

# Bible Bowl Text – December 5, 2009

## St. Matthew 6

<sup>1</sup> “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. <sup>2</sup> Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. <sup>3</sup> But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly. <sup>5</sup> “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. <sup>6</sup> But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. <sup>7</sup> And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup> “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. <sup>9</sup> In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. <sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. <sup>14</sup> “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. <sup>16</sup> “Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. <sup>17</sup> But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. <sup>19</sup> “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. <sup>22</sup> “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup> But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great *is* that darkness! <sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. <sup>25</sup> “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your

life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup> Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? <sup>28</sup> “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; <sup>29</sup> and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.

### **Galatians 5:1 through 6:2**

<sup>1</sup> Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. <sup>2</sup> Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. <sup>3</sup> And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. <sup>4</sup> You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. <sup>5</sup> For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. <sup>6</sup> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. <sup>7</sup> You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? <sup>8</sup> This persuasion does not *come* from Him who calls you. <sup>9</sup> A little leaven leavens the whole lump. <sup>10</sup> I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. <sup>11</sup> And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. <sup>12</sup> I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off! <sup>13</sup> For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. <sup>14</sup> For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” <sup>15</sup> But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! <sup>16</sup> I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. <sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, <sup>21</sup> envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time

past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.<sup>24</sup> And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.<sup>25</sup> If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.<sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. [Chapter 6] <sup>1</sup> Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

### **Ephesians 6**

<sup>1</sup> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: <sup>3</sup> "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

<sup>4</sup> And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. <sup>5</sup> Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; <sup>6</sup> not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, <sup>7</sup> with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, <sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. <sup>9</sup> And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him. <sup>10</sup> Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup> above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. <sup>17</sup> And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; <sup>18</sup> praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— <sup>19</sup> and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. <sup>21</sup> But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; <sup>22</sup> whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts.

<sup>23</sup> Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>  
Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

### Hebrews 11

<sup>1</sup> Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. <sup>2</sup> For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony. <sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. <sup>4</sup> By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. <sup>5</sup> By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "*and was not found, because God had taken him*" for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. <sup>6</sup> But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. <sup>7</sup> By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. <sup>8</sup> By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup> By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; <sup>10</sup> for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God. <sup>11</sup> By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. <sup>12</sup> Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as *many* as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. <sup>13</sup> These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. <sup>14</sup> For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. <sup>15</sup> And truly if they had called to mind that *country* from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly *country*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. <sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, <sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, "*In Isaac your seed shall be called,*" <sup>19</sup> concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. <sup>20</sup> By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. <sup>21</sup> By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff. <sup>22</sup> By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. <sup>23</sup> By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw *he was* a beautiful child; and

they were not afraid of the king's command. <sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, <sup>25</sup> choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, <sup>26</sup> esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. <sup>27</sup> By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. <sup>28</sup> By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. <sup>29</sup> By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry *land*, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned. <sup>30</sup> By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. <sup>31</sup> By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace. <sup>32</sup> And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: <sup>33</sup> who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. <sup>35</sup> Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. <sup>36</sup> Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup> They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— <sup>38</sup> of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in dens and caves of the earth*. <sup>39</sup> And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, <sup>40</sup> God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

### **Venerable Moses the Black of Scete**

**Commemorated on August 28**

**(edited from <http://www.oca.org/FSlives.asp>)**

Saint Moses Murin the Black lived during the fourth century in Egypt. He was an Ethiopian, and he was black of skin and therefore called "Murin" (meaning "like an Ethiopian"). In his youth he was the slave of an important man, but after he committed a murder, his master banished him, and he joined a band of robbers.

Because of his bad character and great physical strength they chose him as their leader. Moses and his band of brigands did many evil deeds, both murders and robberies. People were afraid at the mere mention of his name.

Moses the brigand spent several years leading a sinful life, but through the great mercy of God he repented, left his band of robbers and went to one of the desert monasteries. Here he wept for a long time, begging to be admitted as one of the brethren. The monks were not convinced of the sincerity of his repentance, but the former robber would not be driven away nor

silenced. He continued to ask that they accept him.

St Moses was completely obedient to the igumen [the igumen is the abbot, that is, the head of the monastery] and the brethren, and he poured forth many tears of sorrow for his sinful life. After a certain while St Moses withdrew to a solitary cell, where he spent the time in prayer and the strictest fasting in a very austere lifestyle.

