



THEOSIS

JANUARY 2017

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 5

From the Editor

Dear Friends in Christ,

We are pleased to present this issue of *Theosis* as a monthly spiritual reflection from the Christian East. This month we feature the Luke and Matthew accounts of Christ healing a blind man (or two) near Jericho.

I would like to point out two new books we have published for daily reflections. One is called *Back to the Garden: Lenten Reflections on Genesis*, a compilation of reflections edited by Fr. Jack Custer and written by several recently ordained priests whom he taught at SS Cyril and Methodius Seminary. The second is called *Tea with the Theotokos*, a series of meditations on Mary (60 in all) by Marianne Sailus, a regular contributor to *Theosis* and author of *Unfinished Business* for the Great Fast along with several other books. These all can be ordered online at www.ecpubs.com. For bulk order discounts for parish bookstores or adult education programs, send an email directly to me: **jackfigel@verizon.net**.

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Jack Figel
Editor

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THEOSIS

*Spiritual Reflections
from the Christian East*

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Scripture of the Month: Healing the Blind Man

Commentary of Matthew Henry
from www.biblegateway.com

Luke 18: Verses 35–43

Christ came not only to bring light to a dark world, and so to set before us the objects we are to have in view, but also to give sight to blind souls, and by healing the organ to enable them to view those objects. As a token of this, he cured many of their bodily blindness: we have now an account of one to whom he gave sight near Jericho. Mark gives us an account of one, and names him, whom he cured as he went out of Jericho, Mark 10:46. Matthew speaks of two whom he cured as they departed from Jericho, Matt. 20:30. Luke says it was *en to eggizein auton*—when he was near to Jericho, which might be when he was going out of it as well as when he was coming into it. Observe,

I. This poor blind man sat by the wayside, begging, Luke 18:35. It seems, he was not only blind, but poor, had nothing to subsist on, nor any relations to maintain him; the fitter emblem of the world of mankind which Christ came to heal and save; they are therefore wretched and miserable, for they are both poor and blind, Rev. 3:17. He sat begging, for he was blind, and could not work for his living. Note, Those ought to be relieved by charity whom the providence of God has any way disabled to get their own bread. Such objects of charity by the way-side ought

not to be overlooked by us. Christ here cast a favourable eye upon a common beggar, and, though there are cheats among such, yet they must not therefore be all thought such.

II. Hearing the noise of a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant, Luke 18:36. This we had not before. It teaches us that it is good to be inquisitive, and that those who are so some time or other find the benefit of it. Those who want their sight should make so much the better use



of their hearing, and, when they cannot see with their own eyes, should, by asking questions, make use of other people's eyes. So this blind man did, and by that means came to understand that Jesus of Nazareth passed by, Luke 18:37. It is good being in Christ's way; and, when we

have an opportunity of applying ourselves to him, not to let it slip.

III. His prayer has in it a great deal both of faith and fervency: Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me, Luke 18:38. He owns Christ to be the Son of David, the Messiah promised; he believes him to be Jesus, a Saviour; he believes he is able to help and succour him, and earnestly begs his favour: "Have mercy on me, pardon my sin, pity my misery." Christ is a merciful king; those that apply themselves to him as the Son of David shall find him so, and ask enough for themselves when they pray, Have mercy on us; for Christ's mercy includes all.

IV. Those who are in good earnest for Christ's favours and blessings will not be put by from the pursuit of them, though they meet with opposition and rebuke. They who went along chid him as troublesome to the Master, noisy and impertinent, and bade him hold his peace; but he went on with his petition, nay, the check given him was but as a dam to a full stream, which makes it swell so much the more; he cried the louder, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. Those who would speed in prayer must be importunate in prayer. This history, in the close of the chapter, intimates the same thing with the parable in the beginning of the chapter, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

V. Christ encourages poor beggars, whom men frown upon, and invites them to come to him, and is ready to entertain them, and bid them welcome: He commanded him to be brought to him. Note, Christ has more tenderness and compassion for distressed supplicants than any of his followers have. Though Christ was upon his journey, yet he stopped and stood, and commanded him to be brought to him. Those who had checked him must now lend him their hands to lead him to Christ.

VI. Though Christ knows all our wants, he will know them from us (Luke 18:41): What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? By spreading our case before God, with a particular representation of our wants and burdens, we teach ourselves to value the mercy we are in pursuit of; and it is necessary that we should, else we are not fit to receive it. This man poured out his soul before Christ, when he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. Thus particular should we be in prayer, upon particular occasions.

VII. The prayer of faith, guided by Christ's encouraging promises, and grounded on them, shall not be in vain; nay, it shall not only receive an answer of peace, but of honour (Luke 18:42); Christ said, Receive thy sight, thy faith hath saved thee. True faith will produce fervency in prayer, and both together will fetch in abundance of the fruits of Christ's favour; and they are then doubly comfortable when they come in that way, when we are saved by faith.

VIII. The grace of Christ ought to be thankfully acknowledged, to the glory of God, Luke 18:43. 1. The poor beggar himself, that had his sight restored, followed Christ, glorifying God. Christ made it his business to glorify his Father; and those whom he healed pleased him best when they praised God, as those shall please God best who praise Christ and do him honour; for, in confessing that he is Lord, we give glory to God the Father. It is for the glory of God if we follow Christ, as those will do whose eyes are opened. 2. The people that saw it could not forbear giving praise to God, who had given such power to the Son of Man, and by him had conferred such favours on the sons of men. Note, We must give praise to God for his mercies to others as well as for mercies to ourselves.

Patristic Reflections

**Commentary of
St. John Chrysostom
on Matthew 20:29-33**

**From the website
www.newadvent.com**



“And as they departed from Jericho, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David.”

See whence He passed unto Jerusalem, and where He abode before this, with regard to which it seems to me especially worthy of inquiry, wherefore He went not away even long before this from thence unto Galilee, but through Samaria. But this we will leave to them that are fond of learning. For if any one were disposed to search the matter out carefully, he will find that John intimates it well, and has expressed the cause.

But let us keep to the things set before us, and let us listen to these blind men, who were better than many that see. For neither having a guide, nor being able to see Him when come near to them, nevertheless they strove to come unto Him, and began to cry with a loud voice, and when rebuked for speaking, they cried the more. For such is the nature of an enduring soul, by the very things that hinder, it is borne up.

But Christ suffered them to be rebuked, that their earnestness might the more appear, and that you might learn that worthily they enjoy the benefits of their cure. Therefore He does not so much as ask, “Do ye believe?” as

He does with many; for their cry, and their coming unto Him, sufficed to make their faith manifest.

Hence learn, O beloved, that though we be very vile and outcast, but yet approach God with earnestness, even by ourselves we shall be able to effect whatsoever we ask. See, for instance, these men, how, having none of the apostles to plead with them, but rather many to stop their mouths, they were able to pass over the hindrances, and to come unto Jesus Himself. And yet the evangelist bears witness to no confidence of life in them, but earnestness sufficed them instead of all.

These then let us also emulate. Though God defer the gift, though there be many withdrawing us, let us not desist from asking. For in this way most of all shall we win God to us. See at least even here, how not poverty, not blindness, not their being unheard, not their being rebuked by the multitude, not anything else, impeded their exceeding earnestness. Such is the nature of a fervent and toiling soul.

What then says Christ?

“He called them, and said, What will you that I should do unto you? They say unto Him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.”

Wherefore does He ask them? Lest any one should think that when they wish to receive one thing, He gives them another thing. For indeed it is usual with Him on every occasion, first to make manifest and discover to all the virtue of those He is healing, and then to apply the cure, for one reason, that He might lead on the others likewise to emulation; and for another, that He might show that they were enjoying the gift worthily. This, for instance, He did with respect to the Canaanitish woman also, this too in the case of the centurion, this again as to her that

had the issue of blood, or rather that marvellous woman even anticipated the Lord's inquiry; but not so did He pass her by, but even after the cure makes her manifest. Such earnest care had He on every occasion to proclaim the good deeds of them that come to Him, and to show them to be much greater than they are, which He does here also.

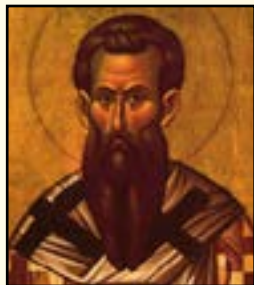
Then, when they said what they wished, He had compassion on them, and touched them. For this alone is the cause of their cure, for which also He came into the world. But nevertheless, although it be mercy and grace, it seeks for the worthy.

But that they were worthy is manifest, both from what they cried out, and from the fact that, when they had received, they did not hasten away, as many do, being ungrateful after the benefits. Nay, they were not like this, but were both persevering before the gift, and after the gift grateful, for "they followed Him."

On the Holy Spirit

By Saint Basil the Great

Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia



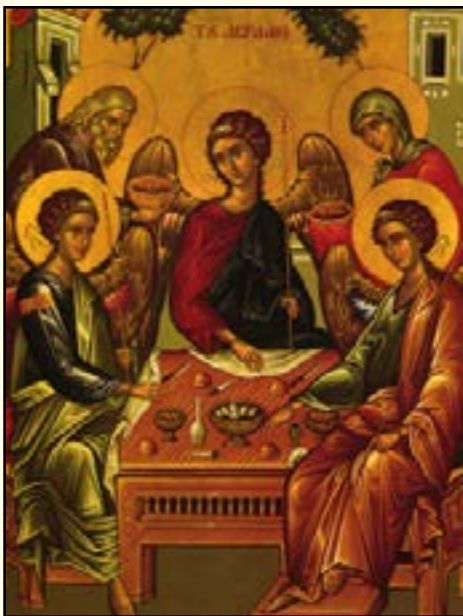
Chapter 2

The origin of the heretics' close observation of syllables.

4. The petty exactitude of these men about syllables and words is not, as might be supposed, simple and straightforward; nor is the mischief to which it tends a small one. There is involved a deep and covert design against true religion. Their pertinacious contention is to show that the mention of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is unlike, as though they will thence find it easy to demonstrate that there is a variation in nature. They have an old sophism, invented by Aetius, the champion of this heresy, in one of whose Letters there is a passage to the effect that things naturally unlike are expressed in unlike terms, and, conversely, that things expressed in unlike terms are naturally unlike. In proof of this statement he drags in the words of the Apostle, "One God and Father of whom are all things,...and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things." 1 Corinthians 8:6 "Whatever, then," he goes on, "is the relation of these terms to one another, such will be the relation of the natures indicated by them; and as the term 'of whom' is unlike the term 'by whom,' so is the Father unlike the Son." On this heresy depends the idle subtlety of these men about the phrases in question. They accordingly assign to God the Father, as though it were His distinctive portion and lot, the phrase "of Whom;" to God the Son they confine the phrase "by Whom;" to the Holy Spirit that of "in Whom," and say that this use of the syllables is never interchanged, in order that, as I have

already said, the variation of language may indicate the variation of nature. Verily it is sufficiently obvious that in their quibbling about the words they are endeavouring to maintain the force of their impious argument.

By the term “ of whom” they wish to indicate the Creator; by the term “ through whom,” the subordinate agent or instrument; by the term “ in whom,” or “ in which,” they mean to show the time or place. The object of all this is that the Creator of the universe may be regarded as of no higher dignity than an instrument, and that the Holy Spirit may appear to be adding to existing things nothing more than the contribution derived from place or time.



Chapter 3

The systematic discussion of syllables is derived from heathen philosophy.

5. They have, however, been led into this error by their close study of heathen writers, who have respectively applied the terms “ of whom” and “ through whom” to things which are by nature distinct. These writers

suppose that by the term “ of whom” or “ of which” the matter is indicated, while the term “ through whom” or “ through which” represents the instrument, or, generally speaking, subordinate agency. Or rather—for there seems no reason why we should not take up their whole argument, and briefly expose at once its incompatibility with the truth and its inconsistency with their own teaching—the students of vain philosophy, while expounding the manifold nature of cause and distinguishing its peculiar significations, define some causes as principal, some as cooperative or con-causal, while others are of the character of “ sine qua non,” or indispensable.

