

Sunday of the Prodigal Son & Afterfeast of the Meeting of the Lord

7 / 20 February

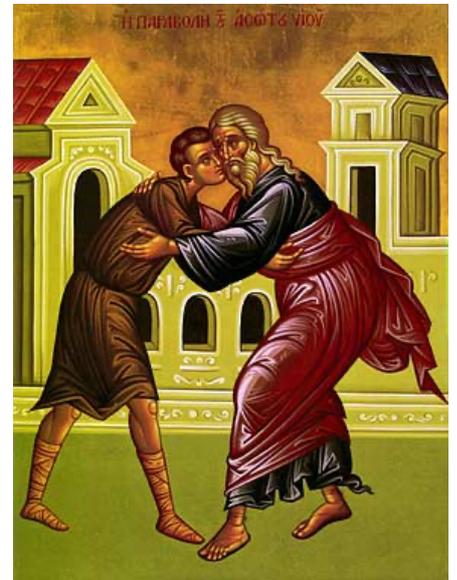
Resurrection Tropar, Tone 2: When Thou didst descend to death, O Life Immortal, Thou didst slay hell with the splendour of Thy Godhead! And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead, all the powers of Heaven cried out: O Giver of Life, Christ our God, Glory to Thee!

Troparion of the Meeting tone 1: Rejoice, thou who art full of grace,/ Mother of God and Virgin,/ for from thee arose the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God,/ to give light to those in darkness./ Rejoice thou also, righteous Elder, who didst take in thine arms the Redeemer of our souls,/ Who also gives us the grace of resurrection.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 2: Hell became afraid, O Almighty Saviour, seeing the miracle of Thy resurrection from the tomb! The dead arose! Creation, with Adam, beheld this and rejoiced with Thee! And the world, O My Saviour, praises Thee forever.

Kontakion of the meeting tone 1: Thou Who didst sanctify the Virgin's womb by Thy birth/ and bless Simeon's hands as was fitting/ hast now come to us and saved us, O Christ our God./ But grant peace in the midst of wars to Thy community,/ and strengthen the Church which Thou hast loved,/ O only lover of mankind.

Kondak for the Prodigal Son, Tone 3: Having foolishly abandoned Thy paternal glory, I squandered on vices the wealth which Thou gavest me. Wherefore, I cry unto Thee with the voice of the Prodigal: I have sinned before Thee, O compassionate Father. Receive me as one repentant, and make me as one of Thy hired-servants.



Matins Gospel II

Epistle: I Corinthians 6: 12-20

12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 13 Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "The two," He says, "shall become one flesh." 17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. 18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

YOUR BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Lord overlooks nothing. Even secrets are open to Him. Let us then do everything as if He were dwelling in us. Thus we shall be His temples, and He will be within us as our God - as He actually is. This will be clear to us just to the extent that we love Him rightly.

St. Ignatius of Antioch. Letter to the Ephesians. B#10, p. 92.

Gospel: St. Luke 15: 11-32

THE LORD SAID THIS PARABLE: A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven,

and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. 25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. 28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. 29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: 30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. 31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

The second preparatory Sunday of Great Lent is termed the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. In the touching parable of the Prodigal Son read during the Liturgy, the Holy Church teaches us to rely on the mercy of God, provided we have sincerely repented of our sins. On this Sunday and the succeeding two Sundays, during the Polyeleos at the All-night Vigil, Psalm 136 is chanted: By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Sion... This psalm describes the suffering of the Jews during the Babylonian captivity and their longing for their fatherland. The words of this psalm teach us about our spiritual captivity, the captivity to sin, and that we should aspire towards our spiritual fatherland, the Heavenly Kingdom. The final words of this psalm scandalise many with reference to Blessed shall be he who shall seize and dash thine infants (those of the Babylonians) against the rock! Of course, the literal meaning of these words is brutal and unacceptable for the Christian, for the Lord Himself taught us to love and bless our enemies and to worship God in spirit and truth. These words gain a pure and lofty significance with a Christian and spiritual nature, for they mean, "Blessed is he who has a firm resolve to break, on the rock of faith, the newly forming evil thoughts and desires (as it were in their infant state) before they mature into evil deeds and habits".

