

Selected Lives of Saints

of January and February

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The Glorification of God-Pleasers

by Archbishop John Maximovitch

This sermon was occasioned by the glorification of St. John of Kronstadt by the Russian Church Abroad in 1964.

Holiness is not simply righteousness, for which the righteous are deemed worthy of the enjoyment of blessedness in the Kingdom of God; it is rather such a height of righteousness that men are filled with the grace of God so that it flows from them, even unto those who associate with them. Great is their blessedness, which proceeds from their direct contemplation of the glory of God. Being filled with love for men also, which proceeds from their love for God, they respond to men's needs and entreaties, mediating and interceding before God for them.

Such, first of all, were the righteous of the Old Testament, who were freed by Christ from Hades and led into paradise, and John the Baptist, who was “the greatest of those born of women.” Such then became the Apostles and their immediate successors. No one of the Christians doubted their sanctity, and, immediately after their deaths — for the greater part as martyrs — they began to be venerated and invoked in prayer. Such also were the martyrs during the time of lofty spiritual ardor, the first centuries of persecution against Christians. A martyr's death was itself a door to the heavenly dwellings, and Christians began to invoke them immediately as holy men pleasing to God. Miracles and signs confirmed the faith of the Christians in this, and were a proof of their holiness. Likewise, later on, the great ascetics began to be venerated. No one decreed that Anthony the Great, Macarius the Great, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, Nicholas the Wonderworker and many others like them, be venerated as saints, but East and West alike revere them, and only those who do not believe in sanctity can deny their sanctity. The assembly of God-pleasers grew without ceasing; in every place where there were Christians, its new ascetics appeared as well.

However, the general life of Christians began to decline; spiritual ardor began to lose its luster; no longer was there that clear sense of what Divine righteousness is. For this reason the general consciousness of the faithful could not always determine who was actually righteous and pleasing to God. In some places there appeared questionable persons, who, by means of supposed ascetic feats, lured away part of the flock. For this reason ecclesiastical authority began to watch over the veneration of saints, taking cares to guard the flock from superstition. They began to investigate the life of ascetics venerated by the faithful, and to verify the accounts of their miracles. It had already been established near the time of the Baptism of Rus' that the recognition of a new saint was to be performed by the ecclesiastical authority. The decree of the ecclesiastical authority was, of course, disseminated throughout the region under its jurisdiction. However, while other localities would recognize a glorification performed elsewhere, they usually did not enter it into their own menology. After all, the ecclesiastical authority merely attested to sanctity. The righteous became saints not by the decree of the earthly ecclesiastical authority, but by the mercy and grace of God. The ecclesiastical authority merely approved the extolling of the new saint in church and his invocation in prayer.

Just what authority should and could do this was not precisely determined; it was, in any case, an Episcopal authority. There were glorifications performed by the higher ecclesiastical authority of an entire local Church; the names of the newly glorified were then entered into the church menologies of that entire Church; others were glorified in one locality or another, and their veneration gradually spread to other places. Usually the glorification was performed in that locality where the saint lived or suffered, but it also happened otherwise. Thus, the youth George, from the town of Kratov (Serbia), who suffered at the hands of the Turks in Sofia (Sredets, Bulgaria) in 1515, was glorified within 14 years in Novgorod. However, though his fellow-citizens venerated him as a new-martyr also (a Church service to him had even been composed by his spiritual father), they did not dare to show this openly, fearing the Turks. Therefore, in Novgorod, which had commercial relations with those places, a service was composed under the direction of the Archbishop; the memory of the martyr George the New then began to be venerated, whence it spread throughout all Russia. When Serbia and Bulgaria were liberated from bondage to the Turks, they began to use the service composed in Russia, while the service originally composed in Sofia remains to this day the property of a library.

In the last two centuries, when Russia lived in glory and prosperity, the glorification of new saints were usually performed very solemnly by decree of the Supreme Authority, sometimes

(but not always) taking place throughout all Russia, but especially in the locality where the wonderworking relics were found.

However, this does not alter the general order in the Church. And if, under the oppression of the godless authority, the Russian people cannot openly extol and invoke a Saint of God, glorified by God, it is the duty of that part of the Russian Church which is free from the oppression of the godless to venerate and invoke the Wonderworker publicly, like the holy Hierarch Nicholas, who is now revered throughout the whole world, and to pray to the holy, righteous John for the correction of our life and for the cessation of the calamities which, in accordance with his prophecy, have befallen our Fatherland.

May the Lord grant the coming of that longed-for day, when from the Carpathians to the Pacific Ocean will thunder out: We magnify thee, O righteous Father John, and we honor thy holy memory, for thou dost entreat Christ God for us!

St. Basil the Great

January 14 (January 1, Old Calendar)

Hierarch Basil the Great is one of the Church's most remarkable theologians. His influence on the fortunes of the Church spread far beyond the borders of his homeland and is still felt in our days. To the pen of St. Basil the Great belong commentaries on Sacred Scripture, a treatise on the Holy Spirit, epistles, sermons and rules for monastic life. He did much for the establishment of the order of the Liturgy, and wrote numerous prayers. The Church reveres him as a fighter for the purity of the faith, a great hierarch and theologian, calling him a “universal teacher.” Only on two other saints — John Chrysostom and Gregory the Theologian — is such a great honor bestowed. Basil the Great was a man of encyclopedic cast. A philosopher, philologist, orator, jurist, scientist and archaeologist, he possessed profound knowledge in astronomy, mathematics and medicine. “He was a ship, loaded with as much erudition as human nature can contain,” writes his contemporary, St. Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium (Konya, Turkey). Hierarch Basil the Great was born about the year 329 in Asia Minor, in the city of Caesarea (Kayseri), the administrative center of Cappadocia. He was born into a rich and notable family, which had given not a few righteous to be numbered among the choir of saints. Basil's mother, Emmelia, was the daughter of a martyr who had suffered at the time of Diocletian's persecutions, while the grandfather on his father's side had hid in the thick forests of Pontus with his whole family during the course of seven years.

Basil the Great's parents had ten children: five sons (one died in early childhood) and five daughters. Of them, five were subsequently numbered among the choir of saints: Basil himself, Macrina, Gregory, subsequently bishop of Nyssa, Peter, at first a simple ascetic and afterwards bishop of Sebaste, and the righteous Theosobeia, a deaconess. The future hierarch received a primary education in the midst of the pious and ascetically inclined women of his family. His father himself, Basil the Elder — a lawyer and teacher of rhetoric — was engaged in his education. He received a secondary education from the best teachers in Caesarea of Cappadocia, and later transferred to the schools of Constantinople, where he listened to prominent orators and philosophers. For the completion of his education, St. Basil set off for Athens — the center of classical enlightenment. Here he passed four years, studying, in particular, the philosophy of Plato, which exerted a certain influence on his world-view and theological constructs. In Athens began a close friendship between Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian. According to the words

of the latter, they became everything for each other: comrades and table-companions and kindred. "Having one aim," said Gregory the Theologian, "we constantly grew in our love for one another...Only two roads were known to us: one — to our sacred churches and to the teachers there; the other — to our instructors in the external sciences." Already in Athens, the friends gave their word to each other to enter the life of the Christian ascetics together. St. Gregory the Theologian remarks that, upon returning to his homeland, Basil the Great was not distinguished by a height of Christian inclination. However, under the influence of his energetic sister Macrina, he quickly overcame the temptations of youth and resolved to dedicate himself to the contemplative life.

In the year 355, Basil the Great was baptized and undertook a journey to the Christian Near East two years later, to the great Orthodox ascetics. The renowned ascetics struck him so much that, upon returning home to Cappadocia, he resolved to emulate them. Having distributed the greater part of his property to the poor, St. Basil led a group of those seeking the monastic life to a picturesque locale on the banks of the Iris River and began to call his friend, Gregory the Theologian, there. However, responsibilities with regard to his aged parents hindered Gregory from realizing his youthful dream of joint asceticism with his friend. All the same, at times he would visit Basil the Great's monastic community, where the friends would struggle in conditions of scarcity and in strict abstinence. Sts. Basil and Gregory were intensely occupied with the study of Sacred Scripture under the direction of the ancient commentators, in particular, Origen, from whose works they compiled the collection, "Philokalia" (which has nothing in common with the present-day ascetical anthology bearing the same name). At that time, at the request of the monks, Basil the Great wrote a collection of rules for moral life.

By his example and sermons, Hierarch Basil the Great promoted the spiritual perfecting of the Christians of his homeland, where many sought him out. Men's and women's monasteries were formed, in which Basil the Great introduced a mixed form of the monastic life — coenobitic and eremitic—free from extremes. Prayer and contemplation in his monasteries alternated with physical labor, while only such trades that did not violate the spiritual collectedness and simplicity of the monastic life were allowed. Other distinguishing features and even innovations in the monastic way of life, according to the rule of Basil the Great, were broad charitable activity and the education of children of both sexes.

In the year 360, Basil the Great, still only a reader, was present at a Constantinopolitan council, and in 364 he was ordained a priest in Caesarea. He preached twice a day struggled against the enemies of Orthodoxy. He did much for the inhabitants of his native city during a terrible famine. Upon becoming archbishop, Basil continued to lead a strict ascetic life; he visited the poor, the sick and the leprous, and founded a hospice the size of a small town. St. Gregory the Theologian describes Basil the Great's appearance thus: a well-proportioned figure with a full, light brown beard, a slow gait, the absence of haste in movements and speech, and inner concentration; everything in him evoked esteem, and even his adversaries would bow before him.