For every one of these they have a distinct and peculiar use of terms, so that the maker is indicated in a different way from the instrument. For the maker they think the proper expression is “ by whom,” maintaining that the bench is produced “ by” the carpenter; and for the instrument “through which,” in that it is produced “through” or by means of adze and gimlet and the rest. Similarly they appropriate “ of which” to the material, in that the thing made is “of” wood, while “according to which” shows the design, or pattern put before the craftsman. For he either first makes a mental sketch, and so brings his fancy to bear upon what he is about, or else he looks at a pattern previously put before him, and arranges his work accordingly. The phrase “ on account of which” they wish to be confined to the end or purpose, the bench, as they say, being produced for, or on account of, the use of man. “ In which” is supposed to indicate time and place. When was it produced? In this time. And where? In this place. And though place and time contribute nothing to what is being produced, yet without these the production of anything is impossible, for efficient agents must have both place and time. It is these careful

distinctions, derived from unpractical philosophy and vain delusion, which our opponents have first studied and admired, and then transferred to the simple and unsophisticated doctrine of the Spirit, to the belittling of God the Word, and the setting at naught of the Divine Spirit. Even the phrase set apart by non-Christian writers for the case of lifeless instruments or of manual service of the meanest kind, I mean the expression “through or by means of which,” they do not shrink from transferring to the Lord of all, and Christians feel no shame in applying to the Creator of the universe language belonging to a hammer or a saw.

Chapter 4

That there is no distinction in the scriptural use of these syllables.

6. We acknowledge that the word of truth has in many places made use of these expressions; yet we absolutely deny that the freedom of the Spirit is in bondage to the pettiness of Paganism. On the contrary, we maintain that Scripture varies its expressions as occasion requires, according to the circumstances of the case. For instance, the phrase “of which” does not always and absolutely, as they suppose, indicate the material, but it is more in accordance with the usage of Scripture to apply this term in the case of the Supreme Cause, as in the words “One God, of whom are all things,” 1 Corinthians 8:6 and again, “All things of God.” 1 Corinthians 11:12 The word of truth has, however, frequently used this term in the case of the material, as when it says “You shall make an ark of incorruptible wood;” and “You shall make the candlestick of pure gold;” Exodus 25:31 and “The first man is of the earth, earthy;” 1 Corinthians 15:47 and “You are formed out of clay as I am.” But these men, to the end, as we have already remarked, that they



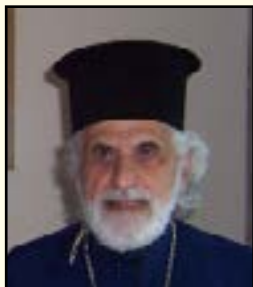
may establish the difference of nature, have laid down the law that this phrase befits the Father alone. This distinction they have originally derived from heathen authorities, but here they have shown no faithful accuracy of limitation. To the Son they have in conformity with the teaching of their masters given the title of instrument, and to the Spirit that of place, for they say in

the Spirit, and through the Son. But when they apply “of whom” to God they no longer follow heathen example, but go over, as they say, to apostolic usage, as it is said, “But of him are you in Christ Jesus,” 1 Corinthians 1:30 and “All things of God.” 1 Corinthians 11:12 What, then, is the result of this systematic discussion? There is one nature of Cause; another of Instrument; another of Place. So the Son is by nature distinct from the Father, as the tool from the craftsman; and the Spirit is distinct in so far as place or time is distinguished from the nature of tools or from that of them that handle them.

Religious Reflections

Bishop John of Amorion

The Baptism of Jesus Christ: Epiphany Day



Baptism of Jesus Christ, Epiphany, Theophany – these are some of the words used to describe this historical event by the Prophet John the Baptist in the running waters of the Jordan River on the shores of Jordan and Israel. The Greek word “Epiphany” comes from the word “Epiphania” meaning the manifestation of Christ’s divinity, when the Holy Trinity was manifested as the voice of God the Father and was heard from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11), with God the Son being baptized and the dove descending upon Christ’s head revealing God the Holy Spirit.

Epiphany, other than Pascha – Christ’s Resurrection – is one of the oldest Christian Feast Days as mentioned by Saint Clement of Alexandria who lived in the second century. As a matter of fact, since the exact date of the Birth of Christ was not known by the early Christians, the Feasts of Jesus’ Birth and Baptism were observed on the same day, January 6, in spite of the thirty years difference between these two events. Even today, the Armenian Christians observe these two historical events in the life of Jesus Christ on January 6. Epiphany Day is also called the Feast of Lights, for it was conducted in the evening and the congregations held lighted candles, thereby witnessing to the fact that “Christ is the light of the world” (John 8:12).

Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Gregory of Nazianzos (both of whom lived in the fourth century) inform us that at the Blessing of the Waters Service in the evening, the faithful received the Holy Water and took it to their homes to be used as spiritual medicine. Likewise, on the following day the catechumens (who were preparing to become Christians) were baptized in the blessed Holy Water of the previous day. By the way, whatever happened to the Prayers of the Catechumens in the Saint Basil and Saint Chrysostom Liturgies? They still are part of the Liturgy of the Catechumens and are contained in the official texts of the clergy. We do recite them aloud whenever the Presanctified Liturgy is conducted.

Although most Christians today observe Epiphany Day, to a lesser or greater degree, there is a major difference in emphasis of historical events. On Epiphany Day, Orthodox and Monophysite Christians observe the Baptism of Jesus Christ, the manifestation of Christ's divinity and that of the Holy Trinity (Matthew 3:13-17), whereas Roman Catholics and Episcopalians observe it as the day the Three Wise Men (not kings) paid homage to the Infant Jesus in a manger in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1-11). As noted, these events are





evident in the different Gospel Lessons read on Epiphany Day in these Churches. Also, the Wise Men did not pay homage to Jesus until some 2 years later. That is why in Byzantine iconography of the Nativity of Jesus Christ, the Wise Men are not depicted, along with the shepherds and angels. They did see the Star of Bethlehem, and they did set out

from the east on camels, which took them some two years, to reach their destination. Furthermore, that is why King Herod ordered the killing of all male Jewish children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old and younger (Matthew 2:16).

On Epiphany Day, we affirm our faith in the Holy Trinity – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. That is, not three gods, but one God. Three in hypostasis, one in essence. Three persons, one in nature. The Father is distinguished from the other Persons as eternally begetting from His Nature God the Son and as breathing forth God the Holy Spirit. The Son is distinguished as being eternally begotten of the Father. The Holy Spirit is distinguished as eternally

proceeding from the Father. The Church Fathers say that God the Father may be likened to a fire, God the Son to the glow, and God the Holy Spirit to the heat. Saint John of Damascus (who lived in the seventh century) in his "Exposition of the Orthodox Faith" says, "We believe in One Father the creator of all, begotten of no one and Father of one only by nature, His Only-Begotten Son, Christ, and we believe in One Son of God, the Only Begotten, Christ, not made, who is consubstantial with the Father. For there never was a time when the Father was and the Son was not, but always the Father and always the Son. For He could not have received the name Father apart from the Son, for if He were without the Son, He could not be the Father. And we believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father, the object of equal adoration and glorification with the Father and Son, since He is co-essential and co-eternal."

Let us experience a spiritual rebirth, as we observe the Baptism of Jesus Christ, by allowing our lives, our thoughts, and our actions to radiate our Orthodox Christian Faith and to illuminate each and every one of us, our homes, our community, and our world with the message of agape, hope, redemption, and salvation in Jesus Christ.

Homiletic Reflections

By Father John Zeyack



Theophany: Matthew 3:13-17

The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is one of the greatest artistic triumphs in history. From 1508 to 1512, the artist Michelangelo lay on his back and painted the Fall and the Flood.

But Michelangelo's magnificent art started to fade almost immediately. Within a century of completing his work, no one remembered what his original frescoes had really looked like. Painter Biagio Biagetti described it in 1936: "We see the colors of the Sistine ceiling as if through smoked glass."

The Vatican invited art experts to examine the work. The result was stunning. No one had imagined that beneath centuries of grime lay such vibrant colors. This was not the Michelangelo known by art critics. That artist was the master of form, his paintings resembling sculpture more than painting. This "new" artist was also the master of color – azure, green, rose, and lavender of amazing nuance.

Their success prompted the restoration of the entire ceiling. The task was completed on December 31, 1989. It had taken twice as long to clean the ceiling as the artist had needed to paint it. But the result was breathtaking. For the first time in nearly 500 years, people viewed this masterpiece the way it was intended, in all its color and beauty.



The land of Palestine and Israel are desert lands. In Jesus' time they didn't have running water in homes, and, being in the desert, they didn't wash often. You can imagine the buildup of dirt, body odor, stains on clothes. When I was in the hospital and really sick, the one thing that bothered me the most was that I wasn't allowed to take a shower and after three weeks I couldn't stand myself.

John the Baptist preached that you had to get cleansed on the inside and the outside. You had to change your ways. What God created, what God had made so beautiful became caked with sin and corruption, violation of all kinds of commandments, shame, guilt, trespass, hatreds, injustice, sexual sins. Prepare the way of the Lord! Repent! Change your lives! And people flocked out to the river Jordan to be baptized as a way of forgiveness and washing away of their sins. They were cleansed on the outside and the inside. And doesn't that feel good! Doesn't that make you want to stay clean forever! It's just so refreshing!

But John's baptism lacked something. It could clean, it could wash away sins, but it really couldn't restore the

whole human person totally to God. And John said, “One is coming after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to lose. I baptize with water, He will baptize with the Holy Spirit.”



And so when Jesus came, John tried to stop Him. “I should be baptized by You. You have no need of baptism.” And Jesus forbade him and said, “I must fulfill all things.” Jesus comes to take all the sins of the world upon Himself. He comes not only to forgive and cleanse our sins, but also to restore the image of God in us. He is filled with the Holy Spirit, God’s Spirit. He is declared “the Son of God; My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” God’s voice is heard! God, who by His word created the heavens and the earth! God’s voice is filled with power and life. God’s voice reaches into the depths of our souls and restores human nature and all creation back to its original purity, to its original likeness. Just like in Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel the form and the color were restored to its

original beauty, so we are restored by Jesus Christ!

In our baptism we are not only cleansed of original sin and our personal sin, but God declares: “You are my beloved son. You are my beloved daughter” Everything I see in Jesus my only begotten Son, I see in you. That’s why baptism is so important for us. It gives us our identity in Christ. It restores the life of Grace within us. Through our union with Jesus we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Everything that God wanted for Adam and Eve – for the whole human race – is restored to us.

And we have a second baptism that is the Sacrament of Confession, because we are weak and prone to sin even after we are cleansed and filled with grace. This Sacrament cleanses us of all sin and restores us to grace. Often we think that we live in the desert and only need to be cleansed on special occasions. What a mistake! I don’t know many people in our society who do not bathe almost every day. And when they don’t we know about it right away! We can’t stand ourselves if we don’t.

And yet we have gotten so comfortable walking around in sin, with hatreds, carrying all kinds of filth in our minds and our hearts and our souls; with anger; without love; with injustice and distortion of our God-given image and likeness, that it almost feels natural.

It is so wonderful to see God act in a person’s life; to see someone come to Confession and be restored to grace; to see them repent and come back to the Lord! What a great blessing! What a great Joy!

This is why we celebrate this Holy Day, because it’s about Jesus Christ coming into our lives – about Jesus Christ coming to cleanse us and to restore us to full vibrancy.

No wonder Jesus begins his ministry with the words:

Repent – the Kingdom of God is at hand. What joyous words – we can be forgiven, we can be restored. We have no need to fear God. No need to fear damnation – losing the eternal life that God made us for. It's all ours because of Jesus.

Claim it. Accept it. Let it fill you! Let it transform you! Let it restore the likeness of God into your life. Let it restore sanity and right living. Let it restore relationships that have been betrayed and broken! Only God can restore our souls – and He sent His Son – so that through Him we can become sons and daughter, so that through Him we can grow in the image and likeness of God, so that through Him the full beauty of every person can shine!