The Law of God

Our Lord Jesus Christ said on several occasions that He had come into the world to take our infirmities and bear our sicknesses (Matt. 8:17), to heal all manner of sicknesses and all manner of disease among the people (Matt. 9:23) and that He should lose nothing of all that the Father had given Him (John 6:39). By the righteous He meant those who considered themselves righteous. And in our Lord's time this implied in particular the arrogant and self-satisfied scribes and Pharisees. By sinners and the lost, Christ meant the sinners and publicans who were seeking their salvation.

St. Luke the Evangelist writes: Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:1-2). *In answer to this reproach, Jesus Christ spoke two parables, of the lost sheep and the lost coin.*

Every parable constitutes a symbol or allegory. Each possesses two meanings, and in each of its images are contained two images, one literal and the other a spiritual one, under the surface. Thus each parable tells of one thing while implying something else, something deeper.

Jesus turned to the crowd and asked: What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance (Luke 15:4-7).

The Savior continues with the parable of the lost coin: What woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:8-10).

In order to make this idea still clearer, Christ then proceeded to tell a third parable, that of the Prodigal Son. A certain man had two sons. The elder was practical, thrifty and obedient, while the younger was an irresponsible dreamer. He was not interested in his father's affairs and was tempted by the prospect of a carefree life somewhere far away from his father's house.

He was prey to that "levity of mind which does not value the happiness of being close to the heart of a good father, under the serene roof of his house, but yearns for a far country for no other reason than simply to be able to live as he pleases" (Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, *Collected Works*). He thus decides to take leave of his father for he lacked that love which might have led him to remain in his father's home.

He asks his father to give him that "portion of his goods" which was due to him. In a spiritual sense, "portion" should be understood as blessings received by man from God, those physical and mental advantages, external attributes and spiritual gifts bestowed on him. After abandoning his father's house, the son soon loses all these blessings. This departure implies man's rejection of God as he embarks on a course of sin and it is the main cause of all the trials that followed.

Anxious not to deprive his son of his freedom, the father places no hurdle in his way. The son sets forth from his native land. His sinful and idle life "in a far country" surrounded by like-minded people attracts him. Under the spell of this

"free" and dissolute life he hardly notices how he squanders away all his means. In a spiritual sense to "waste his substance" means to squander and waste spiritual gifts. A prodigal life means to corrupt mind and will to such an extent that vice appears in the light of virtue and sinful passions as desirable pleasures.

However, this spiritual poverty was accompanied by material poverty: a "mighty famine" fell upon the land and the dissolute son was soon going without even his daily bread. Confronted by this hardship the son joined the service of a citizen of the foreign land who sent him out into the fields to feed his swine. He would have been glad to eat of the husks that the swine ate, but not even these were given to him. Bereft of food and shelter the young man comes to his senses, acknowledges the desperateness of his situation and this marks the beginning of his turning to God.

Before, his thoughts and desires had been held captive by passions and lusts. Now, on sober reflection he remembers his father and the happiness he had turned his back on when he set forth from his home. The son who had gone astray, but is not repentant, no longer has any claim to the name or rights of a son and is quite ready to be taken back into his father's household as no more than a hired servant. This is the thought in which the repentant sinner's new-found humility finds expression.

Faith in his father's kindness and trust in his love once more fill the heart of the unfortunate sinner and give him strength to resolve: *I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants* (Luke 15:18-19).

These words coming straight from the heart of the sinner, yet who is now illumined in grace, express the true sincerity of his repentance, his willingness to pour it forth like a confession before his father and the trusting hope in a happy outcome of his resolve. In the parable it is written: *And he arose and came to his father* (Luke 15:20). "That moment," Bishop Theophan the Recluse points out, "marks the beginning of his soul's turning towards God" (*Paths to Salvation*). The father sees him coming from afar, emaciated and in rags, almost too weak to drag himself on his way; he is filled with compassion and runs out to meet him, falling on his neck and kissing him.

The son only has time to utter part of his confession: *Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son* (Luke 15:21). The father interrupts him before he has time to ask to be taken on as a hired servant. The father was unable and did not wish to see in his son a hired servant. As St. John Chrysostom reminds us, the father did not wish even to reproach his son for his shameful past, because he saw before him a son who had been dead and was alive again, who had been lost and was found.