The fourth century, in which Basil the Great's lived, was a remarkable, golden age of patristic literature and, at the same time, a tragic period in the history of the Church. Heresies appeared, one after another—Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism—bringing disturbance and instability into the enclosure of the Church, and undermining her authority and the faith in the hearts of the weak. The most dangerous of the heresies was Arianism. The Arians adhered to the false teaching according to which the Son of God was not eternal, did not exist

before birth, was not without beginning and, therefore, was not of one essence with God the Father. St. Basil wrote three books against the Arians.

In the year 370, after the death of Bishop Eusebius of Caesaria, St. Basil was elevated to the Caesarean episcopal cathedra. Fifty bishops in eleven provinces were subordinate to him. Amidst constant danger, St. Basil supported the Orthodox and made steadfast their faith, summoning them to manliness and patience. He wrote numerous letters to Churches, bishops, clergy and private persons. Struggling against the heretics, St. Basil provoked hostility and all possible intrigues from the Arians all his life.

In the year 372, St. Basil came out openly against the teaching of Eustathius of Sebaste; up until that time they had been on friendly terms. He demanded an Orthodox confession of faith from him, and, when the latter refused, broke off liturgical communion with him. In the dispute on the Holy Spirit, St. Basil was supported by Athanasius the Great, but all his attempts to receive spiritual help from Rome proved to be in vain: already the East and the West did not understand each other on the question of the Holy Spirit. Although they were still confessing the same teaching, they spoke in different languages and used different terms.

The Emperor Valens (364-378), who unsparingly dispatched bishops displeasing to him into exile, was a resolute supporter of the Arians. He planted Arianism in other provinces in Asia Minor and came to Cappadocia with the same aim. He sent the Prefect Modestus to Basil in order to convince the hierarch to join the Arians. Modestus threatened him with ruin, exile, tortures and even death. St. Gregory tells of Basil the Great's response:

"Thou threatenest me with the confiscation of property, but it means nothing for the man who possesses nothing, unless thou desirest to receive this modest clothing and a few books which make up all my estate. Exile? — but I do not know it, since I am not limited by space. If this ground on which I stand right now does not belong to me, then the whole earth belongs to God, Whose temporary guest I am. Torments? — but they do not have power over one not having flesh, except perhaps for the first blow, which thou art free to make. Death? — but it will be deliverance for me, since it will quickly bring me to God, for Whom I live and to a greater extent have died, and to Whom I hasten to come...Tell the Emperor that neither violence nor persuasion will force me to accept a wrong teaching." Modestus was struck by these words. Having informed Valens of St. Basil's inexorableness, the Prefect added: "We are vanquished, O Emperor, by the leader of the Church." Basil the Great displayed the same steadfastness in the face of the Emperor himself; he made such an impression on the Emperor by his behavior and staunchness, that Valens would not support the Arians who had demanded the banishment of Basil. Hierarch Gregory Nazianzen tells about this as follows:

In the year 375, on the feast of Theophany, the Emperor himself entered the Basilica in which Basil the Great was performing the Divine Service. The Emperor was struck by the harmoniousness of the singing of those praying and by the reverence of the bishop, who, it seemed, did not even notice the Emperor's arrival. When Valens made his offering, none of the deacons could bring himself to accept it without the permission of the bishop, and the Emperor, who was used to the servility of the court bishops, was so upset that he staggered and would have fallen, had not one of the clerics supported him. The hierarch then gave a sign that the Emperor's offering be accepted. By steadfastness, tact, personal charm and sensible tractability, Basil the Great triumphed over his adversaries. Valens tore up the decree that had already been signed concerning the exile of Basil the Great and, departing from Caesarea, left him rich donations for works of philanthropy.

St. Basil performed the Divine Service almost daily. He cared especially about the strict fulfillment of the Church's canons, watching attentively so that only the worthy entered the clergy. He would frequently go about his churches, taking care that ecclesiastical discipline not be violated anywhere and every partiality eliminated.

St. Basil the Great was an indefatigable preacher of the revival of social justice in the society of his times. The hierarch gave a firm organization to Church philanthropy, being an opponent of private philanthropy and the imprudent pity that is ready to help every beggar indiscriminately. His appeal for the founding of monastic communities was simultaneously an appeal to the feeling of men's mutual, brotherly responsibility. Man, according to his teaching, can realize the will of God for himself only in the event that he does not separate his fate from the fate of other men. Monasticism, as Basil the Great thought, is the way for the elect. But the very ideals of monasticism communicate to all Christians the ideals the Gospels set down as the basis of each man's life. Every indifference to the fate of other men, and every kind of individualism, according to Basil the Great, was not only profoundly depraved, but also self-destructive in its nature. He used all of his personal means and all the revenues of his church for the benefit of the poor. In each district of his expansive metropolia, the hierarch founded almshouses. In Caesarea he founded an inn and a hospice, which by their scale seemed to be an entire little town. He was especially concerned about a more just allocation of taxes between lands, and about freeing the clergy, monasteries and almshouses from taxes.

St. Basil prepared the convocation of the Second Ecumenical Council, but did not live to see it. He died from exhaustion on the January 1, 379, at the age of 49. Not long before his death, he blessed St. Gregory the Theologian to accept the Constantinopolitan cathedra.

The Church began to celebrate the memory of St. Basil the Great almost immediately after his death. In a homily on his death, St. Amphilochius, the Bishop of Iconium, said: "Not without reason and not by accident was the Divine Basil released from the body and transported from earth to God on the day of the Circumcision of Jesus, which is celebrated between the days of the Nativity and Baptism of Christ. Therefore, this most blessed one, in preaching and praising the Nativity and Baptism of Christ, extolled the spiritual circumcision, and himself, having put off the body, was deemed worthy of ascending to Christ precisely on the sacred day of the commemoration of Christ's Circumcision. For this cause it has been enacted to honor the memory of Basil the Great annually on this present day, with celebration and solemnity."

Troparion, Tone 1:

Thy fame has gone forth into all the earth,/ which has received thy word./ Thereby thou hast taught the Faith; thou hast revealed the nature of created things;/ thou hast made a royal priesthood of the ordered life of men./ Righteous Father Basil, intercede with Christ our God/ that our souls may be saved.

Kontakion, Tone 4:

Thou wast an unshaken foundation of the Church/ and didst give to all mortals an inviolate lordship/ which thou didst seal with thy doctrine,/ O righteous Basil, / revealer of the mysteries of heaven.

St. Genevieve of Paris

January 16 (January 3 old calendar).

In France 500 years after Christ's birth, there lived a shepherd girl with a blooming faith in her heart, the very same faith which budded in the hearts of the Judean shepherds who followed the star to the Lord's manger-bed.

Born into a wealthy family, the young Genevieve watched her family's flock as a matter of custom rather than need. Their home was in the lovely hill-country of Nanterre outside Paris. And in it Genevieve's soul was nourished with the Gospel message, the icons which illumined it, and the example of her parents' peaceful and pious lives.

One day the holy Bishop Germanus came to Nanterre and the people flocked to him as to a living icon of Christ. As he blessed the crowd, his eye fell upon the child Genevieve; his heart recognized the flame of love for God in her and he knew God intended to crown it with Divine Grace and unshakable faith. He called her to him, kissed her head, and told her parents that many would come to Christ because of her. Then he asked her, quite seriously, if she wished to dedicate her whole life to Christ, as a bride. And just as seriously little Genevieve replied that he had spoken exactly the desire of her heart. They entered the church for Vespers together and the Bishop rested his hand on her head until the end of the service.

The next morning the holy Bishop presented her with a medallion engraved with a cross and asked her never to wear another ornament but the Ornament of God's Grace through the Holy Spirit. With that, he gave his blessing to the townspeople and left Nanterre.

At fifteen Genevieve was consecrated to the monastic life. When her parents died she went to live in a monastic community in Paris. The Evil One wasted no time in stirring up words against her, but the kindly Bishop Germanus treated her warmly in the sight of all and spoiled the Devil's plan to be rid of her quickly.

For the rest of her life the people of Paris wavered in their loyalty to her. One month they brought their sick to her for prayers and glorified God when their loved ones recovered. The next month the Wicked One sowed little seeds of evil in their ears and thoughts and they wanted to stone her. To his dying day her friend the Bishop stuck by her and even from his deathbed sent a message whereby she found favor with the people once again. As a reward for their repentance and because of Genevieve's heartfelt prayers and fasts with her sisters, God turned away an invading army and spared the city of Paris.

In her later life the Saint showed great compassion and steadfastness as Bishop Germanus had foretold. Once a pagan king, desiring to kill some prisoners, tried to do it before Genevieve could hear about it. He knew that if she begged for their lives he could not resist her pleas. But God told her about it and she rushed to the execution just in time to have the prisoners spared. People saw from this example that the prayers of this Saint must be very powerful before the king of Mercies if even a pagan king could not resist them.

One night in a violent rainstorm, the only lantern of Genevieve and her sisters blew out in the pitch dark of the muddy woods. Our Saint signed the lamp with the Cross of the Lord and a bright flame crowned the candle lighting their way to early morning Liturgy.

St. Genevieve reposed at a great age and her relics rest in the Church of St. Stephen in Paris, France.

