and shrubs. In a circular clearing in the centre of the thicket stands a young woman. She is dressed very simply. She stands calmly, radiating a sense of peace. At her feet the hare has crouched down for safety. Prince Brochwel of Powys has just come face to face with Melangell, the daughter of an Irish warrior. Melangell refused a pre-arranged marriage to an old warrior chieftain. She fled to Wales and began a life of prayer, living in a cave on the side of the Pennant Valley. As she was drawn deeper into the spiritual life, animals began to come to her in complete trust. Around her the world was restored to Paradise. Prince Brochwel granted her the valley as a place of prayer and refuge for ever. Gradually a small convent grew up, and a church was built. When Melangell died, the nuns placed her body within the church. The holy woman came to be known as a saint. No one knows how long the convent lasted, but archaeologists have shown that nuns were still being buried outside the church in the 9th and 10th Century. Around 1160 A.D. a new stone church was built, with a shrine where people could come to venerate the bones of Saint Melangell. Pilgrims began to arrive, and miracles of healing took place. The valley was noted as a place of peace, a sanctuary for hares, a comfort to the sick, a glimpse of heaven. Then came the upheavals and pain of the Reformation. The shrine was desecrated, and chunks of masonry from the shrine were hurled out of the church. Often the relics of saints were destroyed at this time by the reformers, but Saint Melangell was reburied in the floor of the church. Pilgrims were no longer encouraged to make the long journey into the Welsh mountains to visit this holy place. Centuries passed, and times changed. Hardly anyone lived near the tiny church in the hidden valley. The few local sheep farmers could not afford to repair the building. By the 1980's the church was almost derelict. Then in 1988 work began to restore the church and shrine of Saint Melangell. Many parts of the ancient shrine were found built into walls, or on neighbouring farms. New masonry was carved to match the old stonework. Today, the church and shrine are beautiful once more. Hundreds of pilgrims flock to pray there and to ask for the prayers of the early Celtic holy woman. A centre for healing and rest has been established a few yards from the church, so that Saint Melangell's work may continue.

**18 / 31 May — The Holy Martyr Theodotus, and the seven maiden martyrs: Tecusa, Alexandra, Claudia, Favina, Euphrasia, Matrona and Julia.** Theodotus was a married man and an innkeeper in Ancyra in the time of the Emperor Diocletian. Although he was married, he lived according to the words of the Apostle: 'Let them who have wives be as though they had not' (I Cor. 7:29). But he kept the inn on, in order to be able unsuspectingly to help Christians, and his inn was a refuge for persecuted Christians. Theodotus secretly sent help to the Christian refugees in the mountains, and secretly gathered the bodies of those who had been killed, giving them burial. At that time, seven maidens were taken for trial and tortured for Christ. They were tortured, mocked and then thrown into a lake. One of them, St Tecusa, appeared to St Theodotus and told him to take her body out of the lake and bury it. Under cover of night, Theodotus set off with a companion to carry out the martyr's wishes, and, led by an angel of God, succeeded in finding all seven bodies and burying them. But this friend betrayed him to the authorities and the judge put him to harsh torture. Theodotus endured all the tortures as though not in his own body, having his whole mind steeped in God. When the torturers had made his body one great wound and broken his teeth with stones, it was ordered that he be beheaded. When he was taken to the scaffold, many Christians wept for him, but St Theodotus said to them: 'Don't weep for me, my brethren, but glorify our Lord Jesus Christ, by whose aid I am finishing my course and overcoming the enemy.' Saying this, he laid his head on the block under the sword and was beheaded, in the year 303. A priest buried the martyr's body on a hill outside the city and a church dedicated to St Theodotus was later built on the site; The Holy Martyrs Peter, Dionysius, Andrew, Paul and Christina; The Holy Martyrs Heraclius, Paulinus and Benedimus.