I've seen the Sistine Chapel before and after. I'll take the restored painting full of life and vibrancy! I know when I need to be cleansed in my soul – I can't wash it away – I need Christ. I need His forgiveness and restoration! I need to be filled again with grace. And I know that joy that comes from being in Christ. I've seen men and women whose lives have been changed and transformed by Christ. I'll take God's work!

When we are blessed today by the Jordan water – the water of cleansing and healing and restoration – make sure that you ask Jesus to enter into your heart and soul. Cleanse me and restore me. Let me shine with your grace and love O, Lord. Fill me with joy!

The Holy Theotokos

By Father Robert Slesinski



9. The Holy Dormition (Part 1)

The Divine King of all bestowed upon you gifts that are beyond nature. Just as He preserved your virginity in childbirth, He saved your body from suffering corruption in the tomb. He exalted you, his Mother, through your divine passage in glory.



This verse from Ode 6 of the Canon of Matins of St. Cosmas of Maiuma (ca. 675–ca. 752)¹³⁷ for the Feast of the Holy Dormition of the Holy Theotokos well encapsulates the paradoxes that defy human reason in coming to terms with this mystery—so magnificently portrayed in Christian art in both the East and the West—that is at one with the Christian faith. This feast, first celebrated in the Christian

East, then in the Christian West, like all other great commemorations of Mary gradually came to the forefront in the wake of the Councils of Ephesus (A.D. 431) and Chalcedon (A.D. 451) that sought to clarify and, indeed, dogmatize the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ as true God and true Man, an ongoing effort that, in the plan of Divine Providence, rallied under the masthead, as it were, of the Theotokos, the “Mother of God.” A celebration of her life by the Christian faithful was only a natural development, a worthy by-product of this primary focus on Christ, her Divine Son. From the perspective of the “people”—the laity—how could there not be an offshoot fascination with the Lord’s Mother in time expressive of a genuine devotion to her, ever-cognizant of her essential role in the unfolding of the Mystery of Redemption and Salvation?

At the same time, it cannot be forgotten that Sacred Scripture does not in any way explicitly broach the subject of the personal life of the Virgin Mary not directly related to the mission of her Son (e.g., the Annunciation, the finding in the Temple, the wedding in Cana, and the scene of Calvary), which entails such “natural” moments as her conception, nativity, and dormition or “falling asleep” and, then, the “existential” moment of her entry into the Temple. Not surprisingly, a whole secondary, “non-canonical” literature arose to fill in this void (purposely) left untouched by the “canonical” Scriptures. But here, unfortunately, the popular imagination could—and did—run wild with a host of “legends” about Mary and her Son as not recounted in the canonical Scriptures taking on a life of their own, most notably, in the Protoevangelion of James, only rivaled by numerous others that include Dormition apocryphals referenced by the various saints and Fathers of the Church to be cited here.



With regard to the natural end of the Theotokos' earthly life, the earliest extant reference to it comes at the hand of Palestine-born St. Epiphanius of Salamis (ca. 315–403), a bishop on the island of Crete, whose most famous work the *Panarion* ("Basket") (A.D. 377) is given over to a confutation of the many heresies assaulting the early Church, hence its common designation as *Adversus haereses*. Its famous chapter 78 is devoted to the Virgin Theotokos, combating erroneous views about her. In this context, he brings up the subject of the Ever-Virgin's earthly end, frankly admitting the pervasive lack of clear knowledge on the matter. His remarks bear citing at length:

If anyone holds that we are mistaken, let him simply follow the indications of Scripture, in which is found no mention of Mary's death, whether she died or did not die, whether she was buried or was not buried. For when John was sent on his voyage to Asia, no one says that he had the holy Virgin with him as a companion. Scripture simply is silent, because of the greatness of the prodigy, in order not to strike the mind of man with excessive wonder.

As far as I am concerned, I dare not speak out but I maintain a meditative silence...

Venturing however two possibilities, namely, that she might have been martyred extrapolating the prophet Simeon's remark of Luke 2:35 or that she might have been taken up into heaven following a certain interpretation of the meaning of the Book of Revelation, chapter twelve, only to continue on an insistent note:

But I dare not affirm this with absolute certainty, nor do I say that she remained untouched by death, nor can I confirm whether she died. The

Scriptures, which are above human reason, left this question uncertain, out of respect for this honored and admirable vessel, so that no one could suspect her of carnal baseness. We do not know if she died or if she was buried; however, she did not ever have carnal relations. Let this never be said!, proffering three hypotheses in summary:

If the holy Virgin is dead and has been buried, surely her dormition happened with great honor...If she was slain...then she obtained the glory together with the martyrs...Or she continued to live. For, to God, it is not impossible to do whatever he wills; on the other hand, no one knows exactly what her end was

Another important, yet discreet, testimony to the dormition of the Ever-Virgin is from Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (late 5th to early 6th century), who places himself among the Apostles at this event and pens, almost as an aside, in his famed tract *The Divine Names* the following:

As you know, we and he [Hierotheus] and many holy brothers met together for a vision of that mortal body, that source of life, which bore God. James, the brother of God, was there. So too was Peter, that summit, that chief of all those who speak of God. After the vision, all these hierarchs chose, each as he was able, to praise the omnipotent goodness of that divine frailty. But next to the sacred writers themselves was my teacher. He surpassed the rapt hierarchs, all the other sacred initiators. Yes, indeed. He was so caught up, so taken out of himself, experiencing communion with the things praised, that everyone who heard him, everyone who saw him, everyone who knew him

(or, rather, did not know him) considered him to be inspired, to be speaking with divine praises.

In the same time frame we find another discrete voice in St. Jacob of Serug who eulogizes the Virgin Mary in a poetic homily, "Concerning the Burial, That Is To Say, the Death of the Holy Virgin Mother of God, Mary and How She Was Buried By the Apostles." His account of her death and burial begins with the moving couplet:

Unto the Mother of this Jesus Christ, Son of God, death came that she might taste his cup.

To be continued...

Practicing Our Faith

By Marianne Sailus



“Lord, Please Let Me See”

This month’s parable is from the Gospel of St. Luke 18:35-43, and relates an interaction between Jesus and a blind man who was begging, probably for his living. This unnamed man heard a crowd passing by, and wondered what was happening. The people who were around him informed him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”

The man must have known something about Jesus, because when he was given this information, St. Luke tells us that the man cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!” If he were not aware of the various stories that he heard from others about Jesus and truly believed that Jesus could heal him, he would not have made this statement of faith, thereby acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah (i.e., “Son of David”).

What occurs next is very interesting. Rather than immediately restoring the man’s sight, Jesus asks him, “What do you want Me to do for you?” This question is interesting because Jesus foreknew what the man desired, yet He wanted the man to make his request directly to Him. Likewise, God knows all that we need, but he likes us to approach Him in our prayers and petition Him for what we need. When we do this, we are communing with our God, Who loves us very much and wants us to be close to Him. Nevertheless, God will never force Himself or His will on us. He would like us to come to Him and ask

that His will be accomplished (“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”) in our lives, but He does not demand this of us.

We are not surprised when we read the blind man’s response to Jesus’ question: “Lord, please let me see.” Obviously, this man is looking for restoration of his physical sight. He wants to see the people and the things and the animals and the buildings that have always been a part of his world, but which were hidden from him, due to blindness. At the beginning of this chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke (18:1-8), Jesus tells the Parable of the Persistent Widow who never gives up petitioning the unjust judge to settle in her favor. After her persistence, the judge agrees to this, saying, “I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice.” In essence, Jesus gives us permission to keep petitioning His Father – the Just Judge – Who will answer our prayers according to what He knows is best for our immortal souls, due to our faith and perseverance in prayer.

If we think about the man’s answer, however, could it not be a prayer that all of us can use to petition God? The only difference is that, for us, our prayer should have a different meaning. That is because most of us reading this column are not physically blind. On the other hand, most of us have occasions of spiritual blindness for which we need the eyes of our faith restored.

We become spiritually blind when we fail to see our need to worship God at the Divine Services (when circumstances allow). When we purposely refuse to give God the worship due Him, we have darkened the eyes of our souls. We become spiritually blind when we allow our passions to overtake us and lead us into sin,

and then neglect the Mystery of Penance before receiving Christ's Body and Blood in Holy Communion. That is why St. Paul writes, "Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment" (I Corinthians 11:28-31).

We also become spiritually blind when we see the needs of others, yet avert our glance so that we cannot see

them. We may be concerned about the motive(s) of those who beg today, and that is totally reasonable. But what about the charities that we know are legitimate and care for the needs of the "least of My brethren?" There are many soup kitchens, homeless shelters, free health clinics, etc. that can really use our help of time, talent, and



treasure – not only during the holiday times – but all year round. In fact, it is the other times during the year (like these winter months!) when these charities run into difficulty, as many people do donate during the various holidays, but not otherwise.

There is one way to regain one's spiritual sight – and that is by the Light of Christ. Jesus Himself tells those who would follow Him, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). Obviously, Jesus is not referring here to the "darkness" caused due to defects in our physical eyes, but rather when we allow the Evil One to overtake our souls with his darkness – the darkness that leads to eternal death, not eternal life.

Just as Jesus tells the man in the Gospel, He tells us, "Have sight; your faith has saved you." If we trust in the Lord to open the eyes of our hearts to love Him with our whole hearts, minds, and souls, and to love our neighbors as ourselves, He will restore our spiritual sight, and like the man whose physical sight was restored, we will give glory and praise to God.

Sacramental Living

By Michael Haldas



Uncreated Light: Experiencing the Transcendent

What is Uncreated Light and why is it an experience of the Transcendent? Why do I capitalize the word “Transcendent?” It is because by experiencing the Transcendent I mean experiencing God, a personal God, a Divine Person, who is beyond our comprehension, yet who relates to us and loves us personally in a way we can comprehend by experiencing Him in our hearts; not some sort of impersonal, abstract being or phenomenon. Too often today people think of the Transcendent as something other than a personal God.

As Christians, we often need to go deeper in our understanding and practice of our faith. Frankly, we also need to go deeper in the way we share our faith with others when those situations and opportunities arise. This notion of going deeper, of living Christianity in-depth as it was meant to be lived, and as a result, our thought, speech, and actions exuding this depth, has been on my mind quite a bit lately. This article is really about this deeper understanding and is the result of some recent experiences of mine that made me reflect.

I was away in a remote place on our most recent Feast Day of the Transfiguration. Though I couldn’t be in Church for that day, one of my favorite Feast Days of the Church, I was in one of the most beautiful natural places I have ever been and I had some experiences and thoughts

I want to share. However, before I describe them, I want to explain about Uncreated Light, what we mean by it in Orthodoxy, and walk through some parts of the Bible that speak to it.

When Orthodox theologians, clergy, teachers, or others talk or write about Uncreated Light they are referring to God's divine energy, or presence, present in our world. It's the energy of the Holy Spirit who permeates everything. St. Paul says in Acts 17:28: "For in Him [God] we live, move and have our being."

God's Uncreated Light, the Light within Himself that He has chosen to share with us, is all around us but we don't often see or experience it, or, better said, Him. Or if we do, in what measure we do, we don't perceive it or understand it as such, or attribute it to something else. Father George Papademetriou in his excellent article, "Introduction to Orthodox Spirituality", writes that: "The divine energies are "within everything and outside everything." All creation is the manifestation of God's energies." He quotes the theologian Vladimir Lossky who says in his work *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*: "These divine rays penetrate the whole created universe and are the cause of its existence." Father George goes on to explain: "The uncreated Light and the knowledge of God in Orthodox tradition "illuminates every man that cometh into this world." It is the same light that the apostles saw on Mount Tabor that penetrates all of creation and transforms it, creating it anew."