The Holy Martyr Tatiana of Rome

January 25 (January 12, Old Calendar)

St. Tatiana came from an eminent family and was educated in the Christian faith. When she reached adulthood, she became indifferent to riches and earthly blessings and came to love the spiritual way of life. She renounced wedded life and was made a deaconess of the Roman Church for her virtuosity. In this function she diligently tended the sick, visited jails, helped the needy and constantly tried to please God with prayers and good deeds.

During the reign of Alexander Severus (222-235), around the year 225, she took on a martyr's suffering for professing her love of Jesus Christ under the Roman city mayor Ulypian. According to the ancient narrative, St. Tatiana was thrown into the arena at the Coliseum after much torture, to be ravaged by a savage lion for the amusement of the spectators. Instead the lion began to be caressed by her. St. Tatiana was then subjected to new tortures, and together with her father was beheaded with a sword. Eight servants of the city administrator, who had tortured the saint, professed Christ having seen the strength of God in her. They too were killed after torture. According to the witness of Deacon Zocim in 1420, St. Tatiana's head was at Perivlepto in Constantinople.

Troparion, Tone 4

Strengthened by the power of faith,/ thou didst contend for Christ our God, O glorious Tatiana;/ thou didst endure every affliction/ and by thy courage put Belial to shame./ We beseech thee to deliver us from the power of the evil one.

Kontakion, Tone 4

Thou wast radiant in suffering, Tatiana,/ and in the royal purple of thy blood thou didst fly like a dove to heaven./ Wherefore pray unceasingly for those who honor thee.

St. Nina, the Enlightener of Georgia

January 27 (January 14, Old Calendar)

St. Nina (also Nunia, Nino) was the niece of the Jerusalem Patriarch Juvenal. From childhood she had loved God with all her heart and deeply pitied those who did not believe in Him. Her father Zebulon, of Cappadocia, left for a hermitage and her mother became a deaconess, after which St. Nina was given to a pious nun for her education. The nun frequently told of Georgia (presently Gruzia) when it was yet a pagan country. These tales instilled in Nina a strong desire to visit this country and to enlighten its inhabitants with the light of the Gospels.

The Mother of God appeared to Nina and promised her that she would take her to that land. When the Lord opened a path to her, the young Nina indeed went to Georgia, where she quickly gained the love of the people. She baptized Mirian, the Tsar of Georgia, his wife Nana and their son, Bakar, who then aided Nina in her missionary efforts zealously. In the course of

her life, St. Nina traveled throughout Georgia and succeeded in bringing all the people to the Christian faith—all during the time when the Emperor Diocletian was fearfully persecuting Christians. Hearing of the power of her prayers, many of the ill began to come to her. The Bishop and priests of Constantinople were summoned, and the first Church was built in Georgia, dedicated to the Apostles. Slowly, almost all of Georgia became Christian.

St. Nina, desiring neither honor nor fame, withdrew to a mountain and there, in solitude, thanked God for the conversion of the pagans to Christianity. After several years she gave up her solitude and went to Kahetia (Khiva?) where she converted the Tsarina Sofia to Christianity. She rested from her many labors and entered into peace in the Lord in the year 335. On the place of her death, the Tsar Marian erected a Church in honor of the great martyr George, a distant relative of St. Nina. Her grave is in a church in Samtavro. She performed many miracles during her lifetime and after her death.

The finding of Christ's chiton is connected to the memory of St. Nina. During the crucifixion of the Savior, this chiton fell to a Roman soldier by way of casting lots and surfaced in Georgia thereafter. Through God's intervention, St. Nina found this chiton buried by the roots of a cedar tree.

Troparion, Tone 4

O handmaid of the Word of God,/ who in preaching equaled the first-called Apostle Andrew,/ and emulated the other Apostles,/ enlightener of Iberia and reed-pipe of the Holy Spirit,/ holy Nina, pray to Christ our God to save our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 2

Let us sing praises to the chosen of Christ,/ Equal-to-the-Apostles and preacher of God's word,/ the bearer of good tidings who brought the people of Katralina/ to the path of life and truth,/ the disciple of the Mother of God,/ our zealous intercessor and unwearying guardian,/ the most praised Nina.

The Holy Martyr Leonilla

January 29 (January 16, Old Calendar)

The holy Martyr Leonilla, together with her grandsons the Martyrs Speusippus, Eleusippus, and Meleusippus, suffered for Christ in France in the reign of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180). The three brothers were triplets. At first, only Leonilla was a Christian, while her grandsons were pagans. After much advice on the part of the pious Leonilla and a local priest, the three brothers were baptized. Being baptized, they began to witness their faith with youthful fervor, and in their zeal went out and smashed all the idols in the area. Accused and brought before the judge, they acknowledged their actions and openly confessed their faith in Christ.

The judge threw them into prison, then summoned their grandmother and directed her to go to the prison and counsel her grandsons to deny Christ and to worship the idols. Leonilla went off without a word to the prison. Instead of advising her grandsons to deny the true faith, however, she encouraged them not to give up, but to persevere to the end in all their sufferings and to die for Christ. When the judge examined them again and saw their yet stronger steadfastness in the faith, he condemned them to death. All three were first hanged on one tree, where they hung 'like strings of a lute,' and after that flogged, and then finally burned. A woman, Jovilla, stirred

by the courage of these martyrs, cried out, "I too am a Christian!" They immediately seized her and beheaded her with a sword, together with the aged St. Leonilla. The Greek Emperor Zeno (474-491) handed the relics to a French nobleman from the town of Lantre, where they remain to this day.

Our Holy Father Antony the Great

January 30 (January 17, Old Calendar)

St. Antony the Great was born in Egypt in a village called Quemen-el-Arons near Heracleopolis in the year 251, of wealthy and noble parents who were Christians. As a youth he faithfully attended church with great intensity and seriousness. He did not have worldly ambitions and found secular education uninteresting. One day during the Divine Liturgy, he heard the words of the Gospel in which Jesus said to the rich young man, "*if you want to be perfect, go sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me*" (Matt. 19:21).

After the death of his parents, he shared his inheritance with his sister, who was still a girl. He made sure that she was cared for, and gave away his half of the inheritance to the poor. At the age of twenty, he consecrated himself to the life of asceticism that he had desired from childhood. At first he lived near his own village, but went off into the desert on the shores of the Red Sea in order to escape the disturbance of men. Here he spent twenty years as a hermit in company with no one but God, in unceasing prayer, pondering, and contemplation, patiently undergoing inexpressible demonic temptations. His fame spread through the whole world and many disciples gathered around him, whom he placed on the path of salvation by word and example.

In the eighty-five years of his ascetic life, he went to Alexandria only twice. He went the first time to seek martyrdom during a time of persecution of the Church; the second was at the invitation of St. Athanasius, to refute the Arians' slanderous allegations that he too was a follower of the Arian heresy. He departed this life at the age of 105, leaving behind a whole army of disciples and followers. And although Antony was unlettered, he was, as a counselor and teacher, one of the most learned men of his age, as was St. Athanasius the Great. When some Hellenic philosophers tried to test him with literary learning, Antony shamed them with the question: "Which is older, the understanding or the book? And which of these is the source of the other?" The shamed philosophers dispersed, for they saw that they had only book learning without understanding. Here was a man who had attained perfection insofar as a man is able on earth. Here was an educator of educators and teacher of teachers, who for a whole eighty-five years perfected himself, and only thus was able to perfect many others. Full of years and great works, St. Antony entered into rest in the Lord in the year 356.

Troparion, Tone 4

Thou didst follow the ways of zealous Elijah,/ and the straight path of the Baptist, O Father Antony./ Thou didst become a desert dweller/ and support the world by thy prayers./ Intercede with Christ our God that our souls may be saved.

Kontakion, Tone 2

Thou didst abandon the world's tumult and live in silence,/ and emulate the Baptist, O Antony./ Wherefore we acclaim thee with him,/ thou summit of the Fathers.

The Holy Martyrs Innas, Pinna, and Rimma

February 2 (January 20, Old Calendar)

Sts. Innas, Pinna, and Rimma are regarded as the first Slav martyrs recorded in history. They lived to old age in Scythia in the first century, and were disciples of the Apostle Andrew, who traveled to the Slavic nations during his ministry on earth. The holy martyrs suffered for the Faith at the hands of their pagan neighbors on the other side of the Danube, near Varna. They were bound, left on the ice, and froze to death, entering into rest in the Lord.

Our Holy Father St. Maximos the Confessor

February 3 (January 21, Old Calendar)

A mighty spiritual giant who was broken by nothing and no one, and whose image does not fade with time, Venerable Maximos the Confessor is a faithful indicator, even till now, of how one may follow after Christ by that path by which he himself so faithfully followed the Lord.

St. Maximos the Confessor was born in 580, a citizen of Constantinople and a nobleman. He became a high-ranking courtier at the court of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, and later became a monk and the abbot of a monastery not far from the capital. He was the greatest defender of Orthodoxy against what was called the Monothelite heresy, which developed from the heresy of Eutyches, *i.e.*, as Eutyches asserted that there is only one nature in Christ, so the Monothelites asserted that there is only one will in Him — the Divine. This heresy was diametrically opposed to the long accepted Orthodox doctrine that Christ had two wills — the Divine and the human. St. Maximos resisted this assertion and found himself in opposition to both the Emperor and the Patriarch. Emperor Constans II, the successor to the Emperor Heraclius, issued his infamous “*Typus*” Declaration, formally accepting the Monothelite teaching as official dogma.