The father then gave orders to his servants for them to dress his son in the best robe and prepare a fatted calf. The father gave a feast and all made merry. "This is how the father welcomes and feasts the prodigal son on his return. This is a radiant image of God's wonderful love for the repentant sinner, on whom He has bestowed His mercy" (Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow).

The parable is concerned with God's great love for man, particularly for the sinner and the joy which Heaven knows when sinners find spiritual regeneration. In the eyes of God every man possesses infinitely greater value and importance than in the eyes of his fellows. We mortals underestimate and denigrate each other, often failing to understand the evil we are doing. This parable calls upon us to be charitable to all men, particularly those who have fallen prey to sinful passions and urges us to emulate the charity our Heavenly Father shows towards us.

The parable teaches us that from our early years we should follow the Lord's path, devoting our strength to good works, that we should be diligent, honor and respect our fellowmen and seek our happiness not in "far countries" but in the place where we live and work.

Lastly this parable teaches us to appreciate the true meaning of the words "repentance" and "penitence". Repentance is only the beginning of penitence and cannot absolve us if not followed by penitence. Judas Iscariot repents but he does not find the inner strength necessary for true penitence.

The desperate plight of the younger son led him to repent and his repentance led to penitence, penitence to confession and confession to forgiveness and absolution. Through repentance, penitence and confession, forgiveness and communion we must strive to wash away our sins and aspire to spiritual perfection. Amen.

The Living Word

A.A.V.

Saints of the Week

Meatfare week

7 / 20 February — Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — St Parthenius, Bishop of Lampsacus - He was the son of a deacon from the city of Melitopolis. He knew the words of the Gospel by heart from his early youth, and strove to fulfil them. Settling beside a lake, he caught fish, sold them and shared the proceeds with the poor. By God's providence, he was chosen as bishop of Lampsacus. He cleansed the city of paganism, closed the temples dedicated to idol-worship, built many churches and strengthened the faithful. He healed all manner of sickness through prayer, and was especially powerful over spirits. At one time when he was about to drive the evil spirit out of a madman, the evil spirit begged him not to. 'I will give you another man, into whom you can enter and in whom you can dwell', Parthenius told him. 'And who is that man?' 'I am he', replied the saint, 'come and make your abode in me'. Hearing this, the evil spirit fled as though burned by fire, crying out: 'How can I enter into the house of God?' St Parthenius lived long and showed in his deeds the greatness of his love for God and man. He entered into

the eternal peace of Christ in the 4th century; Our Holy Father Luke of Hellas; Our Holy Mother Mastridia; The Thousand and Three Martyrs of Nicomedia; at London, St. Augulus, bishop, martyr; at Lucca, St. Ricgard of Wessex, confessor.

8 / 21 February — Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — The Holy and Great Martyr Theodore Stratelates - There are martyrdoms that are more than costly. The costliness of a martyrdom depends on the greatness of the good things of this world that a Christian gives up, receiving suffering in its place; and it depends also on the greatness of the suffering which he endures for the sake of Christ. St Theodore, a Roman commander in the army of the Emperor Licinius and governor of the city of Heraclea, scorned his youth, his good looks, his military status and the goodwill of the Emperor, and in place of all this received terrible tortures for the sake of Christ. Firstly Theodore was flogged, receiving 600 lashes on the back and 500 on the stomach; then he was crucified and pierced through with arrows. Finally he was slain with the sword. Why all this? Because St Theodore loved Christ more than anything else in the world. He scorned the foolish idol-worship of the superstitious Emperor, shattered the silver and gold idols, giving the pieces to the poor, brought many to the Christian faith and urged the Emperor himself to reject idolatry and believe in the one God. During the whole of his torture, Theodore repeated unceasingly: 'Glory to Thee, my God, glory to Thee!' He suffered on February 8th, 319, at three o'clock in the afternoon, and entered into the Kingdom of Christ. He is regarded as the protector of soldiers, who turn to him for help. His wonderworking relics were taken from Euchaita to Constantinople and buried in the Church at Blachernae; The Holy Prophet Zechariah; St Sava the Second, Archbishop of Serbia; in Sussex, at Steyning, St. Cuthman, hermit; in Monmouthshire, St. Kigwe, virgin; at Clonmore Monastery, St. Oncho, pilgrim; St. Elfleda, abbess of Whitby after St. Hilda.