In addition to the experience of the apostles on Mount Tabor, there are other key Scriptures that teach us about Uncreated Light. The Scriptures are the basis of why we believe in God's Uncreated Light. It's because of what we find in Scripture that both informs us, but also speaks to the intuitive, noetic experience we have that confirms this

truth. In Genesis 1:3 God says: “Let there be light”; and there was light. It’s not until verse 16 that He creates the greater and lesser lights, the sun, and the moon, so this light is something other than the sun, moon, and stars. It is God Himself. God is the Light by which we experience this light.



Psalm 35:10 says: “For with You is the fountain of life; In Your Light we shall see light.” (This is Psalm 36:9 in the Protestant Bible). Just as the Bible begins with light it ends with a reaffirmation of this truth that God is the Light and that we need no other light. Revelation 21:23 reads when referring to the new Heaven, new earth and specifically new

Jerusalem: “The city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The lamb is its light.” The Orthodox Study Bible note to this passage reminds us of what I have been attempting to communicate. It reads: “Created light is unnecessary. For the everlasting Uncreated Light will illumine all (Ps 35:10) with true and clear vision to see things as they really are. The true Light, the Light of the world (Jn 8:12), was incarnate (Jn 1:9), and even while on earth He shone with Uncreated Light (Mk 9:2–8; 2Pt 1:16–18).”

The Book of Revelation reminds us one more time before it ends regarding the Light. Revelation 22:5 reads: "There shall be no light there; They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light." Peter, James, and John, experienced a foretaste of this Light in the Transfiguration. Matthew 17:2 reads: "and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light." In addition to these experiences and accounts of the uncreated Light of God, we also have clear teachings about this Light from Christ. In John 8:12 Jesus said: "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

When Christ says this, the Feast of the Tabernacles is concluding with great lamps being lit. One can imagine many of the dutiful religious faithful celebrating the lighting of these lamps yet the true light is not in the lamps. Christ is drawing attention from those symbolic lights to His true light. It's in the person of God who those religious faithful should have been turning their attention to. This represents a common mistake we, as Christians, are surrounded with and which I explain more below.

Now in Matthew 5:14 Jesus says something remarkable, especially when you consider it in the context of what He says in John 8:12 and the experience of the Transfiguration. He says: "You are the light of the world." The "you" is us, human beings. In its corresponding notes to this Scripture, the Orthodox Study Bible reminds us that "God is the true and Uncreated Light."

So Christ who is God, who is uncreated, who is the Light, is telling us, created beings who God created out of love, that we are the light as well affirming that we are indeed created in His image and likeness. That is the depth of God's love for us that He gives us His Light and wills for

us to also be the light. Just as Peter, James, and John – and many of the Holy Fathers if you read about them and some of their experiences – experienced a foretaste of the Uncreated Light, we too can experience it, even if it is a lesser measure than the experience of these Saints. St. John of Krondstadt reminds us: “We can raise our nature to communion with the Divine Nature; and God is the Light uncreated, surpassing every light that has been created.”

As Orthodox Christians, we believe whether we realize it or not, all of us, Christian and non-Christians, yearn for this Light, yearn for the beauty of the Light, yearn for God. But first, we have to be attuned to it, attuned to God, which comes through our sincere participation in the Sacramental life of the Church. How much we are attuned to God determines how much we experience Him, to the measure of how He created us and according to His will. What I mean by this is with God things are not formulaic according to human understanding. We are all different and unique in our persons, and God grants us His experience of Him both based on our desire for Him and also per His will for us as individual persons.

Christ reminded Peter of this at the end of the Gospel of John when Peter was comparing himself to John and Christ essentially said to Peter it doesn't matter to you Peter, what my will is for John, you Peter, need to follow Me according to how I have called you. And of course, we can never confuse what points to the Light, for the Light Himself. This is where a lot of the world is. They confuse the pointers to the Light with the real thing, mistaking the experience of these pointers with the experience of the Light Himself.

But how do we, who are not Saints as we commonly understand the meaning of the word, but are saints,

that is believers, as in the New Testament use of the word. How do we, ordinary believers who are not Saints, experience God's light? There are myriad ways and I am going to suggest a few based on my personal experience which I am going to assume are a shared experience for many of you. Experiencing God's Light was described as something not so much we see, but that we sense and feel intuitively in the depth of being, in our nous, that deep part of us, commonly referred to as the heart, where we know and connect with God.

First, we have the Church to experience God's Light. Ask yourself how often you come out of Church after a beautiful service where you received the Sacrament of Holy Communion, and you feel such a sense of peace and contentment and joy. That's experiencing God's divine energy or God's Light through your union with Him.

Have you ever encountered a person who just seemed to have a light about them? I see it a lot in the faces of devoted and committed clergy and laity who just seem to have something about them that comes through in their faces. I also experience it in nature and that is why I love to take country and forest walks and hikes or be in the mountains or beaches in solitude.

That's what happened to me on the Feast Day of the Transfiguration when I couldn't be in Church. I was on this beautiful mountain and forest hike with sunlight, running waterfalls and it was so beautiful I just felt God's presence all around me. I found my thoughts constantly going to God and thanking Him for His creation and being able to experience the beauty and peace and joy that came with it.

But here is what I didn't do. I didn't for a moment mistake the created for the Creator. Nor did I experience

nature impersonally. I experienced it as an experience of communion because in those moments I was participating in the life of Christ through the beauty of His creation. To me, all of it led my mind and heart to our Personal God. I am making this point because I was with a naturalist who was leading the hike. He was a great guy and he was explaining and appreciating the hike from a spiritual perspective but not in a personal way. When he spoke reverently about nature, he never went beyond nature itself and Who it pointed to. He stopped short of this and simply revered creation.

My intent is not to denigrate him in any way because He was wonderful person who taught me a lot that day from a naturalist perspective. It was just that this encounter and experience brought some things to mind because they are close to my heart. Too often I have heard people over the years say things like, "Let go and let the universe guide you" as if the Universe were some sort of deity or personal force as opposed to a created thing. Or I have heard people say after a great natural experience "I felt at one with nature." Of course, I completely understand what they felt and meant, but this oneness is closeness with God whose creation and the beauty of it draws us to Him, draws us to experience Him, but not in some detached nominalist way in which we are more present in the observation of the experience than in the experience itself.

When people believe that the universe, or nature, has this power within itself apart from God it's a form of pantheism. Fr. George Morelli explains: "As Father of the created world, God creates from without. In other words, creation exists apart from Him. Creation is not equivalent to Him. God as Father is transcendent to what He creates. There is no room for pantheism."

It gets back to St. Gregory Palamas's distinction between

God's essence and His energies. Another saint, St. Athanasius, describes God's essence and energies like this: "He [God that is] is outside all things according to His essence but He is in all things through His acts of power." Metropolitan Kallistos Ware writes that God's



essence is His nature or inner being and His energies are His operations or acts of power.

I get concerned today with the plurality of beliefs to include new age thought systems and competing spiritualities, and secular atheist thought that diminishes everything beyond human rationale to superstition, that our

children and grandchildren will get exposed and potentially enamored with this type of pantheistic thought. We often convey and teach our faith in a legalistic way where dutiful obligation to a set of rules and requirements because you believe in God is what

makes your Christian. We don't often teach enough about the depth and beauty of our sacramental understanding of reality that celebrates all of reality, all of creation, as a way of communion with our loving God. One of the reasons that people gravitate toward new age and eastern spiritual practices is because of its celebration and appreciation of the spiritual beauty of natural world and its transcendent nature. But it's lacking in the end because it is missing something or, to be more accurate, someone.

We have all of this appreciation for the same things in Orthodox Christianity but with one huge difference. It all points to a personal God who loves us, and further, beyond just pointing, it allows us to experience Him in an intimate loving way. That's what we need to make sure our children, grandchildren, and fellow believers never lose sight of. We need to do our best, to the measure we have this understanding and experience, to help them understand and experience our faith knowing it is all about leading us to ever deepening understanding and experience with the Transcendent, that is a loving personal God, not adhering to a set of rules and regulations. The latter is nothing more than a cold understanding that will create a natural dichotomy, or divide, in their thoughts and hearts that will lead them to understand Christ and His Church and God's natural world as two separate unrelated realities.

This will only lead them to seek to fulfill their deep spiritual need, whether they recognize this need consciously or not, someplace else. And we care about this not because we are trying to win converts over to the Christian faith, but because we know our faith is the true reality, and the only reality that exists is God, and we can only find our real and true growth and fulfillment in Him.

Churchs of the East: A Photo Essay

By Jack Figel



St. Basil Greek Catholic Church Krajne Ciero, Slovakia



The Main Church



The Village Street



Church and Entry into the Courtyard



Mother of God with Christ



Christ the Teacher



The Iconostasis

Common Troparia for Days of the Week

Common for Monday - Holy Angels

Troparion - Tone 4:

Leaders of the heavenly armies, although we are unworthy, we always beseech you to fortify us by your prayers and to shelter us beneath the wings of your sublime glory. Watch over us who bow to you and cry out fervently: Deliver us from danger. For you are the commanders of the powers on high.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

Leaders of God's armies and ministers of divine glory, commanders of angels and guides of mortals, plead on our behalf for what we need and for great mercy; since you are the leaders of the heavenly hosts.

Common for Tuesday - the Holy Forerunner John

Troparion - Tone 2:

The memory of the righteous is celebrated with praise, but for you, O Forerunner, the Lord's testimony is enough. You were shown to be more honorable than the prophets since you were deemed worthy to baptize in the waters the Lord you had proclaimed. Therefore, you fought for the truth and with joy proclaimed the good news to those in Hades, that God has appeared in the flesh to take away the sins of the world and to grant us great mercy.

Kontakion - Tone 3:

Today she who once was barren gives birth to Christ's forerunner. He himself is the fulfillment of all prophecy; for in the Jordan, he imposed his hand upon the Word of God whom the prophets had foretold and was shown to be his prophet, herald, and forerunner.

Common for Wednesday - Holy Cross**Troparion - Tone 1:**

Save your people, O Lord, and bless your inheritance. Grant victory to your Church over evil and protect your people by your cross.

Kontakion - Tone 4:

Christ our God, who were willingly raised upon the cross, grant your mercies to the new people who bear your name. By your power grant joy to the Church. Give her victory over evil with your invincible trophy, the weapon of peace, as an ally.

Common for Thursday - the Apostles and St. Nicholas**Troparion of the Apostles - Tone 3:**

O holy apostles, intercede with the merciful God that he may grant our souls forgiveness of sins.

Troparion of Nicholas - Tone 4:

Your life has shown you to your flock as a rule of faith, an image of gentleness, and a teacher of moderation. You acquired greatness through humility and wealth through poverty. O Father and Archbishop Nicholas, intercede with Christ our God to save our souls.

Kontakion of the Apostles - Tone 2:

Lord, you have received your steadfast and inspired preachers, the foremost of your apostles, into the enjoyment of your good gifts and repose. You preferred their sufferings and death above any sacrifice. For you alone know the secrets of the heart.

Kontakion of Nicholas - Tone 3:

You were renowned as a priest in Myra, O holy Nicholas; for you fulfilled the Gospel of Christ, O venerable Father. You risked your life for your people and saved the innocent from death. Thereby you have been initiated into the mysteries of God's grace.

Common for Friday - Holy Cross

Troparion - Tone 1:

Save your people, O Lord, and bless your inheritance. Grant victory to your Church over evil and protect your people by your cross.

Kontakion - Tone 4:

Christ our God, who were willingly raised upon the cross, grant your mercies to the new people who bear your name. By your power grant joy to the Church. Give her victory over evil with your invincible trophy, the weapon of peace, as an ally.

Common for Saturday - the Saints and the Departed

Troparion of the Saints - Tone 2:

Apostles, martyrs, and prophets, bishops, venerable and righteous saints, you have finished the course and have kept the faith. Since you can approach the Savior with confidence, we ask you to beseech his goodness on our behalf, for the salvation of our souls.

Troparion for the Departed - Tone 2:

O Lord, in your goodness, remember your servants and forgive whatever sins they committed in their life; for no one is sinless but you alone. You have the power to grant rest to the departed.