But St. Maximos was fearless and persevered to the end in proving that there are in the Lord two wills and also two natures. By his efforts, one Council in Carthage and one in Rome stood firm, and both these Councils anathematized the Monothelite teaching. St. Maximos’ sufferings for Orthodoxy went beyond description: he was tortured by hierarchs, spat upon by the masses, beaten by soldiers, persecuted, imprisoned, until finally, with his tongue cut out and one hand cut off, to keep him from speaking or writing, he was condemned to exile for life in Skhimaris. But his faithful assistant, St. Anastasios, continued his work of writing in defense of Orthodoxy after these events.

A profound theologian of his time and a strict defender of Orthodoxy, Maximos successfully demonstrated the incorrectness of the Monothelite heresy, for the enemies of the church persecuted him many times.

Venerable Maximos' arguments in behalf of Orthodoxy were so powerful that, after a public debate on the faith with Pyrrhus, the Monothelite Patriarch of Constantinople, the latter renounced the heresy in 645.

The heretics often went from urging and appealing Maximos, to threatening, abusing and beating him. Venerable Maximos was sent into exile several times and called back to Constantinople each time. On one occasion, St. Maximos was called back, and the imperial grandees, Troilus and Sergius, subjected him yet again to interrogation. They began to accuse St. Maximos of pride for esteeming himself as the only Orthodox who would be saved and for considering all others to be heretics who would perish.

To this the saint replied, "When all the people in Babylon were worshipping the golden idol, the Three Holy Youths did not condemn anyone to perdition. They did not concern themselves with what others were doing, but took care only for themselves, so as not to fall away from true piety. In precisely the same way, Daniel also, when cast into the den, did not condemn any of those who, in fulfilling the law of Darius, did not want to pray to God; but he bore in mind his duty, and desired rather to die than to sin and be tormented by his conscience for transgressing God's Law. God forbid that I, too, should condemn anyone, or say that I alone am being saved. However, I would sooner agree to die than, having apostatized in any way from the right faith, endure the torments of my conscience."

Then Troilus and Sergius pointed out to St. Maximos that the whole Christian world recognized the Monothelite Patriarch of Constantinople as legitimate, that all the Eastern Patriarchs and their *locum tenentes* were in communion with him, and that the plenipotentiary representatives of the Roman Pope would serve with the Patriarch and commune with him. Thus, he was the only one remaining in the whole world who did not recognize the Patriarch.

The saint answered, "If even the whole universe should begin to commune with the Patriarch, I will not commune with him. For I know from the writings of the holy Apostle Paul that the Holy Spirit will give over to anathema even the angels, if they should begin to preach any other gospel, introducing anything new."

Venerable Maximos remained unshaken in his religious convictions. Finally, they cut off his right hand and tongue, so that he could not proclaim or defend the truth, either by word or pen. They then dispatched him to confinement in Lazov, a region of Mingrelia in the Caucasus. Here his faithful assistant St. Anastasios continued his work of writing in defense of Orthodoxy. Venerable Maximos died on August 13, 662, foreknowing his approaching death.

Venerable Maximos wrote many theological works in defense of Orthodoxy. Especially valuable are his instructions on the spiritual and contemplative life, some of which are included in *The Philokalia*, a collection of patristic instructions on prayer and the ascetic life. In these ascetic instructions, the spiritual profundity and perceptiveness of St. Maximos' thought is revealed. Also, an explanation of the Liturgy that has a great theological significance has come down to us from him.

In 680, 18 years after St. Maximos gave his soul into God's hands, the sixth Ecumenical Council outlawed the heresy Monothelitism. In addition to his theological and apologetic writings, St. Maximos left many wonderful writings on the Christian life and spiritual counsel for believers, which are of great spiritual profit to those who read them. The second volume of *The Philokalia*, compiled by Sts. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain and Makarios of Corinth, contains many writings of St. Maximos, including two hundred texts on Theology and the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, texts on the nature of Christian love, a treatise on the Lord's Prayer, and various other teachings. This book is currently in print and highly recommended.

The example of Venerable Maximos' courageous stand shows how an Orthodox Christian must behave in the face of apostasy — general deviation from Christ's Truth. Venerable Father Maximos, entreat God for us!

Troparion, Tone 3

Through thee the Spirit poured forth/ streams of teaching for the Church;/ thou didst expound God the Word's self emptying,/ and shine forth in thy struggles as a true Confessor of the Faith;/ holy Father Maximos, pray to Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

Kontakion, Tone 8

O faithful, let us acclaim the lover of the Trinity,/ great Maximos who taught the God-inspired Faith,/ that Christ is to be glorified in two natures, wills and energies;/ and let us cry to him: Rejoice, O herald of the Faith.

The Venerable Gennady

February 5 (January 23, Old Calendar)

St. Gennady Kostromsky, secularly known as Grigory, was born to rich Russo-Latvian nobles in the Latvian town of Mogilev. From childhood he distinguished himself by his piety. He loved to frequent God's Church and fasted faithfully, for which he was ridiculed by his friends. Wanting to consecrate his life to God, he secretly left his parent's house in beggar's clothing and went to Russia. Having visited Moscow and Novgorod, where he could not find a monastery to his liking, he sought out the Venerable Alexander on the river Svir. St. Alexander Svirskiy directed him to the Vologodskie forests to the Venerable Cornelius Komelsky, who tonsured him a monk with the name of Gennady. Some time later the Venerable Cornelius and Gennady departed to lake Sursk near the river Kostroma, where they founded a hermitage with two churches. Thereafter this hermitage became known as the Gennadiev Monastery.

The Venerable Gennady toiled incessantly. He baked the church hosts and bread, split wood and dug ponds with the brothers. In order to perform a labor he constantly wore fetters. He loved to paint icons and decorated the churches of his hermitage with them. For his pious life St. Gennady received from God the gift of discernment and healing. Thus, being in Moscow, he foretold to Anastasia Romanovna, the daughter of the nobleman Roman Zacharin, that she would become the tsarina. Truly, she later married Tsar Ivan the Terrible and was his favorite wife. The Tsar himself pleaded with the venerable one to be the godfather of his own daughter. The Venerable Gennady cured the Bishop Cyprian from a life threatening disease.

He died in 1565. In 1644 his incorrupt relics were obtained, which were guarded from that time under a bushel in the Church of the Transfiguration of his monastery. The Venerable Gennady wrote "Instructions of the Spiritual Elder to the Newly Vested Monk" and "A Spiritual Legacy."

Our Holy Mother Xenia of Rome

February 6 (January 24, Old Calendar)

Born in Rome, St. Xenia was the only daughter of a famous senator. Drawn by the love of Christ, she refused to marry, as her parents desired. In order to escape marriage, she fled from her home with two of her slaves and came to the island of Kos, to a place called Mylassa. There she started a community for virgins, remaining there in asceticism until her death. Though she was a weak woman, she had great perseverance in fasting, prayer and vigils. She often spent entire nights standing in prayer, dressed more poorly than her sisters, and often put ashes from the censer on her bread when she ate. In the year 450, at the hour of her death, a wonderful sign appeared over the monastery: a wreath of stars encircled a cross more resplendent than the sun. Her relics healed many of the sick. Her two slave girls followed the example of their abbess in all things, and, when they reposed, were buried by their wish at the feet of blessed Xenia.

Troparion, Tone 3

Thou didst live the life of a stranger in the world/ and wast estranged to every sin;/ thou didst abandon comforts and fleeting honors/ and betroth thyself to thine Immortal Bridegroom./ O glorious Xenia, entreat Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

Kontakion, Tone 2

Celebrating the memory of the life thou didst live as a stranger,/ and honoring thee with love,/ we praise Christ Who gave thee power to grant healings to all./ O Xenia, ever pray to Him for us all.

Blessed Xenia of St. Petersburg

February 6 (January 24, Old Calendar)

St. Xenia was the wife of Colonel Andrei Feodorovich Petrov, who served as a court chanter. At the age of 26, Xenia was widowed and, appeared to have lost her mind from grief: she distributed her possessions to the poor, dressed herself in the clothes of her reposed husband, and, as if having forgotten her own name, called herself by the name of her reposed husband — Andrei Feodorovich.

These eccentricities were not indicative of a loss of reason, however, but signified a complete disdain for earthly goods and human opinion, which places them at the center of existence. Thus, Xenia of Petersburg took upon herself the difficult *podvig* of foolishness for Christ's sake.

Having come to know the inconstancy of earthly happiness through the death of her beloved husband, Xenia strove toward God with all her heart, and sought protection and comfort only in Him. Earthly, transitory goods ceased to have any value for her. Xenia had a house; but gave it over to an acquaintance under the condition that it be used to shelter paupers. But Xenia herself,

not having a refuge, would wander among the paupers of Petersburg. At night she would go out to a field, where she spent the time in ardent prayer.

When they began to build a church in the Smolensk Cemetery, Xenia, after the onset of darkness, would secretly carry bricks to the top of the construction, and thereby helped the masons erect the walls of the church.

Some of Xenia's relatives wanted to take her in and provide her with all necessities, but the blessed one replied to them: "I do not need anything."

She was glad of her poverty, and when visiting somewhere, would at times remark: "I am all here!" When her reposed husband's clothing wore out, Xenia clothed herself in the poorest clothing, and wore torn shoes without stockings on her feet. She did not dress warmly and forced her body to suffer from the severe cold.