**19 May / 1 June — The Hieromartyr Patrick, Bishop of Brussa with three priests: Acacius, Menander and Polyenus** - they suffered for the Christian faith in the time of Julian the Apostate in Asian Brussa. The imperial governor, Junius, brought Patrick to a hot water spring and asked him: 'Who created this healing water, if not our gods, Aesculapius and the others, whom we worship?' St Patrick answered: 'Your gods are demons; and this water, like all other water, was created by Christ, our Lord and God.' Then the governor asked: 'And will this Christ of yours save you if I throw you into this boiling water?' The saint replied: 'If He wills, He can keep me whole and uninjured, although I would wish, in this water, to be parted from this temporal life, that I may live eternally with Christ; but let His holy will be done, without which not a hair of a man's head can fall.' Hearing this, the governor ordered that Patrick be thrown into the water. The boiling drops fell on all sides, and scalded many of the onlookers, but the saint remained untouched, as though he were standing in cold water. Seeing this, the governor

was wild with shame and commanded that Patrick and three of his priests be beheaded with axes. So these goodly followers of Christ said their prayers and laid their heads under the executioner's axe. When they had been beheaded, their souls were taken merrily to Christ's Kingdom of light, to reign eternally. St John, Bishop of the Goths; The Holy Prince Ivan of Vologda. **St. Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury (988)** - nephew of the Archbishop of Canterbury, spent a privileged youth at the court of King Athelstan and eventually became abbot of Glastonbury. English monastic life had almost totally disappeared as a result of the Viking invasions. Dunstan set about vigorously reviving it. He founded monasteries at Bath, Exeter, Malmesbury, and elsewhere, drawing up new rules for their good order. He installed monks in Winchester, in Chertsey, Surrey, and Milton Abbas, Dorset and restored the old abbey of Abingdon. After a period of exile King Edgar recalled him to be Archbishop of Canterbury in the year 960. There he founded an abbey to the east of the city, along with three churches dedicated to St Mary, Saints Peter and Paul, and St Pancras. As a skilled metalworker, scribe and bell-founder himself, he stimulated the revival of church art and illuminated manuscripts. He also loved to play the harp and wrote several fine hymns

**20 May / 2 June — Fast Day - The Holy Martyr Thaleleus** - born in Lebanon, his father's name being Berucius and his mother's Romylia, he was an eighteen-year-old youth, handsome and well-grown and with ginger hair. A doctor by profession, he suffered for Christ in the reign of Numerian. When he courageously confessed his faith in Christ the Lord before the judge, the latter commanded the two executioners, Alexander and Asterius, to bore through his knees, pass a rope through the pierced bone and hang him from a tree. But the executioners, as though the unseen power of God had deprived them of sight, bored through a plank and hung it on the tree. When the judge discovered this, he thought that the executioners had done it deliberately, and ordered that they be flogged. Then Alexander and Asterius cried out under the flogging: 'The Lord is alive to us; from now on, we are become Christians. We believe in Christ, and suffer for Him.' Hearing this, the judge ordered that they be beheaded. Then the judge took the awl, to bore through Thaleleus's knees himself, but his hand was paralysed and he had to ask Thaleleus to heal him, which the kindly martyr, with Christ's aid, did by his prayers. Then he was thrown into water, but showed himself alive to the judge (for Thaleleus was praying within himself that God would not have him die at once, but would let his tortures continue). When he was thrown to the wild beasts, they licked his feet and rubbed tamely round him. He was finally beheaded and entered into eternal life in 284

**The Holy Martyr Asclas** - Asclas suffered in the town of Antioch in Egypt during the reign of Diocletian. He was flogged, scraped, burned with candles but he remained unwavering in the Faith to the end. When the tormentor Arrian was crossing the Nile by boat Asclas, through prayer, stopped the boat in the middle of the river and would not allow it to move until Arrian wrote that he believes in Christ as the One and Almighty God. But, ascribing this miracle to a magical skill of Asclas, the tormentor forgot what he wrote and continued to torment the man of God. Finally, they tied a stone around his neck and tossed him into the Nile river. On the third day Christians found the body of Asclas along the shore with the stone around his neck (as the martyr foretold them before his death) and honourably buried him in the year 287 A.D. Leonides, the holy martyr, also suffered with him. Arrian, their tormentor, later repented, believed in Christ with his whole heart and openly began to express his faith before the pagans. The pagans also killed him and so Arrian, a one-time tormentor of Christians, was made worthy of the martyr's wreath for Christ; Our Holy Father Stephen of Pipheri; St. Ethelbert, king and martyr (c793)