9 / 22 February — Apodosis of the Meeting of Our Lord — The Holy Martyr Nicephorus: The Hieromartyr Peter Damascene; in Wales, St. Teilo of Llandaff, bishop, (6th c) and St. Eingan of Llanengan, hermit; at Iona, St. Cuaran the Wise, bishop; ; in Ireland, St. Taraghta, virgin and St. Cronan the Wise, canonist.

10 / 23 February — The Hieromartyr Charalampus - This great saint was bishop in Magnesia, and suffered for Christ at the age of 113. When a violent persecution broke out under the Emperor Septimus Severus, the aged Charalampus did not hide from his persecutors, but freely and openly preached the Christian faith. He endured all tortures as though not in the body, and when they flayed the living flesh from him, the godly saint said to the Emperor's soldiers: 'Thank you, my brethren, for scraping off the old body and renewing my soul for new and eternal life.' He performed many wonders and brought many to the Faith. Even the Emperor's daughter, Gallina, repudiated the paganism of her father and became a Christian. Condemned to death and led to the place of execution, St Charalampus raised his arms to heaven and prayed for all men, that God would give them bodily health and salvation of soul, and that He would grant them the fruits of the earth in abundance: 'Lord, Thou knowest that men are flesh and blood; forgive them their sins and pour out Thy blessing on all.' After praying thus, the saintly elder gave his soul to God before the executioner had laid his sword to his neck. He suffered in 202. Gallina took his body and buried it; Our Holy Father Prochorus the Orach-eater (1107);

Russian New Martyr Anatole, metropolitan of Odessa (1938) should be especially glorified for his spiritual courage in the grievous years of 1928-1937. He lived in the South of Russia and was respected for his spiritual deeds and his fearless professing of the true Russian Faith. Metropolitan Anatole suffered a slow martyrdom from the hands of the communists, who cruelly persecuted and humiliated him. Even before entering high school he dedicated his life to the service of God. After high school he was accepted by the Academy of Kiev, and while studying there, took the vows of monkhood. Soon after graduating from the Academy, the Rev. Anatole was ordained bishop. Bishop Anatole, young and inspired, won the hearts of his spiritual children. His ever increasing popularity was noted, of course, by the usurpers of power of the Russian government. Bishop Anatole was one of the first to be arrested by the communists. For a long time he languished in the prisons of the GPU (pre-KGB). During the hours of questioning the mild prelate was outrageously beaten by magistrates, to the point that his jaw was permanently injured, so that his speech at times was not quite distinct. Two of his ribs were also injured. Bishop Anatole spent a long time in the prison hospital. His wounds had hardly healed when he was exiled to Solovky to the harsh conditions of a labour camp for the most dangerous political "criminals", especially for the clergy. Severe frosts, lack of satisfactory nourishment, and very heavy labour broke the health of the already not too robust bishop. He suffered this oppressive life for seven years. He owed his survival there only to the most unselfish care of his younger sister, whom he had raised as a daughter. She had left everything to follow her brother into exile. Upon release from exile, Bishop Anatole was promoted to the rank of Archbishop of Saratov and Samara. Shortly after this, he was taken ill with an ulcer of the stomach—the result of hardships suffered while at the labour camp. Upon recovery, he was appointed head of the Odessa-Kherson diocese in the South. He arrived in Odessa in the darkest hour of its existence. All religious affairs were in the hands of the NKVD inspector-of-the-cults, Vishnegorodsky at first, and later Baranovich. Both of them fully enjoyed using their power to inconvenience and humiliate the head of the local churches. The Archbishop was frequently ordered to get out of bed in the middle of the night and report to the NKVD headquarters. Sometimes the inspectors would appear in church during solemn services on an important holiday, and issue the same order. In such instances, the otherwise meek and humble Archbishop Anatole would curtly tell them that under no circumstances would he stop the church ritual; that he would come only after officiating in the church. His refusals were so positive that even the NKVD messengers gave up, inwardly furious. At the end of four or five hours of Church service, the Archbishop would hurry to the NKVD, without time to rest or eat. There he was kept waiting for one or two hours more, just to repay him for the delay. When he was finally received, Baranovich would stamp his feet and shout at the Archbishop, just as if he were a disobedient slave. Such were the conditions under which this highly respected priest carried on his spiritual work. The hardest trial for him was the arrest of almost all the clergy and the best preachers of Odessa in 1931. All of them (more than 20), were exiled during the same year, when the sacrilegious closing and destroying of the churches started. The majestic Cathedral of the Transfiguration was blown up before the eyes of the Archbishop, as was the beautiful Church of the Archangel Michael in the Devichy Monastery; the military Cathedral of St. Serge, and the churches