Sensing the greatness of Blessed Xenia's soul, the inhabitants of Petersburg loved her, because she despised the earthly for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. If Xenia entered anyone's home, this was considered a good sign. Mothers rejoiced if she kissed their children. Cab drivers would ask permission of the blessed one to drive her a little, since after this the earnings would be guaranteed for the whole day. Merchants in the bazaars would try to give her kalach [cracknel bread] or some food; if Blessed Xenia took something from what was offered, all the wares of the seller were quickly bought up.

Xenia had the gift of clairvoyance. On the eve of the Nativity of Christ in 1762, she walked about Petersburg and said, "Bake blini! Tomorrow all Russia will bake blini!" The next day, the Empress Elizabeth Petrovna, suddenly died [blini is traditionally made at someone's death]. A few days before the murder of the royal youth, John VI (Antonovich, the great-great-grandson of Tsar Alexis Michailovich), who in infancy had been proclaimed the Russian Emperor, the blessed one wept and repeated, "Blood, blood, blood." Within a few days after Mirovich's unsuccessful conspiracy, the young John was killed.

Once, Xenia came to a home where there was a grown-up daughter. Turning to the girl, she said, "Here you are drinking coffee, while your husband is burying his wife at Okhta." After a certain time, this girl married that very widower who at that moment had been burying his first wife at the Okhta Cemetery.

Blessed Xenia died at the end of the eighteenth century, but tradition has not preserved either the year or day of her decease. She was buried in the Smolensk Cemetery, where she had helped build the church.

Pilgrimages to her grave began shortly after her decease. Blessed Xenia often appeared in visions to people in difficult circumstances, forewarned of dangers and saved them from calamities. The righteous one has not ceased to show compassionate love toward all who with faith have called upon her, and many instances of her help for the suffering and those in desperate situations are known.

A civil servant, Nicholas Selivanovich Golovin, had lived in Grodno approximately until 1907. He often experienced unpleasantness at work. He came to Petersburg to put his affairs in order, but they became even more entangled. Golovin was very poor, caring for his elderly mother and two sisters. In despair, he walked along the streets of Petersburg, and, though he was a man of faith, the thought to throw himself into the Neva stole into his soul. At this moment, some unknown woman stood in front of him. He was struck by her appearance, which was reminiscent of a poor nun. "Why are you so sad?" she asked. "Go to the Smolensk Cemetery, serve a panikhida [a requiem service] for Xenia, and everything will be settled." After these words, the

unknown woman disappeared. Golovin fulfilled the advice of the mysterious nun, and his affairs were unexpectedly settled in the best manner possible. He joyfully returned home to Grodno.

Emperor Alexander III, when he was the heir, became ill with a serious form of typhus. The Grand Duchess Maria Feodorovna was very alarmed by her spouse's illness. One of the valets, seeing her in the corridor, related to her how Blessed Xenia helps the sick, gave her sand from the cherished grave and added that he himself had been healed from illness by the prayer of the righteous one. The Grand Duchess placed the sand under the pillow of the patient. That same night, while sitting at the head of the bed, she had a vision of Blessed Xenia, who told her that the patient would recover and that a daughter would be born in their family. She should be called Xenia. The prediction of the blessed one was fulfilled exactly.

In the Pskov province, a relative from Petersburg came to stay for a while with a landowner and recounted how they revere Blessed Xenia in the capital. Under the influence of this account, the pious landowner prayed before sleep for the repose of her soul. At night, she dreamed that Xenia was walking round her house and pouring water on it. In the morning, the hay barn on the country estate caught on fire, but the fire did not spread further and the home remained whole.

A colonel's widow arrived in Petersburg to enroll her two sons into the Cadet Corps. She did not succeed in this. The money borrowed for the trip had come to an end, and the widow walked along the street and wept bitterly. Suddenly, some woman of the common people came up to her and said: "Serve a panikhida for Xenia. She helps in sorrows." "Who is this Xenia?" asked the colonel's widow. "The tongue [that asks the way] will lead to Kiev," she answered, quickly vanishing.

Indeed, the colonel's widow easily learned who this Xenia was. She served a panikhida for her at her grave in the Smolensk Cemetery, and shortly after received the unexpected news that both her sons had been accepted into the Cadet Corps.

A multitude of similar instances of Blessed Xenia's help is known also in our days.

Troparion, Tone 8

Christ the Lord has shown forth in thee a new mediatrix and intercessor for our race;/ thou didst will to endure evil in thy life and didst lovingly serve both God and man./ We zealously run to thee in misfortune and sorrow,/ we hope in thee and cry from our hearts:/ Put not our hope to shame, O blessed Xenia.

Another Troparion, Tone 5

Having lived as a stranger in the world, O Xenia,/ thou didst outwit the deviser of evil/ by thy pretended foolishness./ Thou didst receive from God/ grace to foresee and foretell things to come./ Now thou hast been translated from earth/ and art numbered with the choirs of Angels.

Kontakion, Tone 4

Thou didst give thy wealth to the poor, O Xenia,/ and accept poverty out of love for Christ;/ and having lived in a manner rivaling the Angels/ thou wast counted worthy/ of glory on high.

St. Gregory the Theologian

February 7 (January 25, Old Calendar)

St. Gregory the Theologian (326-389) was the son of Gregory and Nonna, a very pious woman. Even before his birth she promised to dedicate him to God and used all her power to lean him toward the Lord. Gregory considered his education from his mother to have been the most important in his life. Because of his eminent capabilities, St. Gregory received an excellent education. He studied in the schools of Palestinian Caesarea, which contained a rich library compiled by Pamphil of Alexandria; there he studied the works of Origen. Later, in Athens, he became close to Basil the Great, whom he had known before, and whose friendship he considered greater than the highest school. In Athens, the saintly friends had one room and one way of life; only two paths were known to them: one led to the Church of God, the other to the academy. In Athens, St. Gregory met Julian the Apostate, who rejected Christianity when he became Emperor, and strove to resurrect paganism in the Roman Empire from 361 to 363. St. Gregory has left a living image of this angry and crafty enemy of the Church. At the age of 26 St. Gregory accepted baptism.

St. Gregory refrained from any community obligation for a long time after returning to his fatherland. Reflecting on God, praying, reading Divine Scripture, writing inspired words and songs, and attending to the needs of his aged parents, these were his only occupation. He also spent time with Basil the Great in the desert, which he considered the happiest in his life. His father, who was already a bishop was in need of an assistant. He called him back from the desert to Nazianzen and elevated him to a Presbyter. Even this rank intimidated Gregory with its title and the burden of its accompanying obligations, so that he withdrew to the solitude of the desert. Thereafter, having quieted the turmoil of his soul, he returned to his father. He accepted the priestly obligation with the comfort that he, in serving God, was helping his aged parent in his labors with his parish.

In the meantime, his friend Basil the Great had already reached the high rank of Archbishop. Wishing to have a loyal and enlightened helper in the management of the vast district, St. Basil offered Gregory a place as the main archpriest of his diocese, but St. Gregory turned away this honorable and influential office. Some time later St. Gregory was ordained Bishop of Sasima through a secret arrangement between Archbishop Basil and Gregory's father. Seeing the will of God in this he accepted the ordination but refused the obligation; he continued to serve his father and the Nazianzen parish in the role of "vicar". In 374 his father died and his mother shortly thereafter. St. Gregory continued his father's work for some time, managing the Nazianzen Church, when he became gravely ill. Upon recovering he went away to a solitary existence where he remained in prayer and fasting for about three years.

The Holy one could not conceal himself in a monastic cell, however. The Orthodox bishops and lay people elected him to the archbishop's see in Constantinople. He arrived there at the height of Arianism, which had a grasp on all the churches in the capital. St. Gregory stopped at the home of his friends. He converted one of the rooms into a chapel which he called Anastasius (which means "resurrection"), with the hope that Orthodoxy would be resurrected here. He began to preach. The Arians insulted and derided him; they pelted him with stones and sent assassins. The people recognized their true pastor, however. St. Gregory notes that they seem to have been attracted to his chair like iron to a magnet. With his strong voice, exemplary life and eccle-

siastic efforts he vanquished the enemies of the Church. Great numbers came from all over to listen to his inspired sermons. Listeners were collected around his chair not unlike a stormy sea, with their loud expressions of approval, clapping of hands and exclamations. Stenographers noted and preserved his words for posterity. Each week, thousands of people returned to the Orthodox Church from heresy.

Finally, after the enthronement of the Christian Emperor Theodosius (379-395), the unyielding Arians were banished from the Churches of the capital. St. Gregory then fought against the Macedonian heresy, which denied the Divinity of the Holy Ghost. He played a vital role in the sessions of the Second Ecumenical Council. Having completed his works, he refused the see of Constantinople, saying “Farewell my Cathedra—it is an enviable and perilous height.” St. Gregory went to the town of Arianza near Nazianzen, and here in strict ascetic deeds he passed the last years of his life.

For his wonderful theological works, St. Gregory received from the Church the honorary status of Theologian and universal teacher. The Church refers to him in one of its prayers as the highest intellect, for delving into the deepest mysteries of the faith and being able to express her incomprehensible truths with a clear understanding and strict correctness. His sermons are filled with such poesy that many of his words have been set to music (St. John Damascene, *et al.*) for feast day canticles. Incorruptible parts of St. Gregory’s relics give off a wonderful fragrance to this day.