**21 May / 3 June — The Holy Emperor Constantine and the Empress Helena** - Constantine's parents were the Emperor Constantius Chlorus and the Empress Helena. Chlorus had further children by another wife, but by Helena he had only the one, Constantine. Constantine fought two great battles when he came to the throne: one against Maxentius, a tyrant in Rome, and the other against Licinius not far from Byzantium. At the battle against Maxentius, when Constantine was in great anxiety and uncertainty about his chances of success, a shining cross, surrounded by stars, appeared to him in the sky in full daylight. On the cross were written the words: 'In this sign, conquer!' The wondering Emperor ordered that a great cross be put together, like the one that had appeared, and be carried before the army. By the power of the Cross, he gained a glorious victory over enemies greatly superior in number. Maxentius drowned himself in the Tiber. Immediately after this, Constantine issued the famous Edict of Milan, in 313, to put an end to the persecution of Christians. Conquering Byzantium, he built a beautiful capital city on the Bosphorus, which from that time was named Constantinople. At this time, Constantine fell ill with leprosy. The pagan priests and doctors advised him to bathe in the blood of slaughtered children, which he refused to do. Then the Apostles Peter and Paul appeared to him and told him to seek out a bishop, Sylvester, who would heal him of the disease. The bishop instructed him in the Christian faith and baptised him, and the leprosy vanished from the Emperor's body. When there was discord in the Church about the troublesome heretic Arius, the Emperor summoned the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, in 325, where the heresy was condemned and Orthodoxy confirmed. St Helena, the Emperor's devout mother, was very zealous for the Christian faith. She visited Jerusalem and found the Precious Cross of the Lord, and built the Church of the Resurrection over Golgotha and many other churches in the Holy Land. This holy woman went to the Lord in 327, at the age of eighty. The Emperor Constantine outlived his mother by ten years and entered into rest at the age of about sixty in 337, in the city of Nicomedia. His body was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople; Our Holy Father, the Martyr Pachomius.

**22 May / 4 June — Fast Day - The Holy Martyr Basiliscus** - a kinsman of St Theodore the Tyro, he was martyred together with Eutropius and Cleonimus (March 3rd). When these two were crucified and gave up the ghost, Basiliscus was taken back to prison. A change of governors occurring at this time, Basiliscus remained a long time confined in prison. He besought God with tears that He would not deprive him of a martyr's death for His sake. After he had prayed at length, the Lord Jesus appeared to him and promised to fulfil his desire, sending him to his village to say farewell to his mother and brothers. Thereupon the new governor, Agrippa, arrived and sent to have Basiliscus brought from the village immediately. On the way to the city of Amasea, the Lord worked great wonders through His martyr, bringing many of the people to faith in Christ. Agrippa ordered the martyr to offer sacrifice to Apollyon. "Apollyon" means "Destroyer", said Basiliscus, and, with fervent prayer, he knocked the idol to dust and burned the temple with fire from heaven. The terrified Agrippa attributed this all to magic, and ordered that Basiliscus be beheaded with the sword. Agrippa immediately became insane and, in his madness,

went to the place of execution, found a little of the martyr's blood in the dust and smeared it on himself under his belt, being restored to health by it. Having come to his senses, he was baptised. Later, a certain Marinus, a citizen of Comana (the place of Basiliscus's execution) built a church over the martyr's relics, and many of the sick found healing there.

**The Holy Martyr John Vladimir, King of Serbia** - John Vladimir was of princely lineage from Zahumlje. His grandfather was called Hvalimir and his father Petrislav. As a ruler, he was wise, merciful, meek, chaste and brave. He fervently prayed to God and voluntarily built churches and supported them. However, he had difficult struggles both internally and externally. Internally, from heretics and the Bogomils and externally from Tsar Samuel and Tsar Basil who wanted to conquer him. Samuel deceitfully captured him and cast him into prison. While he languished in prison an angel of God appeared to him and foretold that he would shortly be freed, but that he would die a martyr's death. Getting to know him better, Samuel grew to like him and gave his daughter Kosara to be his wife. When Samuel died, his son Radomir was crowned Tsar. But Vladislav, his twin brother, slew Radomir and deceitfully summoned Vladimir and beheaded him in the year 1015 A.D. The relics of this saintly king repose uncorrupt in his monastery near Elbasan and over his relics, throughout the ages and even today, numerous miracles occur. In 1925, a church was built to honor this crowned martyr adjacent to the monastery of St. Nahum since John Vladimir was the benefactor of this glorious monastery.