of the port and many others. The repressions and persecutions of the clergy increased, leaving clergymen without food and lodgings. They found refuge in the Archbishop's home, while he himself went about to different government organisations pleading humbly for assistance and mercy for his unfortunate colleagues. But he was met only with mockery and insults. In 1932, Archbishop Anatole was promoted to the rank of Metropolitan. He remained head of the Odessa-Kherson diocese until his arrest in August, 1936. Before his arrest, Metropolitan Anatole had to suffer the humiliation of being dismissed by Baranovich and forbidden to perform church services. Upon his arrest, Metropolitan Anatole was removed to Kiev where he was kept under severe conditions for about six months. He again suffered from ulcer of the stomach with complications which affected his legs. Metropolitan Constantine, Exarch of the Ukraine, succeeded in obtaining permission for him to see his sister before he left for exile. The poor woman later told, with sobs, how Metropolitan Anatole was led into the room of their meeting supported on both sides—having nearly lost the complete use of his legs. In spite of his condition, Metropolitan Anatole was taken into exile by "etape". He was purposely placed among the gangs of the worst criminals, who systematically robbed him on the way. The sick prelate was actually forced by gun-butts to walk from one stop to another, farther and farther to the North, with no time to rest. When he collapsed in a dead faint, he was lifted onto a truck; but as soon as he regained consciousness he was forced again to walk. Men who witnessed the tortures of the saintly man, later declared with tears, that it would have been more merciful to have shot him on the spot. On the way, Metropolitan Anatole caught croupous pneumonia, but even this did not stop his tragic march. By winter he had reached his place of exile and, in the Far North, dying he pleaded for permission to see his sister, who had managed to reach his place of exile. The sister had received only postcards from him on which he had written: "I beg you to do everything you can. Plead, pray, implore, but obtain the permission for our meeting. I yearn before my death to see your dear face and bless you." But the meeting was not to be; the permission was refused. When Metropolitan Anatole was on the point of dying, the communists came to him and demanded his Gospel and his priest's cross. The Gospel was snatched from out of his weakened hands, but he clung to his cross. Protecting it on his chest with numbed hands, he fell back and died (1938). His body was thrown into a common grave in the frozen earth of the far North.

11 / 24 February — The Hieromartyr Blaise, Bishop of Sebaste - born in Cappadocia, Blaise was meek and God-fearing from early childhood. He was chosen for his virtues as bishop of Sebaste, and was a great spiritual and moral light in that pagan town. During a period of violent persecution of Christians, Blaise encouraged his flock and visited the martyrs in prison, among whom was the famous Eustratius. When the city of Sebaste was left entirely denuded of Christians—some killed and others fled—Blaise, by then an old man, retired to the mountain of Argeos and lived there in a cave. Ferocious wild beasts, recognising a holy man, came to him and he gently tamed them. But the persecutors found the saint in that hidden spot and took him for trial. On the way there, Blaise healed a boy who had a bone stuck in his throat and, at the petition of a poor widow, made the wolf that had taken her pig return it to her. The benighted judges tortured him, flogging him terribly. By his steadfastness in the Christian faith, Blaise brought many unbelievers to the Faith. Seven women and two children were thrown into prison with him; the women were slain first, then Blaise and the two children. He suffered and was glorified in 316. Blaise's prayers are sought for the health and well-being of domestic animals and for protection from wild beasts. In the West, he is also invoked against sore throats. The Holy Martyr George of Kratov; St Theodora; St. Gobnait, abbess of Ballyrouney, Cork, Ireland (5th c); St. Caedmon of Whitby, monk (c.680)