Kontakion for the Departed - Tone 8:

With the saints, O Christ, give rest to your servants, where there is no pain, sorrow, nor mourning, but life everlasting.

Kontakion of the Saints - Tone 8:

To you, O Lord, Gardener of all creation, the world offers the God-bearing martyrs as the first fruits of nature. Through their prayers and through the Theotokos preserve your Church, your dwelling-place, in perfect peace, O most merciful One.

Menalogion: Calendar of Saints and Daily Prayers

According to the *Typicon* of Archbishop David Petras

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1

**SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY. CIRCUMCISION OF
OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST. OUR
HOLY FATHER BASIL THE GREAT, ARCHBISHOP OF
CAESAREA IN CAPPADOCIA.**

Resurrection Tone 8

Troparion:

You descended from on high, O Merciful One. You accepted burial for three days to free us from our passions. O Lord, our Resurrection and our Life, glory to you.

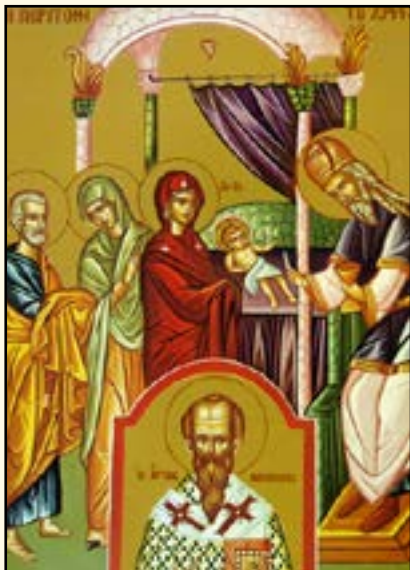
Feast of the Circumcision

Troparion - Tone 1:

O Jesus, although you are seated on a fiery throne with the eternal Father and your divine Spirit, you were pleased to be born of a virgin maiden, your mother who has never known man. Therefore, as man you were also circumcised when you were eight days old. Glory to your most noble decision! Glory to your salvation! Glory to your humility! You alone love us all.

Kontakion - Tone 3:

The Lord of all endures circumcision and being good, he cuts away the sins of mortals. Today he grants salvation to the world, and the bishop Basil, the Creator's morning star, rejoices; he has been initiated into the mysteries of Christ.



Saint Basil the Great

Troparion - Tone 1:

Your voice resounds to the whole world which has received your word of instruction in divine dogmas. You explained the nature of creation and gave rules to order human conduct. O royal priest, O venerable father Basil, beg Christ our God to grant us his great mercy.

Kontakion - Tone 4:

You have appeared as the unshakable foundation of the Church,

leading all mortals to safe pasture in the Lord, and confirming them by your teachings, O venerable Basil, revealer of heavenly mysteries.

Readings: Epistles: [2 Timothy 4:5-8](#) (Sunday before Theophany) and [Col 2:8-12](#) (Circumcision);

Gospels: [Mark 1:1-8](#) (Sunday before Theophany) and [Luke 2:20-21.40-52](#) (Circumcision).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

OUR HOLY FATHER BASIL THE GREAT, ARCHBISHOP OF CAESAREA IN CAPPADOCIA, who is called “great” in learning and wisdom. He taught meditation on the Scriptures and manual work in obedience and fraternal love to his monks, and established a way of life for them in the Rules he wrote. He taught the faithful by his excellent writings and shone forth by his pastoral care for the poor and sick. (379)

MONDAY, JANUARY 2

Pre-festive Day of Theophany. Our Holy Father Sylvester, Pope of Rome.

Pre-feast of Theophany

Troparion - Tone 4:

Zebulun, make ready; Naphtali, prepare yourself.
O River Jordan, stand and leap for joy to receive
the Master coming to be baptized. O Adam, rejoice



with the first mother,
Eve, and do not hide
yourselves as once
you did in Paradise.
For, seeing you naked,
Christ has appeared to
put on the first robe. He
has appeared to renew
all creation.

Kontakion - Tone 4:

Today the Lord appears
in the Jordan's streams
and cries out to John:
Do not be afraid to baptize me, for I have come
to save Adam, the first
created.

Common for a Bishop

Troparion - Tone 4:

Your life has shown you to your flock as a rule
of faith, an image of gentleness, and a teacher
of moderation. You acquired greatness through
humility and wealth through poverty. O father and
bishop Sylvester, intercede with Christ our God to
save our souls.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

Divine thunder, spiritual trumpet, sower of faith, and destroyer of heresies, servant of the Trinity, O great bishop Sylvester, you stand forever with the angels. Pray without ceasing for all of us.

Readings:

Epistle, [Hebrews 3:5-11 & 17-19](#) or [1 Timothy 3:14-4:5](#);
Gospel, [Luke 20:27-44](#) or [Matthew 3:1-11](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

Our holy father Sylvester, Pope of Rome who piously ruled the Church for many years. During his pontificate, Constantine the Emperor built basilicas worthy of veneration and the Nicene Council of 325 acclaimed Christ the Son of God. On this day in Rome in the cemetery of Priscilla his body was laid to rest. (335)

TUESDAY, JANUARY 3

Pre-festive Day of Theophany. The Holy Prophet Malachi. The Holy Martyr Gordius. Venerable Genevieve of Paris.

*Pre-feast of Theophany***Troparion - Tone 4:**

Zebulun, make ready; Naphtali, prepare yourself. O River Jordan, stand and leap for joy to receive the Master coming to be baptized. O Adam, rejoice with the first mother, Eve, and do not hide yourselves as once you did in Paradise. For, seeing you naked, Christ has appeared to put on the first robe. He has appeared to renew all creation.

Kontakion - Tone 4:

Today the Lord appears in the Jordan's streams and cries out to John: Do not be afraid to baptize me, for I have come to save Adam, the first created.

*Common for a Prophet***Troparion - Tone 2:**

As we celebrate the memory of your prophet Malachi, O Lord, we implore you to save our souls through his prayers.

Kontakion - Tone 4:

Your pure heart was enlightened by the Spirit and became a vessel of radiant prophecy. Because you saw as present the events yet to come we honor you, O blessed and glorious Prophet Malachi.

*Common for a Martyr***Troparion - Tone 4:**

Your martyr Gordius, O Lord our God, in his struggle, received an incorruptible crown from you. With your strength, he brought down the tyrants and broke the cowardly valor of demons. Through his prayers, O Christ our God, save our souls.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

O victorious martyr Gordius, you arose as a bright star not misleading the world but announcing Christ the Sun by your rays. You have extinguished all error. Give us light as you pray without ceasing for all of us.

Readings:

Epistle, [Hebrews 4:1-13](#); Gospel, [Luke 21:12-19](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

The holy prophet Malachi, who after the return from the Babylonian Captivity announced the great day of the Lord and his coming to his temple, and that always and everywhere a pure offering should be made to his name.

The holy martyr Gordius, praised in the writings of St. Basil the Great, a centurion who suffered during the reign of the Emperor Diocletian. (304)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4

Pre-festive Day of Theophany. Synaxis of the Holy 70 Apostles. Our Venerable Father Theoctist, Hegumen at Cuomo in Sicily.

For the Pre-feast

Troparion - Tone 4

Zebulun, make ready; Naphtali, prepare yourself. O River Jordan, stand and leap for joy to receive the Master coming to be baptized. O Adam, rejoice with the first mother, Eve, and do not hide yourselves as once you did in Paradise. For, seeing you naked, Christ has appeared to put on the first robe. He has appeared to renew all creation.

Kontakion - Tone 4:

Today the Lord appears in the Jordan's streams and cries out to John: Do not be afraid to baptize me, for I have come to save Adam, the first created.

Common for Many Apostles

Troparion - Tone 3:

O holy apostles, intercede with the merciful God that he may grant our souls forgiveness of sins.

Common for a Venerable

Troparion - Tone 8:

In you, O father, the divine image was strictly preserved; taking up your cross, you followed Christ. You taught us by example how to spurn the flesh, for it passes away, and how to care for the soul, which is immortal. Therefore, O venerable Theoctist, your soul rejoices with the angels.

Readings:

Epistle, [Hebrews 5:11-6:8](#); Gospel, [Luke 21:5-7 & 10-11 & 20-24](#).

THURSDAY, JANUARY 5

Vigil of the Theophany. The Holy Martyrs Theopempt and Theona. Our Venerable Mother Syncletica. The Holy Prophet Micah.

*Vigil of Theophany***Troparion - Tone 4:**

After Elijah had been taken up, the River Jordan was parted in two by Elisha's mantle; and a dry path was opened in the waters as an image of true baptism by which we pass beyond this fleeting life. Christ appeared at the Jordan to sanctify the waters.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

O most compassionate Christ, who take away the many sins of all, because of your immeasurable mercy, you have come to be baptized in the waters of the Jordan as a man, clothing in a robe of glory the misery of my ancient nakedness.

*Common for Many Martyrs***Troparion - Tone 1:**

O Lord who love us all, accept the sufferings which your saints endured for you. As we pray, heal all our pains.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

You appeared as bright lamps, O godly martyrs. You enlightened all creation with the brilliance of your miracles. As you free us from sickness and drive away forever the depths of darkness, pray without ceasing to Christ our God for all of us.

*Common for a Venerable Woman***Troparion - Tone 8:**

In you, O mother, the divine image was strictly preserved; taking up your cross, you followed Christ.



You taught us by example how to spurn the flesh, for it passes away, and how to care for the soul which is immortal. Therefore, O venerable Synclcta, your soul rejoices with the angels.

**Kontakion -
Tone 2:**

In your love for the Lord you disdained the desire for rest, O venerable woman. You enlightened your soul by fasting and with power you conquered beasts; but by your prayers destroy the pride of our enemies.

Readings of Royal Hours:

Old Testament, [Isaiah 35:1-10, 1:16-20, 12:3-6, 49:8-15](#); Gospels, [Matt 3:1-11, Mk 1:1-8, Mk 1:9-15, Matt 3:13-17](#).

Vespers and Liturgy:

Epistle, [1 Cor 9:19-27](#); Gospel, [Luke 3:1-18](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

The holy martyrs Theopempt and Theona, of Nicomedia in Bithynia, who met martyrdom in the persecution of the Emperor Diocletian. (c. 350)

Our venerable mother Synclctica of Alexandria in Egypt, virgin, who is said to have led a solitary life that influenced many women of her day. (4th cent.)

FRIDAY, JANUARY 6**THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST.***Feast of Theophany***Troparion - Tone 1:**

At your baptism in the Jordan, O Lord, worship of the Trinity was revealed; for the Father's voice bore witness to you, calling you his beloved Son, and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truth of these words. O Christ God, you appeared and enlightened the world. Glory to you!

Kontakion - Tone 4:

You have revealed yourself to the world today; and your light, O Lord, has set its seal on us. We recognize you and exclaim to you: You have come and revealed yourself, O Unapproachable Light.

**Readings:**

Epistle, [Titus 2:11-14](#) & [3:4-7](#); Gospel, [Matthew 3:13-17](#).

The Feast Description

THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST. Since the second century, the Church has celebrated the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan River for our sanctification.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 7

Saturday after Theophany. SYNAXIS OF THE HOLY FORERUNNER, PROPHET AND BAPTIST JOHN.

Feast of Theophany (See page 62)

Common for Saint John the Baptist

Troparion - Tone 2:

The memory of the righteous is celebrated with praise, but for you, O Forerunner, the Lord's testimony is enough. You were shown to be more honorable than the prophets since you were deemed worthy to baptize in the waters the Lord you had proclaimed. Therefore, you fought for the truth and with joy proclaimed the good news to those in Hades, that God has appeared in the flesh to take away the sins of the world and to grant us great mercy.

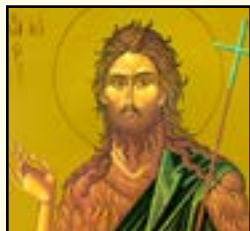
Kontakion - Tone 3:

Today she who once was barren gives birth to Christ's forerunner. He himself is the fulfillment of all prophecy; for in the Jordan, he imposed his hand upon the Word of God whom the prophets had foretold and was shown to be his prophet, herald, and forerunner.