Once, four of the robbers of his former band descended upon the cell of St Moses. He had lost none of his great physical strength, so he tied them all up. Throwing them over his shoulder, he brought them to the monastery, where he asked the Elders what to do with them. The Elders ordered that they be set free. The robbers, learning that they had chanced upon their former ringleader, and that he had dealt kindly with them, followed his example: they repented and became monks. Later, when the rest of the band of robbers heard about the repentance of St Moses, then they also gave up their thievery and became fervent monks.

St Moses was not quickly freed from the passions. He went often to the igumen, Abba Isidore, seeking advice on how to be delivered from the passions of profligacy. Being experienced in the spiritual struggle, the Elder taught him never to eat too much food, to remain partly hungry while observing the strictest moderation. But the passions did not cease to trouble St Moses in his dreams.

Then Abba Isidore taught him the all-night vigil. The monk stood the whole night at prayer, so he would not fall asleep. From his prolonged struggles St Moses fell into despondency, and when there arose thoughts about leaving his solitary cell, Abba Isidore instead strengthened the resolve of his disciple.

In a vision he showed him many demons in the west, prepared for battle, and in the east a still greater quantity of holy angels, also ready for fighting. Abba Isidore explained to St Moses that the power of the angels would prevail over the power of the demons, and in the long struggle with the passions it was necessary for him to become completely cleansed of his former sins.

St Moses undertook a new effort. Making the rounds by night of the wilderness cells, he carried water from the well to each brother. He did this especially for the Elders, who lived far from the well and who were not easily able to carry their own water. Once, kneeling over the well, St Moses felt a powerful blow upon his back and he fell down at the well like one dead, laying there in that position until dawn. Thus did the devils take revenge upon the monk for his victory over them. In the morning the brethren carried him to his cell, and he lay there a whole year crippled. Having recovered, the monk with firm resolve confessed to the igumen, that he would continue to live in asceticism. But the Lord Himself put limits to this struggle of many years: Abba Isidore blessed his disciple and said to him that the passions had already gone from him. The Elder commanded him to receive the Holy Mysteries, and to go to his own cell in peace. From that time, St Moses received from the Lord power over demons.

Accounts about his exploits spread among the monks and even beyond the bounds of the wilderness. The governor of the land wanted to see the saint. When he heard of this, St Moses decided to hide from any visitors, and he departed [from] his own cell. Along the way he met servants of the governor, who asked him how to get to the cell of the desert-dweller Moses. The monk answered them: "Go no farther to see this false and unworthy monk." The servants returned to the monastery where the governor was waiting, and they told him the words of the Elder they had chanced to meet. The brethren, hearing a description of the Elder's appearance, told them that they had encountered St Moses himself.

After many years of monastic exploits, St Moses was ordained deacon. The bishop clothed him in white vestments and said, "Now Abba Moses is entirely white!" The saint replied, "Only outwardly, for God knows that I am still dark within."

Through humility, the saint believed himself unworthy of the office of deacon. Once, the bishop decided to test him and he bade the clergy to drive him out of the altar, reviling him as an unworthy Ethiopian. In all humility, the monk accepted the abuse. Having put him to the test, the bishop then ordained St Moses to be presbyter. St Moses labored for fifteen years in this rank, and gathered around himself 75 disciples.

When the saint reached age 75, he warned his monks that soon brigands would descend upon the skete and murder all that were there. The saint blessed his monks to leave, in order to avoid violent death. His disciples began to beseech the monk to leave with them, but he replied: "For many years already I have awaited the time when the words which my Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, should be fulfilled: "All who take up the sword, shall perish by the sword" (Mt. 26: 52). After this, seven of the brethren remained with the monk, and one of them hid nearby during the attack of the robbers. The robbers killed St Moses and the six monks who remained with him. Their death occurred in about the year 400.

**Venerable Dionysius of Aegina**  
**Commemorated on December 17**  
(from <http://www.oca.org/FSlives.asp>)

Saint Dionysius of Zakynthos, the Bishop of Aegina was born in 1547 on the island of Zakynthos. Though born into a noble family, he was determined to flee the world and set his mind upon heavenly things. He entered the monastery of Strophada, and after the prescribed time, he was clothed in the angelic schema by the abbot. Though young in years, he surpassed many of his elders in virtue, and was found worthy of ordination to the holy priesthood.

Although he protested his unworthiness, St Dionysius was consecrated Bishop of Aegina. In that office he never ceased to teach and admonish his flock, and many were drawn to him in order to profit from his wisdom. He feared the praise of men, lest he should fall into the sin of vainglory, so he resigned his See and returned to Zakynthos.

In 1579 the diocese of Zakynthos was widowed (when a bishop dies, his diocese is described as "widowed"), and Dionysius agreed to care for it until a new bishop could be elected. Then he fled from the worldly life which gave him no peace, and went to the Monastery of the Most Holy Theotokos Anaphonitria, twenty miles from the main village.