Troparion, Tone 1

The shepherd's pipe of thy theology/ conquered the philosophers' trumpets;/ for since thou didst search out the depths of the Spirit,/ beauty of speech was added to thee./ Intercede with Christ our God that our souls may be saved,/ O Father Gregory.

Kontakion, Tone 3

With thy theologian's speech thou didst dispel the philosopher's cobwebs,/ O glorious Gregory;/ and thou dost adorn the robe of Orthodoxy woven for the Church from on high./ Wearing this, she cries out with us thy children:/ Rejoice, O Father, most excellent mind of theology.

New Hieromartyr Vladimir, Metropolitan of Kiev

February 7 (25 January, Old Calendar)

The first Russian new martyr of hierarchichal rank was the Very Most-Reverend Vladimir, who in the world had been Basil Nikiforovitch Bogoyavlensky. He was born on January 2, 1848 into the family of a priest in Little Morshanka, Morshansk district, Tambov province. He was educated at the Tambov seminary, and then at the Kiev Theological Academy. Upon graduation in 1874, he was first appointed a teacher of homiletics at his old seminary. In 1888, he discontinued his work at the seminary, and was ordained to the priesthood. He served at the Holy Protection Cathedral Church, in the city of Kozlov, Tambov Province. Not only did he carry out pastoral duties in his parish, but acted as deputy of diocesan meetings and dean of churches in Kozlov. A severe illness brought on the death of his matushka, and the young priest’s familial sorrow roused him to begin a new path of service to the Church and to the people. In February 1886, at

the Tambov Kazan cathedral, he was tonsured a monk, and was elevated to the rank of archimandrite. On May 21, 1889, archimandrite Vladimir was elevated to the cathedra as bishop of Starorussk. In 1892, he became exarch to Georgia, and a member of the Holy Synod. In 1898 he became metropolitan of Moscow, in 1912 metropolitan of Petrograd, and in 1915, metropolitan of Kiev.

Kozlov, Novgorod, Samara, Georgia, Moscow, Petrograd, Kiev: such were the successive steps along Metropolitan Vladimir's arduous path of service. At every step, Metropolitan Vladimir kept foremost the need to keep the people within the protection of the Church, to preserve them from sectarian influences and from socialist propaganda, to liberate them from the awful, age-old yoke of drunkenness, and to give them the light of true Christian learning.

Metropolitan Vladimir used to say to the students at the Moscow seminary, "Perhaps you would say that in our time the bread of the Church has become so stale that it sometimes is like a dry crust that even young teeth cannot chew. But first of all, one must think not about what comes from the people, but what we ourselves can do for them. Our people are poor; their life is rent by the awful yoke of drunkenness. And we must apply, first of all, all our efforts to raising them up, to sobering them, and bringing into their midst the light of true Christian teaching.

The family and the school, the factory and business — all these and the other branches of societal and government life — should absorb as the basic, determining tenet of their activity, the spirit of Christ's teaching through the Church, its pastors, and the faithful."

In his spiritual struggle to further that goal, Vladika Vladimir spared neither his strength nor his health. He was constantly on guard, ready for spiritual struggle and for battle as a faithful warrior of Christ. He strove to raise the educational level of pastors and other clergy; he established many cadres of missionaries to the people, organized theological classes for women, inspired strugglers to abstinence in their work, arranged courses to prepare pastors for service in distant Siberia, and waged war against the approaching disease of atheistic socialism — a disease whose danger to Russia was always clear to him. In all of these paths of action, he maintained himself as a pastor of peace and love, unshakable steadfastness, absolute honesty, and eternal dedication to Christ and His Church.

On the night of January 26, 1918, Bolshevik forces entered the Kiev Caves Lavra. Shortly thereafter, some anonymous persons, having found out that Metropolitan Vladimir was in charge of the Lavra, went to his quarters. After completing a search and taking away 100 rubles — for he had no more — they proceeded to take him to the commandant for interrogation. On the way, they decided to rid themselves of him, and carried out their mad idea. The body of the hieromartyr was found, pierced by two fatal bullet wounds and three stab wounds. During that most difficult of times in our history, and at the hands of criminals, the thread of life of this holy hierarch who had so labored in the vineyard of the Russian Orthodox Church, was severed. His lifelong spiritual struggle was crowned with the crown of martyrdom. The Church piously and with thanksgiving keeps the prayerful memory of the archpastor, who in his lofty service gave himself unstintingly to service to the faithful, courageously leading them out of the age-old sickness of drunkenness, away from their unhealthy leanings towards schism and sectarianism, away from the ruinous socialist morass, and to the constant light of the Resurrection of Christ.

The Translation of the Relics of St. John Chrysostom

February 9 (January 27, Old Calendar)

St. John Chrysostom (347-407) came from a noble family of Antioch. Having lost his father in early childhood, he was diligently educated by his mother Anthusa, who was a woman of admirable character and a model Christian. Later on he studied under the famous heathen Libanius. Having been endowed with brilliant gifts, he diligently developed them in a fundamental, deep education of the biblical in conjunction with the classical, such that when Libanius was asked whom he considered his successor, he answered sadly: “John, of course, had not the Christians taken him away from us.” And even of St. John’s mother, Libanius had this to say: “What worthy women these Christians have!”

After finishing his studies, John pursued the career of law where he was distinguished by his eloquence. Soon however mundane life wearied him. According to custom he was baptized in adulthood. He wanted to go into the wilderness, but remained at his mother’s wish. Meletius, the Bishop of Antioch, heard about John’s unusual gifts and took him into the ranks of clergy. At this time John was earnestly studying the Holy Scripture and the other sciences pertaining to theology.

After his mother’s death, he fulfilled his long-harbored wish: for four years he lived in seclusion and for two in total seclusion in a cave. Illness forced him to return to Antioch. Here he entered the rank of deacon and then of priest. The twelve years of priesthood in Antioch were the happiest of his life. He preached indefatigably and took an active part in the joys and sorrows of his Antiochan flock. Very often his sermons were interrupted by applause. John would stop the audience saying, “What is your applause to me? Correcting your lives and turning to God — that is my best praise from you.” He became especially famous for his words regarding the calamities threatening the Antiochans for having cast down the emperor’s statue.

Soon the fame of St. John as “Chrysostom” rang throughout the Christian world there. The title, which in Greek means “golden-tongued,” was given to the saint because of his divinely inspired and eloquent discourse. It was first uttered by a simple woman enrapt while listening intently to his words. Therefore when the cathedra of the archbishop of Constantinople became available, after the death of Bishop Nectary, who succeeded St. Gregory the Theologian, Emperor Arcady (395-408) decreed that it be reserved for Chrysostom. At first the consecration was very consoling to St. John. He fervently gave himself to the tasks of eradicating the remainder of Arianism, reconciling feuding Bishops and improving the clergy and the entire congregation. However, this energetic activity set many enemies against him, the foremost being the Empress Eudoxia, a woman who was extremely vain and ambitious.

Eudoxia found an ally in Theophilus, Archbishop of Alexandria, who was supported by the bishops unhappy with John. These bishops formed a cathedral in a small place called Doub, near Constantinople and condemned John to the loss of the cathedra and exile. “The Church of Jesus Christ was not begun by me and will not be ended by me,” said John to his loyal friends. He left the capital. But that very night there occurred a strong earthquake whose shocks were especially heard in the palace. A terrified Eudoxia begged Chrysostom to return at once. After two months Eudoxia gave in to her passions and vices as she had previously, and John stepped forward with words of accusation once again. This time John was condemned behind his back and sent into exile. For three years John lived in the Armenian town of Cucusus, he was then sent to

Pityus (on the shores of the Black Sea). For three months, fierce wars took the Holy man on foot through the mountains, heat and teeming rain. Totally enfeebled, the Holy one stopped in the town of Komanah. Here at night the Holy Martyr Basilik (whose relics were venerated in this town) appeared and said, "Do not be saddened brother John, tomorrow we shall be together." John partook of Holy Communion and died peacefully with these words: "Thank God for everything!"

In his numerous sermons, of which there are some 800, St. John Chrysostom left inspired commentaries on many books of the Holy Scripture, and is esteemed by the Church as being a very authoritative commentator on the Bible. He wrote the Liturgy bearing his name, introduced the use of the procession with the cross and various other pious customs. Above all he is known for the spread of Christ's faith. He is also considered one of the enlighteners of Russia for sending preachers of the faith to its hermitages.

On January 27, the translation of his honored relics from the Armenian village of Comana (where he died in exile in 407) to Constantinople (where he had governed the Church earlier as Patriarch) is celebrated. Thirty years after his death, Patriarch Proclus made a speech in memory of his spiritual father and mentor. By this speech he roused the love of the people and the Emperor, Theodosius the Younger, towards the great saint, so much so that they all wanted the relics of St. John to be translated to Constantinople. It is related that the coffin containing the relics could not be moved from its place until the Emperor wrote a letter to St. John, begging his forgiveness (Theodosius was the son of Eudoxia, who had persecuted the saint) and appealing him to return to Constantinople, his former residence. When this repentant letter was placed on the coffin, the latter became light enough in weight to be moved.