Readings: Epistle, [Ephesians 6:10-17](#) (Saturday after Theophany) and [Acts 19:1-8](#); Gospel, [Matthew 4:1-11](#) (Saturday after Theophany) and [John 1:29-34](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

The Synaxis of the holy Forerunner, Prophet, and Baptist John. A "synaxis" feast follows one of the great feasts, and highlights a major personage of yesterday's celebration. We remember today the work of the Forerunner, John, who baptized Christ.



SUNDAY, JANUARY 8

SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY. Our Venerable Father George the Chozebite. Our Venerable Mother Domnica. Our Holy Father and Confessor Emilian.

Resurrection Tone 1

Troparion:

The stone was sealed by the Jews, soldiers guarded your most pure body, but you, O Savior, arose on the third day granting life to the world. Therefore, the heavenly powers acclaimed you, O Giver of Life: Glory to your resurrection, O Christ! Glory to your kingdom! Glory to your salvation! You alone love us all.

Kontakion:

As God, you arose in glory from the grave and raised the world with you. Human nature praises you as God and death has vanished. Adam sings in exultation, O Lord; Eve, freed from bondage, cries joyfully: O Christ, it is you who give resurrection to all.

Feast of Theophany (See page 62)

Common for a Venerable

Troparion - Tone 8:

In you, O father, the divine image was strictly preserved; taking up your cross, you followed Christ. You taught us by example how to spurn the flesh, for it passes away, and how to care for the soul, which is immortal. Therefore, O venerable George, your soul rejoices with the angels.

Readings:

Epistle, [Ephesians 4:7-13](#); Gospel, [Matthew 4:12-17](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

Our venerable father George the Chozebite, a Cypriot



monk at the Monastery of the Mother of God at Chozeba near Jericho. (614)

Our venerable mother Dominica, born in Carthage in North Africa, lived a life of asceticism and died in Constantinople under the reign of the Emperor Zenon. (474)

Our holy father and confessor Emilian. A native of Vannes (in what is now France), he was a recluse. (767)

MONDAY, JANUARY 9

Postfestive Day of Theophany. The Holy Martyr Polyeuct.

Feast of Theophany (See page 62)

Common for a Martyr

Troparion - Tone 4:

Your martyr Polyeuct, O Lord our God, in his struggle, received an incorruptible crown from you. With your strength, he brought down the tyrants and broke the cowardly valor of demons. Through his prayers, O Christ our God, save our souls.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

O victorious martyr
Polyeuct, you arose as
a bright star not mis-
leading the world but
announcing Christ the
Sun by your rays. You
have extinguished all
error. Give us light as
you pray without ceas-
ing for all of us.

Readings:

Epistle, [Hebrews 8:7-13](#);

Gospel, [Mark 8:11-21](#).

The Synaxarion
(Lives of the Saints)


The holy martyr Polyeuct, of Melitene in Armenia, who as a soldier was ordered to sacrifice to the gods by the edict of the Emperor Decius. Instead, he destroyed the images; wherefore he suffered many tortures and at last was beheaded and baptized by the outpouring of his own blood. (230)

TUESDAY, JANUARY 10

Postfestive Day of Theophany. Our Holy Father Gregory of Nyssa. The Venerable Dometian, Bishop of Melitene. Our Venerable Father Marcion, Priest and Treasurer of the Great Church.

Feast of Theophany (See page 62)

Common for a Bishop

Troparion - Tone 4:

Your life has shown you to your flock as a rule of faith, an image of gentleness, and a teacher of moderation. You acquired greatness through

humility and wealth through poverty. O father and bishop Gregory, intercede with Christ our God to save our souls.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

Divine thunder, spiritual trumpet, sower of faith, and destroyer of heresies, servant of the Trinity, O great bishop Gregory, you stand forever with the angels. Pray without ceasing for all of us.

Readings:

Epistle, [Hebrews 9:8-10 & 15-23](#); Gospel, [Mark 8:22-26](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

Our holy father Gregory of Nyssa, brother of St. Basil the Great, one of the great theologians of the Byzantine Church. (c.395)



The venerable Dometian, bishop of Melitene, who lived under Emperors Justinian the Lesser and Maurice, and was known for his remarkable intelligence, prudence, and spiritual zeal, and for his love for the poor. (602)

Our venerable father Marcion, priest and treasurer of the Great Church in Constantinople, second in command to Patriarch Gennadius. (c.471)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11**Post-festive Day of Theophany. Our Venerable Father Theodosius, founder of the Common Life.***Feast of Theophany (See page 62)**Common for a Venerable***Troparion - Tone 8:**

In you, O father, the divine image was strictly preserved; taking up your cross, you followed Christ. You taught us by example how to spurn the flesh, for it passes away, and how to care for the soul, which is immortal. Therefore, O venerable Theodosius, your soul rejoices with the angels.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

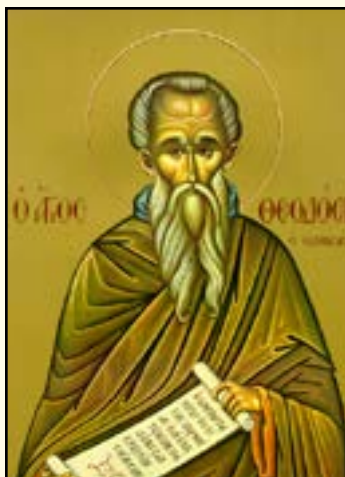
As a venerable and proven ascetic, as an honorable and renowned martyr, a model of the desert life, O ever exalted Theodosius, we sing worthy hymns of praise to you; for you have trampled serpents.

Readings:

Epistle, [2 Corinthians 4:6-16](#); Gospel, [Matthew 11:27-30](#).

**The Synaxarion
(Lives of the Saints)**

Our venerable father Theodosius, founder of the common life, abbot, a friend of St. Sabbas, who, after a long solitary life permitted many disciples to assemble as companions to himself. In monasteries that he built, he cultivated the common life, until, having suffered many things for the true faith, the centenarian finally rested in the peace of Christ. (529)



THURSDAY, JANUARY 12

Postfestive Day of Theophany. The Holy Martyr Tatiana.

Feast of Theophany (See page 62)

Common for a Woman Martyr



Troparion - Tone 4:

Your lamb Tatiana, O Jesus, cries out in a loud voice: I love you, my Bridegroom; I seek you with painful longing; I am crucified with you; in your baptism, I am buried with you; I suffer for you that I may reign with you; and I die for you that I may live with you. Receive me as a spotless sacrifice immolated with love for you. By her prayers, O merciful One, save our souls.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

All the faithful find spiritual healing in your all-holy temple. O renowned virgin-martyr Tatiana, with a loud voice we sing to you: Pray without ceasing to Christ our God for all of us.

Readings:

Epistle, [Hebrews 10:35-11:7](#); Gospel, [Mark 9:10-16](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

The holy martyr Tatiana, who died in Rome under Emperor Alexander Severus. (c.227)

FRIDAY, JANUARY 13

Postfestive Day of Theophany. The Holy Martyrs Hermyla and Stratonicus. Our Venerable Father Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers.

Feast of Theophany (See page 62)

Common for Many Martyrs

Troparion - Tone 1:

O Lord who love us all, accept the sufferings which your saints endured for you. As we pray, heal all our pains.

**Kontakion - Tone 2:**

You appeared as bright lamps, O godly martyrs.

You enlightened all creation with the brilliance of your miracles. As you free us from sickness and drive away forever the depths of darkness, pray without ceasing to Christ our God for all of us.

Common for a Venerable Martyr

Troparion - Tone 8:

In you, O father, the divine image was strictly preserved; taking up your cross, you followed Christ. You taught us by example how to spurn the flesh, for it passes away, and how to care for the soul, which is immortal. Therefore, O venerable Hilary, your soul rejoices with the angels.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

As a venerable and proven ascetic, as an honorable and renowned martyr, a model of the desert life, O ever exalted Hilary, we sing worthy hymns of praise to you; for you have trampled serpents.

Readings:

Epistle, [Hebrews 11:8 & 11-16](#); Gospel, [Mark 9:33-41](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

The holy martyrs Hermylaous and Stratonicus, of Singidunum in Moesia (this city is quite close to the modern Belgrade, Yugoslavia), who after fierce tortures under the emperor Licinius were drowned in the Ister River (the Danube), sometime between 307 and 311.

Our venerable father Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, great defender of the orthodox faith against the Arian heresy, mentor of St. Martin of Tours, hymnwriter and apologist. (367)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 14

Otdaniye (leave-taking) of Theophany. Our Venerable Fathers killed by the Arabs in Sinai and Raitho in 312. Commemoration of the Passing of the holy Equal-to-the-apostles Nina, Enlightener of the Georgians.

Feast of Theophany

Troparion - Tone 1:

At your baptism in the Jordan, O Lord, worship of the Trinity was revealed; for the Father's voice bore witness to you, calling you his beloved Son, and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truth of these words. O Christ God, you appeared and enlightened the world. Glory to you!

Kontakion - Tone 4:

You have revealed yourself to the world today; and your light, O Lord, has set its seal on us. We recognize you and exclaim to you: You have come and revealed yourself, O Unapproachable Light.

Readings:

Epistle, [Ephesians 5:1-8](#); Gospel, [Luke 14:1-11](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

Our venerable fathers killed by the Arabs in Sinai and Raitho in 312. A group of holy monks living on the height of Mt. Sinai were killed by Bedouin tribesmen.

The Commemoration of the passion of the holy equal-to-the-apostles Nina, Enlightener of the Georgians, who was taken as a captive into that country and converted the king through her example and miraculous cures. (4th century)



SUNDAY, JANUARY 15

THIRTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. Our Venerable Fathers Paul of Thebes and John the Hutterdwell.

Resurrection Tone 2

Troparion:

When you descended to death, O Immortal Life, you destroyed Hades by the brilliance of your divinity; and when you raised the dead from the depths of the earth, all the heavenly powers cried out: O Giver of Life, Christ our God, glory to you.

Common for Two Venerable-Martyrs

Troparion - Tone 4:

God of our fathers, you always deal with us in your kindness. Take not your mercy away from us; but through their prayers guide our life in peace.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

Passing through the stormy waves, you remained dry. You drowned the bodiless enemies in the mighty streams of your tears. O venerable martyrs, filled with God's wisdom, you have received the gift of miracles. Pray without ceasing for all of us.

Readings:

Epistle, [Colossians 3:12-16](#); Gospel, [Luke 18:18-27](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

Paul of Thebes was a disciple of St. Anthony the Great and one of the earliest of the "desert fathers," living as a hermit in the Thebaid in Egypt. (c.345).

John of Constantinople, who, as it is said, briefly lived in a retreat in the home of his father. He left home for six years and came back and lived in a "kalyba" (i.e., a hut) as a beggar in rags, subsisting on the charity of his unwitting parents; wholly surrendered to contemplation. His parents recognized him, after his death, from a gold codex of the Gospels that they had given him. (5th century)



MONDAY, JANUARY 16**Veneration of the Chains of the Holy, Glorious and Illustrious Apostle Peter.***Common for Monday (see pages 51-53)**Common for an Apostle***Troparion - Tone 3:**

O holy Apostle Peter, intercede with the merciful God that he may grant our souls forgiveness of sins.

Kontakion - Tone 4:

O Apostle Peter, the Church has gained you for all time as a brilliant star, enlightening it with the multitude of your miracles. Therefore, we cry out to Christ: O most merciful Lord, save those who in faith honor the memory of your apostle.

Readings:

Epistle, [Hebrews 11:17-23 & 27-31](#); Gospel, [Mark 9:42-10:1](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

The church on the Equiline Hill in Rome (called St. Peter in Chains) preserves the chains with which St. Peter was bound in prison during the persecution of Nero.