**The Second Ecumenical Council** - This Council was called during the reign of Emperor Theodosius the Great in Constantinople in the year 381 A.D. Its goal was to confirm the Orthodox teaching concerning the Holy Spirit about Whom the Patriarch Macedonius of Constantinople erroneously taught. He erroneously taught that the Holy Spirit is God's creature and not a divine person [Hypostasis] equal to the Father and Son and One in essence with Them in the Holy Trinity. Macedonius was condemned by this Council and the teaching about the Holy Spirit was added to the Nicæan Symbol of Faith [the Nicene Creed].

**Holy and Righteous Melchisedek, King of Salem** - Melchisedek was a contemporary of our forefather Abraham. According to the words of the Apostle Paul he was a king, priest and proto-type of the Lord Jesus Christ ([Hebrews 7](#)).

**23 May / 5 June — St Michael, Bishop of Synnada** - from his childhood, this wise and holy hierarch consecrated himself to the service of Christ. He laboured in asceticism together with Saint Theophylact of Nicomedia. Once, in a time of drought, these two holy men caused an abundance of rain to fall on the earth by their prayers. Because of the life of asceticism and chastity that Michael had led from his early youth, he was chosen and consecrated by Patriarch Tarasius as Bishop of Synnada. He took part in the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787. At the wish of the Emperor, he visited Caliph Harun al-Rashid to conduct peace negotiations. In the time of the wicked Emperor Leo the Armenian, he was deposed from his episcopal throne for his veneration of the holy icons and sent into exile, where he died in want and poverty, faithful to Orthodoxy to the end. He entered into the Kingdom of Christ the King in 818.

**Our Holy Father, the Martyr Michael** - After the death of his parents, Michael distributed all of his goods to the poor and went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Following that, he entered the monastery of St. Sabas the Sanctified where he was tonsured a monk. Michael was quite young and of a handsome countenance but, from much fasting, he appeared withered and pale. At that time, the Arabs ruled Jerusalem. One day Michael was sent by his spiritual father to the city to sell his handiworks. He was met on the streets by the eunuch of the Arabian queen who brought him to her to display his handiworks. When the queen saw this handsome monk she became inflamed with unclean passion and proposed carnal sin to the monk as once did the wife of Potiphar to the chaste Joseph. When Michael rejected the impure offer and began to flee, the angry queen ordered that he be beaten with canes and after that brought him to the king with the charge that he blasphemed the faith of Muhammad. The king proposed that Michael embrace the Islamic faith, but he refused. He was then given a potent poison to drink. Michael drank the poison but nothing happened to him. Then the king ordered Michael to be beheaded in the centre of Jerusalem. Monks discovered his body and removed it to the monastery of St. Sabas where they honourably buried him. St. Michael suffered for Christ and was glorified in the ninth century

**Our Holy Mother Euphrosyne, Princess of Polotsk** - the daughter of Prince Vseslav of Polotsk. When her parents wanted to betroth her, she fled to a convent and was tonsured a nun. An angel of the Lord appeared to her three times and revealed to her where she must establish a new convent for virgins. She even attracted her sister Eudocia to the monastic life and many other maidens from the ranks of the aristocracy. Her cousin, Zvenislava, by birth Princess Borisov, brought all of her riches, clothes and precious stones and said: "All the beauty of this world, I consider vanity and these adornments prepared for my marriage, I give to the Church of the Savior and I, myself, wish to be betrothed to Him in a spiritual marriage and place my head beneath His good and easy yoke." Euphrosyne also tonsured her a nun and gave her the name Eupraxia. In her old age, Euphrosyne desired to die in Jerusalem and for that she prayed to God. God heard her prayers and, indeed, when she visited Jerusalem she died there. Euphrosyne was buried in the monastery of St. Theodosius on May 23, 1173 A.D.