Before the translation, many of the sick were healed upon touching the coffin. When the relics arrived at the capital, the Emperor again begged forgiveness over them in his mother's name, as though it were she herself speaking these words: "While I lived in this temporal life, I acted in malice towards thee; but now that thou livest in eternal life, be thou of help to my soul. My glory passes and there is naught to help me; help me, Father, in thy glory; help me before I come to be condemned before the judgment of Christ." When the saint was carried into the Church of the Holy Apostles and placed on the patriarchal throne, the assembled throng heard these words from his mouth: "Peace be with you all!" The translation of the relics of St. John Chrysostom was carried out in 438.

Concerning the holy Chrysostom, one may with all justice say that he surpassed all the Hellenic sages in wisdom, cogency of discourse, and eloquence of speech. He interpreted the divine Scriptures and elucidated them wonderfully; similarly, he far surpassed all in the virtuous life and in the vision of God. He was a wellspring of mercy and love, and was full of zeal to teach. He lived all of sixty years and was shepherd of the Church of Christ for six. By the prayers of these three holy hierarchs may Christ our God dispel the divisions of the heretics and preserve us in peace and oneness of mind, and may He count us worthy of His heavenly kingdom, for He is blessed forever.

In addition to his Divine Liturgy, many of his sermons concerning the Christian Faith have been translated and are available in print.

Troparion, Tone 8

Grace like a flame shining forth from thy mouth has illumined the universe,/ and disclosed to the world treasures of poverty and shown us the height of humility./ And as by thine

own words thou teachest us, Father John Chrysostom,/ so intercede with the Word, Christ our God, to save our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 1

The Church rejoices at the recovery of thy holy relics./ She kept them hidden, like most precious gold,/ and by thine intercessions she unceasingly grants healing to those/ who praise thee, O John Chrysostom.

Our Holy Father Nikita of the Kiev Caves

February 13 (January 31, Old Calendar)

As a monk, in disobedience to his abbot, St. Nikita went off and lived as a recluse in a solitary cell. For his disobedience, God sent great temptations upon him. Once when Nikita was at prayer, the devil appeared to him as an angel of light and said to him: “Do not pray any more, but rather read books, and I will pray in your place.” Nikita obeyed, stopped praying, and began to read books. He read only the Old Testament and was totally unable to open the New, being prevented by some diabolical strength. He also prophesied with the help of the devil — about crimes, kidnappings, fires and other evil works which were known to the devil and thence made known to him. The holy fathers of the monastery finally realized that Nikita had fallen into demonic illusion and began to pray for him. Nikita returned to himself, realized the abyss into which he had fallen, repented bitterly of his disobedience and pride and directed himself onto the right path. After long penance and many tears, God forgave him and gave him the gift of wonder-working. He entered into rest in 1108.

The Three Great Hierarchs: Sts. Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom

February 12 (January 30, Old Calendar)

Each of these saints has his personal feast day in the month of January: St. Basil on the 1st, St. Gregory on the 25th, and St. John Chrysostom on the 27th. The common feast we celebrate on January 30th was instituted in the 11th Century, in the time of the Emperor Alexius Comnenus. At one time there was a quarrel among the people about who was the greatest of the three. Some gave St. Basil the pre-eminence for his purity and courage, others St. Gregory for the unfathomable depth and height of his theological mind; still others St. John for the wonderful beauty of his speech and the clarity of his presentation of the Faith. So the first were called Basilians, the se-

cond Gregorians, and the third Johannites. But, by the providence of God, this dispute was resolved to the benefit of the Church and the yet greater glory of the three saints.

The Bishop of Euchaita, John (June 14), had a vision in his sleep, in which each of these saints appeared individually to him in great glory and indescribable beauty, and then all three together. They then said to him, "We are one in God, as you see, and there is no dispute among us...neither is there among us a first or a second." The saints also advised Bishop John to compile a common feast for them and to set aside for them a day of common commemoration. The quarrel was settled as indicated by the wonderful vision; January 30 was set aside for the common commemoration of the three hierarchs. The Greeks regard this feast not only as a church festival but as their greatest national and scholastic holiday.

Troparion, Tone 1

Let all who love their words come together and honor with hymns/ the three luminaries of the light-creating Trinity:/ Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian,/ and renowned John of the golden speech,/ who have enlightened the world with the rays of their divine doctrines,/ and are mellifluous rivers of wisdom/ who have watered all creation with streams of divine knowledge;/ they ever intercede with the Trinity for us.

St. Symeon the Host of God and St. Anna the Prophetess

February 16 (February 3, Old Calendar)

St. Symeon, the Host of God, was a man not only of holy spirit but of great patience as well. He was a highly intelligent scholar and a deeply religious man, who knew from his interpretation of the Old Testament that the Messiah was to come. He prayed not only for deliverance, but for the opportunity to remain alive just long enough to cast his eyes on the Messiah. This was no small request made of the Lord, for it is quite certain, although estimates vary as to his actual age, that he was born many years before Christ. St. Symeon is estimated to have been at least 150 years old at the time of the Nativity, and only because God had given him those many years in answer to his earnest prayers that he be allowed to live to that great day.

St. Symeon was one of the famous Seventy, who were chosen to translate the Bible from Hebrew into Greek in the time of the Egyptian Pharaoh Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.). St. Symeon worked conscientiously, but when, translating the prophet Isaiah, he came to the prophecy: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," he was puzzled. He took a knife to scratch out the word "virgin" and substitute "young woman," and translate it thus into Greek. But at that moment an angel of God appeared to him and held him back from his intention, explaining to him that the prophecy was true and rightly expressed. And to confirm its veracity, the messenger from God said that he, Symeon, by the will of God, would not die until he had seen the Messiah born of a virgin. The righteous Symeon rejoiced at these heavenly tidings, left the prophecy unchanged and thanked God that He had found him worthy to live to see the Promised One.

When the Christ Child was brought into the Temple in Jerusalem by the Virgin Mary, the Spirit of God revealed this to Symeon, who was now a very old man with snow-white hair. He went quickly to the Temple and found there both the Virgin and Child, bathed in a light that

shone round their heads like a halo. The joyful elder took Christ in his arms and prayed to God, saying: "Lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, O Master, according to Thy word, for my eyes have seen Thy salvation" (Lk. 2:29-30). Soon after that, St. Symeon departed this life. This righteous elder is venerated as the protector of young children.

St. Anna the prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, also came to see the child, recognizing Him as the Messiah and making Him known to the people. St. Anna was then 84 years old.

Troparion, Tone 1

In the Temple thou didst embrace as an infant God the Word Who became flesh./ O glorious Elder Symeon, who didst hold God in thine arms./ And also as a prophetess the august Anna ascribed praise to Him./ We acclaim you as divine servants of Christ.

Kontakion, Tone 3

Let Symeon the Righteous and Anna the Prophetess,/ that godly pair, be praised together;/ well-pleasing to God,/ they became witnesses of the Incarnate Lord./ When they saw him as an infant, they worshipped Him together.

Holy and Great Martyr Theodore Stratilates

February 23 (February 8, Old Calendar)

Great Martyr Theodore Stratilates (meaning "The Commander") was born in Euchait (Marsivan in Asia Minor, presently Turkey) of an eminent family. He was well-schooled from birth in the military tradition, displaying excellence and aptitude for military science and tactics. Quickly rising through the ranks, he was only in his twenties when he assumed command of the garrison at Galatia. The Emperor Licinius soon recognized him as a brilliant general and an excellent peacetime administrator. Licinius decided to honor Theodore and to bestow on him the emperor's highest award at a pagan celebration to be held in the city of Nicomedia.

St. Theodore realized that he would not be able to participate fully in the ceremonies and that the time had come when he would have to declare and witness for his faith. He had only one thing in mind, and that was to declare Christ publicly among the many Christians in the city.

The emperor brought a number of gold idols that were set around the place of the pagan, but at the direction of St. Theodore, the golden images were broken into pieces and taken away to be distributed among the poor. When the emperor demanded to know who had perpetrated this outrage, St. Theodore presented himself as the culprit and declared himself a Christian. He denounced paganism as he had so many years ago when he accepted Christ, and now he was prepared to die for his Savior.

At the emperor's order, St. Theodore was flogged with more than 1,000 lashes on the back and stomach. He was then crucified and pierced through with arrows, and finally slain with the sword. During the whole of his torture, St. Theodore repeated unceasingly: "Glory to Thee, my God, glory to Thee!" He died and entered into the Kingdom of Christ in the year 319. He is regarded as the protector of soldiers. His wonderworking relics were taken from Euchaita to Constantinople and buried in the Church at Blachernae.

Troparion, Tone 4:

O trophy-bearer Theodore,/ by thy leadership thou wast a general of the heavenly King;/ armed with the weapons of faith/ thou didst annihilate hordes of demons and win the Athletes' contest./ With faith we call thee blessed.

Kontakion, Tone 2:

With the Word of God as a spear in thy hand,/ armed with faith and courage of soul,/ thou didst vanquish the enemy, Theodore, glory of martyrs./ With them pray to Christ our God for us all.

The Martyrs Valentina, Paula and Ennapha

February 23 (Feb 10 Old Calendar)

There is very sparse knowledge regarding these three martyrs. It is known that they suffered in Palestine for their faith in Christ in the year 308 at the time of Maximianus Valerius (308-313) from the regional ruler Phirmilianus. St. Ennapha was from the vicinity of Gaza, St. Valentina from Caesarea Palestine and St. Paula from the neighborhood of Caesarea. Valentina was brought into a pagan temple as a sacrificial victim. She threw a stone onto the sacrificial altar and turned her back on its blazing fire. For that she was beaten and beheaded. Similar sufferings were borne by Ennapha and Paula.