TUESDAY, JANUARY 17**Our Venerable Father Anthony the Great.***Common for a Venerable***Troparion - Tone 8:**

In you, O father, the divine image was strictly preserved; taking up your cross, you followed Christ. You taught us by example how to spurn the flesh, for it passes away, and how to care for the soul, which is immortal. Therefore, O venerable Anthony, your soul rejoices with the angels.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

You armed yourself in a godly way with purity of soul, and you wielded unceasing prayer as a mighty spear, piercing the armies of demons. Our father Anthony, pray without ceasing for all of us.

**Readings:**

Epistle, [Hebrews 13:17-21](#);

Gospel, [Luke 6:17-23](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

Our venerable father Anthony the Great, who, bereaved by his parents' death, accepted the evangelical commands, distributed all his goods to the poor and retired in solitude to the Thebaid in Egypt. He began to lead an ascetic life and diligently worked to strengthen the Church, sustaining confessors of the faith during the persecution of the Emperor Diocletian. He supported St. Athanasius against the Arians. He had many disciples, and is thus considered the father of monks. (356)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18**Our Holy Fathers Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria.***Common for a Wednesday (See pages 51-53)**Common for Two Bishop-Martyrs***Troparion - Tone 4:**

God of our fathers, you always deal with us in your kindness. Take not your mercy away from us; but through their prayers guide our life in peace.

Kontakion - Tone 3:

Today we gather to praise in hymns the never-setting lights of the Sun of Reason shining upon those in the darkness of ignorance; calling them all to the summit of virtue. Therefore, O priest-martyrs, we cry out to you: Rejoice, foundation of all ascetics.

Readings:

Epistle, [James 1:1-18](#); Gospel, [Mark 10:11-16](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

Our holy fathers Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria, archbishops of that city. Athanasius is called the “Father of Orthodoxy” because of his defense of the faith against Arius at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea (325); he was greatly persecuted for this. This date celebrates his return from exile in 345. (373



Cyril worked against the Nestorian heresy, and was champion of the use of the term Theotokos (i.e. the one who gave birth to God). He was one of the major figures of the Third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus that was held in 431. (444)

THURSDAY, JANUARY 19

Our Venerable Father Macarius of Egypt.

Common for Thursday (See pages 51-53)

Common for a Venerable

Troparion - Tone 8:

In you, O father, the divine image was strictly preserved; taking up your cross, you followed Christ. You taught us by example how to spurn the flesh, for it passes away, and how to care for the soul, which is immortal. Therefore, O venerable Macarius, your soul rejoices with the angels.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

You armed yourself in a godly way with purity of soul, and you wielded unceasing prayer as a mighty spear, piercing the armies of demons. Our father Macarius, pray without ceasing for all of us.

Readings:

Epistle, [James 1:19-27](#);

Gospel, [Mark 10:17-27](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

Our venerable father Macarius of Egypt, known as Macarius 'the Elder,' priest and abbot of the monastery of Skete in Egypt, who, dead to the world and to himself, lived for God alone, which he also taught his disciples. (390)



FRIDAY, JANUARY 20**Our Venerable and God-bearing Father Euthymius the Great.***Common for a Venerable***Troparion - Tone 8:**

In you, O father, the divine image was strictly preserved; taking up your cross, you followed Christ. You taught us by example how to spurn the flesh, for it passes away, and how to care for the soul, which is immortal. Therefore, O venerable Euthymius, your soul rejoices with the angels.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

You armed yourself in a godly way with purity of soul, and you wielded unceasing prayer as a mighty spear, piercing the armies of demons. Our father Euthymius, pray without ceasing for all of us.

**Readings:**

Epistle, [Hebrews 13:17-21](#); Gospel, [Luke 6:17-23](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

Our venerable and God-bearing father Euthymius the Great, abbot, who, Armenian in origin and consecrated to God from infancy, sought Jerusalem. Having lived very many years in solitude, he was steadfast and cheerful to the very end of his life in humility and love, and died manifest in the observance of discipline. (473)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 21

Our Venerable Father Maximus the Confessor. The Holy Martyr Neophyte. The Holy Martyrs Eugene, Candidus, Valerian and Aquila. The Holy Virgin Martyr Agnes of Rome.

Common for Saturday (See pages 51-53)

Common for a Confessor

Troparion - Tone 8:

Guide to Orthodoxy, teacher of piety and holiness, luminary for the world, inspired adornment of monks, O wise Maximus, harp of the Spirit, you enlightened all by your teachings; intercede with Christ our God to save our souls.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

Divinely wise Maximus, you practiced self-control and stilled the desires of the flesh, O holy father. You flourished in faith and flowered like the tree of life in Paradise.

Common for Many Martyrs

Troparion - Tone 1:

O Lord who love us all, accept the sufferings which your saints endured for you. As we pray, heal all our pains.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

You appeared as bright lamps, O godly martyrs. You enlightened all creation with the brilliance of your miracles. As you free us from sickness and drive away forever the depths of darkness, pray without ceasing to Christ our God for all of us.

Readings:

Epistle: [Colossians 1:3-6](#); Gospel, [Luke 16:10-15](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

Our venerable father Maximus the Confessor, noted theologian and writer who resigned his post as secretary to the Emperor Heraclius and entered the monastery of Chrysopolis, of which he eventually became hegumen. He headed the opposition to the Monothelite heresy. For this he was banished, imprisoned, and lost his tongue and right hand. (662)

The holy martyr Neophyte, of Nicaea in Bithynia, martyr, who died at the age of fifteen in the reign of Diocletian. (4th century)

SUNDAY, JANUARY 22

THIRTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Holy Apostle Timothy. The Holy Venerable-Martyr Anastasius the Persian.

Resurrection Tone 3

Troparion:

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; for the Lord has shown the might of his arm. By his death the Lord has trampled Death; he has become the first-born of the dead; he has delivered us from the depths of Hades and has granted great mercy to the world.

Kontakion:

Today, you arose from the grave, O merciful Lord; you led us out of the gates of Death. Today, Adam exults and Eve rejoices. With them, the prophets and patriarchs ever praise the might of your divine power.

Common for an Apostle

Troparion - Tone 3:

O holy Apostle Timothy, intercede with the merciful God that he may grant our souls forgiveness of sins.

Kontakion - Tone 4:

O Apostle Timothy, the Church has gained you for all time as a brilliant star, enlightening it with the multitude of your miracles. Therefore, we cry out to Christ: O most merciful Lord, save those who in faith honor the memory of your apostle.

Common for a Venerable-Martyr

Troparion - Tone 8:

In you, O father, the divine image was strictly preserved; taking up your cross, you followed Christ. You taught us by example how to spurn the flesh, for it passes away, and how to care for the soul, which is immortal. Therefore, O venerable Anastasius, your soul rejoices with the angels.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

As a venerable and proven ascetic, as an honorable and renowned martyr, a model of the desert life, O ever exalted Anastasius, we sing worthy hymns of praise to you; for you have trampled serpents.

Readings: Epistle, [1 Timothy 1:15-17](#); Gospel, [Luke 18:35-43](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

The holy apostle Timothy who, disciple of St. Paul the Apostle and his assistant in his apostolate, was the leader of the church at Ephesus. Two epistles, which offer wise counsels on the ordering of pastors and the faithful, were written to him.

The holy venerable martyr Athanasius the Persian from Bethsaloe in Persia, monk. After very many tortures, which he had borne steadfastly in Caesarea in Palestine, he was afflicted with many punishments by Chosroes, king of the Persians. After his seventy companions, he too was strangled next to a river and his head cut off. His head was brought to Rome and is still venerated in the church of Ss. Vincent and Athanasius. (628)

MONDAY, JANUARY 23

The Holy Martyr Clement, Bishop of Ancyra. The Holy Martyr Agathangel.

Common for Monday (See pages 51-53)

Common for a Bishop-Martyr

Troparion - Tone 4:

You shared in the apostles' way of life and succeeded to their throne, divinely inspired bishop. You found access to contemplation in the active life. Therefore, you rightly taught the word of truth and struggled for the faith to the shedding of your blood. O priest-martyr Clement, pray to Christ our God to save our souls.

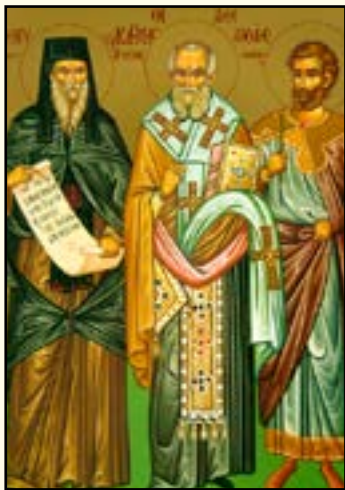
Kontakion - Tone 4:

You lived piously as a bishop, and followed the path to martyrdom. Filled with divine wisdom, you put out the fire of sacrifice to idols. You were a defender of your flock. Therefore, to honor you we mystically sing: Our father Clement, by your prayers, deliver us always from tribulation.

Common for a Martyr

Troparion - Tone 4:

Your martyr Agathangel, O Lord our God, in his struggle, received an incorruptible crown from you. With your strength, he brought down the tyrants and broke the cowardly valor of demons. Through his prayers, O Christ our God, save our souls.



Kontakion - Tone 2:

O victorious martyr Agathangel, you arose as a bright star not misleading the world but announcing Christ the Sun by your rays. You have extinguished all error. Give us light as you pray without ceasing for all of us.

Readings: Epistle, [James 2:14-26](#); Gospel, [Mark 10:46-52](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

The holy martyr Clement, bishop of Ancyra, was killed along with the holy martyr Agathangel during the persecution of the Emperor Maximian (c. 296)

TUESDAY, JANUARY 24**Our Venerable Mother Xenia of Rome.**

Common for Tuesday (See pages 51-53)

Common for a Venerable Woman

Troparion - Tone 8:

In you, O mother, the divine image was strictly preserved; taking up your cross, you followed Christ. You taught us by example how to spurn the flesh, for it passes away, and how to care for the soul which is immortal. Therefore, O venerable Xenia, your soul rejoices with the angels.



Kontakion - Tone 2:

In your love for the Lord you disdained the desire for rest, O venerable woman. You enlightened your soul by fasting and with power you conquered beasts; but by your prayers destroy the pride of our enemies.

Readings: Epistle, [James 3:1-10](#); Gospel, [Mark 11:11-23](#).

**The Synaxarion
(Lives of the Saints)**

Our venerable mother Xenia of Rome, born of a noble Roman family, who lived a holy life with other virgins at Mylassa of Caria in the fifth century. (450)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25

Our Holy Father Gregory the Theologian, Archbishop of Constantinople.

Common for a Bishop

Troparion - Tone 4:

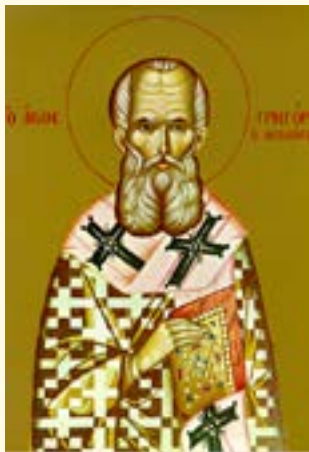
Your life has shown you to your flock as a rule of faith, an image of gentleness, and a teacher of moderation. You acquired greatness through humility and wealth through poverty. O father and bishop Gregory, intercede with Christ our God to save our souls.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

Divine thunder, spiritual trumpet, sower of faith, and destroyer of heresies, servant of the Trinity, O great bishop Gregory, you stand forever with the angels. Pray without ceasing for all of us.

Readings:

Epistle, [1 Corinthians 12:7-11](#); Gospel, [John 10:9-16](#).