12 / 25 February — St Meletius, Archbishop of Antioch - this great and holy man was an outstanding interpreter and defender of Orthodoxy. The whole of his life was devoted to the fight against the Arian heresy, which did not recognise the Son of God and blasphemed against the Holy Trinity. He was three times removed from his archiepiscopal throne by the heretics, and driven off into Armenia. The struggle between the Orthodox and the heretics became so bitter that once, while St Meletius was preaching to the people in church on the divine Trinity in unity, his own deacon, a heretic, ran up to the bishop and shut his mouth with his hand. Being unable to preach with words, Meletius preached by signs. Thus, he raised his arms on high, opened three fingers to their fullest extent and showed them to the people, then closed his hand and raised the one fist. He took part in the Second Ecumenical Council in 381, where the Emperor Theodosius showed him specially great honour. At that Council, God showed a mystery through His archbishop. When Meletius was propounding the doctrine of the Holy Trinity to the Arians, he first raised three fingers, separated one by one, then brought them together; and at that moment lightning flashed from his hand before the gaze of all present. At that Council, Meletius established Gregory the Theologian in the seat of Constantinople. While the Council was still in session, St Meletius finished his earthly course in Constantinople. His relics were taken to Antioch.

St Alexis, Metropolitan of Moscow - a great hierarch of the Russian Church in a difficult period of Tartar oppression of the Russian people. Once in childhood he went bird-hunting, then went to sleep and in a dream heard a voice that said: 'Alexis, why rush around so fruitlessly? I will teach you to catch men!' He became a monk at the age of twenty, and in time became Metropolitan of Moscow. He twice went among the 'Golden Horde' of the Tartars, once to sooth the wrath of Verdevir Khan against the Russian people, and the second time at the invitation of Amurat Khan, to cure his wife's blindness. This woman had been blind for three years, but was healed and her vision restored when Alexis prayed and anointed her with holy water. After a life of great endeavour and fruitfulness, Alexis entered into rest in 1378 at the age of 85, and went to the court of the Lord. **New Martyr Alexis (Bui)** - in 1926, he took over administration of Voronezh diocese. He was tall and thin, an inspired preacher, a great father and true monk. He did not have a theological education, and had been superior of a monastery in Kozlov. He celebrated the Divine services with heedful concentration. In mid 1927 the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius was published, and Voronezh was divided like all of Russia. All eyes were on Bishop Alexis, and he responded with a bold rejection of the Declaration and his announcement that he had chosen to be a follower of Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd. For his epistle Bishop Alexis was suspended, and then on February 21, 1930 he was arrested by the GPU, dying in prison. Soviet researchers have made Bishop Alexis out to be the founder of a 'sect' called the "Buevtsy" (Bui-ites). It is clear from the

material, however, that this movement was simply the local part of a larger catacomb movement amongst Orthodox Christians in Russia. Thus we can see the considerable influence of Bishop Alexis on the future development of the True Orthodox or Catacomb Church in Russia. Holy New Martyr Alexis, pray for us! Our Holy Mother Mary (Marius); St Antony, Patriarch of Constantinople. St Callia; St. Ethilwald of Lindisfarne (740).

13 / 26 February — Our Holy Father Martinian - The life of this saint is wonderful beyond measure and is worth reading in full. What did he not endure to fulfil the Law of God? At the age of eighteen, he went off into a mountain in Cappadocia called the Ark and there spent 25 years in fasting, vigils and prayer, and struggling with manifold temptations. When a woman came to tempt him and he saw that he would fall into sin with her, he leapt barefoot into the fire and stood in it until the pain brought forth tears from his eyes and he had killed all lust within himself. When other temptations arose, he fled to a lonely rock in the sea and lived there. When, though, in a shipwreck, a woman swam to the rock, he leapt into the sea intending to drown himself. But a dolphin took him upon its back and brought him, by God's providence, to the shore. He then decided to make nowhere his permanent home but to travel incessantly. Thus he passed through 164 towns in two years, exhorting and advising the people. He finally arrived in Athens, where he died in 422. Ss Zoa and Photinia; Our; Our Holy Father Simeon, the Outpourer of Myrrh; St. Modomnoc, bishop of Ossory (6th c.)