A certain stranger murdered the saint's brother Constantine, an illustrious nobleman. Fearing his victim's relatives, the stranger, by chance or by God's will, sought refuge in the monastery where St Dionysius was the abbot. When the saint asked the fugitive why he was so frightened, he confessed his sin and revealed the name of the man he had murdered, asking to be protected from the family's vengeance. St Dionysius wept for his only brother, as was natural. Then he comforted the murderer and hid him, showing him great compassion and love.

Soon the saint's relatives came to the monastery with a group of armed men and told him what had happened. He pretended to know nothing about it. After weeping with them and trying to console them, he sent them off in the wrong direction. Then he told the murderer that he was the brother of the man he had killed. He admonished him as a father, and brought him to repentance. After forgiving him, St Dionysius brought him down to the shore and helped him to escape to another place in order to save his life. Because of the saint's Christ-like virtue, he was granted the gift of working miracles.

Having passed his life in holiness, St Dionysius reached a great age, then departed to the Lord on December 17, 1624. Not only are the saint's relics incorrupt, but he is also one of Greece's "walking saints" (St Gerasimus and St Spyridon are the others). He is said to leave his reliquary and walk about performing miracles for those who seek his aid. In fact, the soles of his slippers wear out and must be replaced with a new pair from time to time. The old slippers are cut up, and the pieces are distributed to pilgrims. On August 24, we celebrate the Transfer of his Holy Relics. Through the prayers of Saint Dionysius, may Christ our God have mercy upon us and save us.

**Nun-Martyr Eugenia of Rome**  
**Commemorated on December 24**  
(from <http://www.oca.org/FSlives.asp>)

The Holy Martyr Eugenia, was a Roman by birth. She lived at Alexandria, where her father Philip was sent by the emperor Commodus (180-192) to be Prefect of Egypt. Eugenia received a fine upbringing and was noted for her beauty and good disposition. Many illustrious youths sought her hand, but she did not wish to marry anyone, for she was determined to preserve her virginity.

Providentially, she became acquainted with the Epistles of the Apostle Paul. She yearned with all her soul to become a Christian, but kept this a secret from her parents. At that time, Christians were banished from Alexandria by the command of the emperor. Wishing to learn more about Christian teachings, she asked permission to visit one of the family estates outside

the city, supposedly to enjoy the countryside. She left in the company of her two servants Protus and Hyacinthus, dressed in men's clothes. She and her companions were baptized at a certain monastery by Bishop Elias (July 14), who learned about her in a vision. He blessed her to pursue asceticism at the monastery disguised as the monk Eugene.

By her ascetic labors, St Eugenia acquired the gift of healing. Once, a rich young woman named Melanthia turned to her for help. Seeing "Eugene," this woman burned with an impure passion, and when she was spurned, she falsely accused the saint of attempted rape. St Eugenia came to trial before the Prefect of Egypt (her father), and she was forced to reveal her secret. Her parents and brothers rejoiced to find the one for whom they had long grieved.

After a while they all accepted holy Baptism. But Philip, after being denounced by pagans, was dismissed from his post. The Alexandrian Christians chose him as their bishop. The new Prefect, fearing the wrath of the people, did not dare to execute Philip openly, but sent assassins to kill him. They inflicted wounds upon St Philip while he was praying, from which he died three days later.

St Claudia went to Rome with her sons, daughter, and her servants. There St Eugenia continued with monastic life, and brought many young women to Christ. Claudia built a wanderers' hostel and aided the poor. After several peaceful years, the emperor Galienus (260-268) intensified the persecution against Christians, and many of them found refuge with Sts Claudia and Eugenia.

Basilla, an orphaned Roman girl of imperial lineage, heard about the Christians and St Eugenia. She sent a trusted servant to the saint asking her to write her a letter explaining Christian teachings. St Eugenia sent her friends and co-ascetics, Protus and Hyacinthus, who enlightened Basilla, and she accepted holy Baptism.

Basilla's servant then told her fiancé Pompey that his betrothed had become a Christian. Pompey then complained to the emperor against the Christians for preaching celibacy and denouncing idolatry. Basilla refused to enter into marriage with Pompey, and so they killed her with a sword.

They dragged Sts Protus and Hyacinthus into a temple to make them sacrifice to the idols, but just as they entered, the idol fell down and was shattered. The holy Martyrs Protus and Hyacinthus were beheaded. They also brought St Eugenia to the temple of Diana by force, but she had not even entered it, when the pagan temple collapsed with its idol.