The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

Our holy father Gregory the Theologian, archbishop of Constantinople, the friend of St. Basil; bishop of Sebaste, and then of Constantinople, and finally Nazianzus. He defended the divinity of the Word with great ardor, for which reason he is also named "the Theologian." During his time as patriarch of Constantinople, he presided over the Second Ecumenical Council (Constantinople, 381). (389)

THURSDAY, JANUARY 26

**Our Venerable Father Xenophon and His Wife Mary.
Our Holy Father Joseph, Archbishop of Thessalonica.**

Common for Thursday (See pages 51-53)

Common for a Venerable

Troparion - Tone 8:

In you, O father, the divine image was strictly preserved; taking up your cross, you followed Christ. You taught us by example how to spurn the flesh, for it passes away, and how to care for the soul, which is immortal. Therefore, O venerable Xenophon, your soul rejoices with the angels.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

You armed yourself in a godly way with purity of soul, and you wielded unceasing prayer as a mighty spear, piercing the armies of demons. Our father Xenophon, pray without ceasing for all of us.



Readings:

Epistles, [James 4:7-5:9](#);

Gospel, [Mark 11:27-33](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

Our venerable father Xenophon and his wife Mary. Xenophon was a Senator in Constantinople, where he led a holy Christian life with his wife Mary and their two sons, Arcadius and John. On their way to Phoenicia to study law, the young men were shipwrecked and barely managed to escape with

their lives. The parents set out to find them, and, on discovering them in a monastery in Jerusalem, they too entered the monastic life, equal to one another in the ardor of their souls. (520)

FRIDAY, JANUARY 27

Translation of the Relics of our Holy Father John Chrysostom.

Common for a Bishop

Troparion - Tone 4:

Your life has shown you to your flock as a rule of faith, an image of gentleness, and a teacher of moderation. You acquired greatness through humility and wealth through poverty. O father and bishop John, intercede with Christ our God to save our souls.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

Divine thunder, spiritual trumpet, sower of faith,
and destroyer of heresies, servant of the Trinity,
O great bishop John, you stand forever with the
angels. Pray without ceasing for all of us.

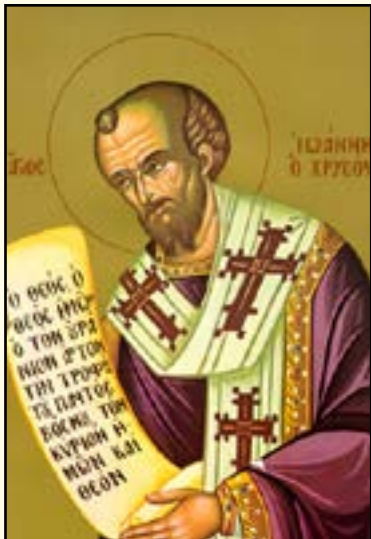
Readings:

Epistle, [Hebrews 7:26-8:2](#);

Gospel, [John 10:9-16](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

The Translation of the Relics of our holy father John Chrysostom. In the year 438, thirty-three years after the death of St. John in Comana of Armenia, his relics were transferred to his episcopal see of Constantinople. This occurred during the reign of Emperor Theodosius the Lesser.

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 28**

Our Venerable Father Ephrem the Syrian. Our Venerable Father Isaac the Syrian, Bishop of Nineveh.

Common for Saturday (See pages 51-53)

Common for a Venerable

Troparion - Tone 8:

In you, O father, the divine image was strictly preserved; taking up your cross, you followed Christ. You taught us by example how to spurn the

flesh, for it passes away, and how to care for the soul, which is immortal. Therefore, O venerable Ephrem, your soul rejoices with the angels.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

You armed yourself in a godly way with purity of soul, and you wielded unceasing prayer as a mighty spear, piercing the armies of demons. Our father Ephrem, pray without ceasing for all of us.

Readings:

Epistle, [1 Thess 5:14-23](#); Gospel, [Luke 17:3-10](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

Our Venerable Father Ephrem the Syrian, who, first in his own home town of Nisibis exercised the office of preaching and of handing on holy teaching. Then, when the Persians invaded Nisibis, he fled with his disciples to Edessa in Syria, where he set down the fundamentals of a school of theology, fulfilling his ministry by his words and writings. So striking is the austerity of his life and the clarity of his teaching that from the exquisite hymns he composed he has deserved to be called the harp of the Holy Spirit. (378)



SUNDAY, JANUARY 29

THIRTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. SUNDAY OF ZACCHAEUS. Translation of the Relics of the Holy Bishop and Martyr Ignatius of Antioch.

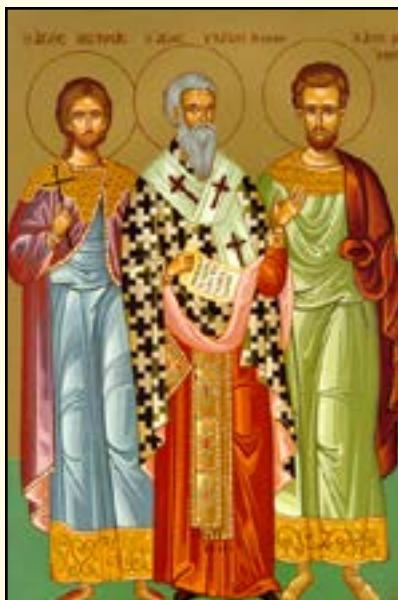
Resurrection Tone 4

Troparion:

The joyful message of the resurrection was heard by the women disciples from the angel; and being freed from the ancestral curse, they boasted to the apostles: Death is despoiled; Christ our God is risen, giving great mercy to the world.

Kontakion:

O my Savior and Redeemer, as God, you raised from the grave all those who were in chains and destroyed the gates of Hades; and, as Lord, you arose on the third day.



*Common for a Bishop-
Martyr*

Troparion - Tone 4:

You shared in the apostles' way of life and succeeded to their throne, divinely inspired bishop. You found access to contemplation in the active life. Therefore, you rightly taught the word of truth and struggled for the faith to the shedding of your blood. O priest-martyr Ignatius, pray to Christ our God to save our souls.

Kontakion - Tone 4:

You lived piously as a bishop, and followed the path to martyrdom. Filled with divine wisdom, you put out the fire of sacrifice to idols. You were a defender of your flock. Therefore, to honor you we mystically sing: Our father Ignatius, by your prayers, deliver us always from tribulation.

Readings:

Epistle, [1 Timothy 4:9-15](#); Gospel, [Luke 19:1-10](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

Translation of the relics of the holy bishop and martyr Ignatius of Antioch. Ignatius was martyred in Rome at the beginning of the second century. His remains were later translated to Antioch, the place of his birth and his episcopate. During the invasion of the Persians, the relics were once again taken from Antioch to Rome (in the sixth century).

MONDAY, JANUARY 30

FEAST OF THE THREE HOLY BISHOPS: BASIL THE GREAT, GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN AND JOHN CHRYSOSTOM. The Holy Bishop-Martyr Hippolytus.

Three Holy Hierarchs

Troparion - Tone 4:

Teachers of the world, of one mind with the apostles, intercede with the Lord of all to grant peace to the world, and abundant mercy to our souls.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

Lord, you have received your holy and inspired preachers, the foremost of teachers, into the enjoyment of your good gifts and repose. You preferred their labors and death above any sacrifice. For you alone glorify your saints.

Readings:

Epistle, [Hebrews 13:7-16](#); Gospel, [Matthew 5:14-19](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

THE THREE HOLY HIERARCHS: BASIL THE GREAT, GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, AND JOHN CHRYSOSTOM. All three of these saints have their own feast days. This celebration began in 1100 in the days of the Emperor Alexis Comnenus. A great quarrel arose in Constantinople as to which of these three was the greatest theologian. They appeared in a dream to then Patriarch



John and told him that they were equal before God, and each had his special gifts and talents. John chose Jan. 30 to commemorate all three of them together, and composed the office.

The holy bishop martyr Hippolytus was a priest of the Church of Rome famous for his learning. After he unjustly accused Archdeacon

Callistus, he was exiled from Rome and rebelled against the authority of the Pope. He repented and was reconciled to the church, and was martyred. (235)

TUESDAY, JANUARY 31**The Holy Wonderworkers and Unmercenary Healers
Cyrus and John.**

Common for Tuesday (See pages 51-53)

Common for Holy Unmercenary Healers

Troparion - Tone 8:

Holy unmercenary healers and wonder-workers,
treat us in our weakness; freely you received, so
freely give to us.

Kontakion - Tone 2:

O glorious physicians and wonder-workers who
have received the grace of healing, you grant health
to the afflicted. By your care, defeat our shameless
enemies and give miraculous healing to the world.

Readings:

Epistle, [1 Peter 3:10-22](#); Gospel, [Mark 12:18-27](#).

The Synaxarion (Lives of the Saints)

The holy wonderworkers and unmercenary healers
Cyrus and John, who, for their confession of Christ, were
beheaded after many tortures in the city of Alexandria.
(311)



Contributors

Saint John Chrysostom

He lived from c. 349-407 and was Archbishop of Constantinople. He was an important Early Church Father and known for his preaching, public speaking, the Divine Liturgy text, and his ascetic sensibilities.

Saint Basil the Great

Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, Doctor of the Church.

Bishop John of Amorion

Bishop Emeritus of the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Atlanta, Georgia (before it was elevated to a metropolitan see)

Father John Zeyack

Priest of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic, St. George Church, Linden, New Jersey.

Father Robert Slesinski

Author, Lecturer and Priest of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic now residing in Massachusetts.

Marianne C. Sailus

A board certified chaplain who works in rehab and general hospitals; a member of St. Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Church in Bethlehem, PA.

Mr. Michael Haldas

Author, parish leader and religious instructor at St. George Greek Orthodox Church, Bethesda, MD.

Mr. Jack Figel

Publisher of Eastern Christian Publications, Chairman of the Orientale Lumen Conferences, and Executive Producer of OLTV, in Fairfax, VA.

Sources

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From www.biblegateway.com.

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Religious Reflections

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Homiletic Reflections

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The Holy Theotokos

Sections from the book titled *The Holy Theotokos* found at www.ecpubs.com.

Practicing Our Faith

Reflections by the author written for *Theosis*.

Sacramental Living

Blogs from www.sacramentalliving.net. The book of the same title can be found at www.ecpubs.com. Also available in CD and DVD.

Churches of the East: A Photo Essay

From a series of three books on the wooden churches of Slovakia published by the Archeparchy of Prešov.

Menalogion -- Calendar of Saints

Based on the *Typicon* of Archpriest David Petras for the Byzantine Catholic Ruthenian Church. Prayer texts are from the Faithful's Prayer Book, used with permission. The Synaxarion is excerpts from the Monthly Menaion of the Metropolitan Cantor Institute, Archeparchy of Pittsburgh.

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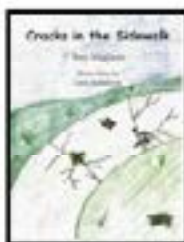
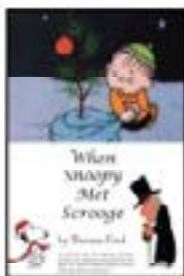
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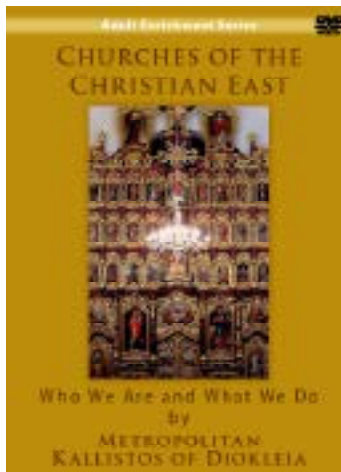
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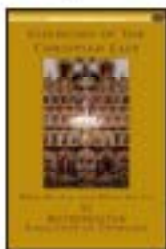
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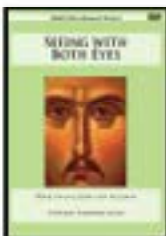
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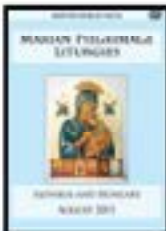
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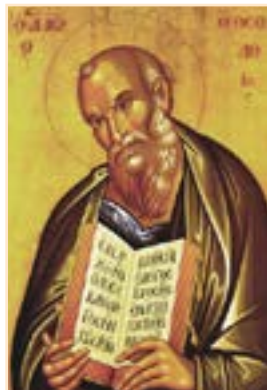
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