Meatfare Saturday and the Commemoration of the Departed

In the days of this week "we do not sing Alleluia", i. e. we do not sing "Alleluia" at Matins instead of "God is the Lord", as the "Alleluia" is sung during Great Lent and on Wednesday and Friday in Cheesefare Week. At Matins we sing only two verses (instead of three) of the Sessional Hymns. At Compline the Canon to the Theotokos is dropped; and to be exact they also are dropped in the Inter-hours.

On Meatfare Saturday, before the commemoration (on Meatfare Sunday) of the Last Judgment, the Holy Church prays for the departed, so that together with us they also stand at the right hand of the Judge, and especially prays for those who have died, who, as the Synaxarion says, were stolen suddenly by death in a foreign country, on the sea and on impassable mountains, on cliffs, from starvation, from plagues and hunger, in war, in fires, from cold, and have undergone all kinds of other generic types of death, and also about poor and needy, and in general for all who "have not received commemoration in the legitimate psalms and hymns".

On a Saturday, instead of another day, before Meatfare Sunday it is necessary to pray for the repose of souls because the Sabbath Day is the day of rest, according to its innate meaning. It is the most important day for prayer for those who repose with the Saints. Besides this, the present prayer for the departed who repose the Holy Church reminds us about our inevitable end and our standing for trial before the incorruptible Judge, that, fearing these things to better prepare us for the spiritual struggle which are to come in the saving fast.

The service for Meatfare Saturday is performed in the same way as for the Saturday before the feast of Pentecost, with the only exception that on the Meatfare Saturday the hymns of the Octoechos are sung according to the tone in the order, and on the Saturday before Pentecost we must use the 6th tone.

The peculiarities of the service for these days are that:

- a) at Vespers, instead of the Prokeimenon, we sing the "Alleluia", with the priest exclaiming the verses: "Blessed are they whom Thou has chosen", and "Their souls shall dwell with the blessed";
- b) in Matins after the usual verses, i. e. the 16th Kathisma we sing "Blessed are the undefiled" (i. e. the 17th Kathisma), on two stases, and after each of them at the "Glory", together with the "Alleluia", we sing the end of the stasis, three times, namely, after the first stasis we sing the words: "Unless Thy law had been my study", and after the second stasis we sing the words: "My soul shall live".

After the second stasis we sing with the refrain: "Blessed are Thou, O Lord", the Troparion for the departed: "The choir of the saints have found the fountain of Life".

After the 6th ode of the canon we sing the Kontakion: "With the saints give rest", and the Ikos.

As after the first stasis "Blessed are the undefiled", so after the second stasis and the hymn "Blessed are Thou, O Lord", and after the 6th Ode of the Canon, before the singing of the Kontakion: "With the saints give rest" there is a Litany for the Departed. In it we call out: "Again we pray for the repose of the souls of the servants of God, the forefathers, fathers and brothers, Orthodox Christians who here and everywhere lie asleep".

After this, usually, from a special book the departed Orthodox god-fearing Emperors, Kings, Great Princes, and god-fearing Empresses, Queens, Princesses are commemorated by name. In other temples after this a table is placed before the Royal Doors, and on the table is a cross and before it a candle in its holder, and sometimes even kutiya. In other temples only a candle in a large candleholder is placed before the Royal Doors. While intoning these litanies, the priest or deacon hold a censor.

This service for the departed is performed and when, if the Feast of the Three Hierarchs (Jan. 30), or the Translation of the Head of John the Forerunner (Feb. 24) falls on Meatfare Saturday the service for these feasts is performed on Meatfare Friday.

But if the Saint's Feast of the Temple or the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord falls on Meatfare Saturday, then on Meatfare Saturday we sing the service of the temple feast or the Meeting of the Lord; then we sing the service for the departed, evening and morning, on the previous Saturday or on Meatfare Thursday.

When the Saint's Feast of the temple falls on Meatfare Saturday, then the service for the departed may be sung only at the sepulcher, in the temple there must only be one service to the temple; and where there is no sepulcher, the service is sung as noted above; however, at the sepulcher may also be understood the vestibule, in which it is necessary to perform the order for the departed after the dismissal of Vespers (Ustav (Rubrics) chapter 14).

S. V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed., 1274 pp., (Kharkov, 1900) p 492-3

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