St. Alexis of Moscow

February 25 (February 12, Old Calendar)

The Most Holy Alexis, christened Elevation, the son of a Chernigov nobleman, Feodor Biakont, was born in Moscow and was received from the holy cupola (church) by count John Kalit. At 13 years of age, he was graced by a special calling from God. Once, as he strung his nets to catch birds he heard a voice: "Why do you catch birds Alexis? You should be a catcher of men!" The lad Elevation decided to dedicate himself to the service of God and entered into monasticism in the Moscow monastery of the Epiphany with the name of Alexis.

He lived in this monastery for 20 years and became known to the count and the metropolitan by his wisdom and spiritual deeds. He learned the Greek language to understand better the works of the Holy Church Fathers. Metropolitan Theognost, a Greek by birth, understood the need of a Russian helper in the administration of Metropolitan affairs, and his choice fell on Alexis.

For 12 years Alexis lived in the prelate's house as the Metropolitan's vicar. During the demise in health of Metropolitan Theognost, he was elevated in 1353 to the cathedra of the Bishop Vladimir. After the death of Theognost he was elected as its recipient.

Metropolitan Alexis superintended the Church at a precarious time for Russian rule. The authority of the Grand Duke of Moscow, John the Red, was weak. After his death in 1359, it was especially weak, for his heir was the eight year old Dmitri (who subsequently became a hero of

the Don region) and the Duke of Suzdal became the Grand Duke. Disregarding the conviction of the new Grand Duke, the Most Holy Alexis did not leave Moscow and tried by all means to confer the dignity of the Grand Duchy to the young Dmitri. He often advised Dmitri and pacified participating dukes, for whom he often had to make strict pastoral decisions. Besides which Metropolitan Alexis used the help and cooperation of his contemporary, the great God-pleaser, the Venerable Sergios, abbot of Radonezh, who, at the instruction of the Holy One, went to Nizhny Novgorod and Piazan in order to pacify the resident mutinous dukes.

Being concerned about the Church and the fatherland, the Most Holy Alexis traveled three times to Ord. The first time by custom at the beginning of his sanctification; and the second time at the summons of Khan Chanibek.

Troparion, Tone 4:

We glorify God with fitting praises/ as we celebrate the memory of the guardian of apostolic dogmas,/ the shepherd and teacher, the blessed and holy Hierarch Alexis:/ for God has given us His servant who pours forth healings like a gushing spring/ and is the praise and support of Moscow.

Kontakion, Tone 8

All you people who faithfully sing to Christ's divine, most holy Hierarch and new wonderworker Alexis,/ let us greet him with love as a great shepherd and minister, as a most wise teacher of Russia./ Let us who are gathered today in his memory joyously cry out in song:/ In thy boldness before God deliver us from affliction,/ that we may cry to thee: Rejoice, support of Moscow.

The Venerable Martinian, Sts. Zoia and Svetlana

February 26 (February 13, Old Calendar)

Near the end of the fourth century, a holy monk, St. Martinian, lived in Greece. At the age of 18, he retreated to a mountain in Cappadocia (now western Turkey), where he spent 25 years in fasting, vigils and prayer. In his youthful body there swelled the passions of the flesh, and his soul was perplexed by demonic temptation, but St. Martinian vanquished them by strict fasting, prayer and toil. A very beautiful, dissolute woman named Zoia came with the purpose of visiting him and tempting him to leave the monastic life and marry her. The saint was sorely tempted; to fight this temptation, he walked barefoot into a fire and stood until this temptation was destroyed in him.

Zoia was so impressed by the love and devotion of this hermit for God that she repented bitterly, and asked St. Martinian to pray for her. She went to the monastery of St. Paula in Bethlehem. She lived there in heroic asceticism as a hermit and anchorite. Repenting of all her sins, she received the gift of wonderworking from the Lord. Until the end of her life, St. Zoia abstained from wine, sustained herself on bread and water every other day, and slept on the ground.

St. Martinian withdrew to an uninhabited rocky island and lived there for several years under an open sky, receiving food from a boatman for whom the Venerable one braided baskets.

At the place of St. Martinian's venture, a young maiden, Svetlana (Photynia), was thrown by the waves onto the island after a shipwreck. Accepting the maiden on his island, St. Martinian, anticipating temptation, threw himself into the sea. With God's help he arrived at the southern part of Greece. After this, St. Martinian roamed for two years, and died peacefully in Athens in the year 422. St. Svetlana remained on the island, passed some six years in solitude and good deeds, and emulated St. Martinian's God-pleasing life. She also died peacefully.

The Holy and Great Martyr Theodore the Tyro

March 2 (February 17, Old Calendar)

In the town of Amasia in the district of Pontus, during the persecutions of the Emperor Maximian (286-305), Christians were compelled to reject Christ and bring sacrifice to the idols. Among them was the warrior Theodore, whose nickname, Tyro, means "neophyte," or "novice" in Latin. Theodore refused to do as he was bidden, and was cruelly tortured and then incarcerated. There, during his prayers, he was solaced by the wonderful apparition of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some time later he was taken from jail and tortured again, so that he would be forced to reject Christ. Finally, seeing that he would not submit, the administrator of the district condemned him to be burned at the stake. Without trepidation, St. Theodore mounted the pyre and gave up his soul to the Lord with prayer and praise. His body was buried in the town of Euchait (presently Marsivan, in Asia Minor, now Turkey). Later his relics were transferred to Constantinople into the Church bearing his name; his head rests in Gaeta, Italy.

Some 50 years after the death of St. Theodore, the emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363) tried to carry out a plan to sully the Christian Great Lent. He ordered the Constantinople diocese, the city commander, to sprinkle all food sold in the markets with blood from sacrifices to idols during the first week of Lent. St. Theodore appeared to Eudoxus, the Archbishop of Constantinople, in a vision at night. He and ordered Eudoxus to declare to the Christians that they should not buy the fouled provisions in the marketplace, but use kutia [cooked wheat with honey] as food. In memory of this event the Orthodox Church to this day commemorates the Great Martyr Theodore on the first Saturday of Great Lent. On the eve of Friday, after the post chancel prayer, a Te Deum to St. Theodore is served, which is followed by a blessing of the kutia.

Troparion, Tone 2:

Great are the achievements of faith! / In the fountain of flame as in refreshing water, / the holy Martyr Theodore rejoiced. / He was made a whole burnt offering in the fire / and was offered as bread to the Trinity. / By his prayers, O Christ our God, save our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 8:

Thou didst receive the Faith of Christ in thy heart as a breastplate / and trample upon the enemy hosts, O great Champion. / Thou hast been crowned with a heavenly, eternal crown, for thou art invincible.

St. Leo of Rome

March 3 (February 18, Old Calendar)

St. Leo the First was Pope of Rome during the fifth century. Born in Italy of devout parents, he was first archdeacon under Pope Sixtus the Third, and elected to the papal throne against his will after Sixtus's death. When Attila the Hun drew near to Rome, preparing to ravage and burn the city, St. Leo went out to him in his episcopal vestments, tamed the wrath of the Hun leader and averted the fall of Rome. Attila was willing to be guided by St. Leo because he saw his holiness, and because he had a vision of the Apostles Peter and Paul standing behind St. Leo, threatening him with a flaming sword.

St. Leo not only saved Rome, but contributed greatly to the safeguarding of Orthodoxy against the heresy of Eutyches and Dioscorus. This heresy consisted in the merging of the divine and human natures of Christ into one, and, following from this, the denial of the existence of two wills in the Person of our Lord and Savior. This led to the summoning of the Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon, at which St. Leo's Epistle was read. St. Leo, after writing this epistle, had placed it on the tomb of St. Peter, whereupon it had been corrected by St. Peter. As death drew near, he spent forty days in fasting and prayer by the tomb of the Apostle Peter, begging him to tell him if his sins were forgiven. The apostle appeared to him and assured him that they were, except of his sins in ordaining priests (from which it is seen how grave a sin it is to ordain an unworthy man). The saint returned to prayer until he was told that these also were wiped out. Then he gave his soul to the Lord in peace. St. Leo entered into rest in the year 461.

Troparion, Tone 3:

Thou wast the Church's instrument/ in strengthening the Church's teaching of true doctrine;/ thou didst shine forth from the West like a sun/ and didst dispel the heretics' error./ O righteous Leo, entreat Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

Kontakion, Tone 3:

From the throne of thy priesthood, O glorious one,/ thou didst stop the mouths of the spiritual lions;/ thou didst illumine thy flock with the light of the knowledge of God/ and with the inspired doctrines of the Holy Trinity./ Thou art glorified as a divine initiate of the grace of God.

The Venerable Marina and Kira

March 13 (February 28, Old Calendar)

Sts. Marina and Kira, kindred sisters, came from the town of Beri in Syria where they lived in the fifth century. Disdaining the eminence of their origin, they departed to the outskirts of the city and took shelter in a cave in order to live a monastic life. They lived here for forty years, residing in silence, strict fasting and perpetual prayer. In order to perform a great labor, they wore heavy fetters under their clothing. They left their self-exile only once, in order to bow to the Lord's tomb in Jerusalem. They died peacefully around the year 450, leaving a legacy as champions of good deeds.

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