They threw the holy martyr into the Tiber with a stone about her neck, but the stone became untied and she remained unharmed. She also remained unscathed in the fire. Then they cast her into a pit, where she remained for ten days. During this time the Savior Himself appeared to her and said that she would enter into the heavenly Kingdom on the day He was born. When this radiant Feast came, the executioner put her to death with a sword. After her death, St Eugenia appeared to her mother to tell her beforehand the day of her own death.

**St Irene Chrysovalantou**  
**Commemorated on July 28**  
(from <http://www.oca.org/FSlives.asp>)

Saint Irene was the daughter of a wealthy family from Cappadocia, and was born in the ninth century.

After the death of her husband Theophilus, the empress Theodora ruled the Byzantine Empire as regent for her young son Michael. St Theodora (February 11) helped to defeat the iconoclast heresy, and to restore the holy icons. We commemorate this Triumph of Orthodoxy on the first Sunday of Great Lent.

When Michael was twelve years of age, St Theodora sent messengers throughout the Empire to find a suitably virtuous and refined girl to be his wife. St Irene was chosen, and she agreed to the marriage. While passing Mt. Olympus in Asia Minor, Irene asked to stop so she could receive the blessing of St Joannicius (November 4), who lived on the mountain. The saint, who showed himself only to the most worthy pilgrims, foresaw the arrival of St Irene, and also her future life.

The holy ascetic welcomed her and told her to proceed to Constantinople, where the women's monastery of Chrysovalantou had need of her. Amazed at his clairvoyance, Irene fell to the ground and asked St Joannicius for his blessing. After blessing her and giving her spiritual counsel, he sent her on her way.

When the party arrived in Constantinople, Irene's relatives met her with great ceremony. Since "the steps of a man are rightly ordered by the Lord" (Ps. 36/37:23), God arranged for Michael to marry another girl a few days before, so that Irene might be free to become a bride of Christ. Far from being disappointed, Irene rejoiced at this turn of events.

Remembering the words of St Joannicius, Irene visited the Monastery of Chrysovalantou. She was so impressed by the nuns and their way of life that she freed her slaves and distributed her wealth to the poor. She exchanged her fine clothing for the simple garb of a nun, and served the sisters with great humility and obedience. The abbess was impressed with the way that Irene performed the most menial and disagreeable tasks without complaint.

St Irene often read the Lives of the Saints in her cell, imitating their virtues to the best of her ability. She often stood in prayer all night with her hands raised like Moses on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 17:11-13). St Irene spent the next few years in spiritual struggles defeating the assaults of the demons, and bringing forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

When the abbess sensed the approach of death, she told the other nuns that they should not accept anyone but Irene as the new abbess. Irene was not told of the abbess's instructions, and when she died the community sent representatives to go and seek the advice of the patriarch, St Methodius (June 14). He asked them whom they wanted as their superior. They replied that

they believed he would be guided by the Holy Spirit. Without knowing of the late abbess's instructions to the nuns, he asked if there was a humble nun by the name of Irene in their monastery. If so, he said, they should choose her. The nuns rejoiced and gave thanks to God. St Methodius elevated Irene to the rank of abbess and advised her how to guide those in her charge.

Returning to the monastery, Irene prayed that God would help her to care for those under her, and redoubled her own spiritual efforts. She displayed great wisdom in leading the nuns, and received many revelations from God to assist her in carrying out her duties. She also asked for the gift of clairvoyance so that she would know what trials awaited her nuns. Thus, she was in a better position to give them the proper advice. She never used this knowledge to embarrass others, but only to correct their confessions in a way which let them know that she possessed certain spiritual gifts.

Although St Irene performed many miracles during her life, let us mention only one. On great Feasts it was her habit to keep vigil in the monastery courtyard under the starry skies. Once, a nun who was unable to sleep left her cell and went into the courtyard. There she saw Abbess Irene levitating a few feet above the ground, completely absorbed in prayer. The astonished nun also noticed that two cypress trees had bowed their heads to the ground, as if in homage. When she finished praying, Irene blessed the trees and they returned to their upright position.

Afraid that this might be a temptation from the demons, the nun returned the next night to see if she had been mistaken. Again she saw Irene levitating as she prayed, and the cypress trees bowing down. The nun tied handkerchiefs to the tops of the two trees before they went back to their places. When the other sisters saw the handkerchiefs atop the trees, they began to wonder who had put them there. Then the nun who had witnessed these strange events revealed to the others what she had seen. When St Irene learned that the nun had witnessed the miracle and told the others, she was very upset. She warned them not to speak of it to anyone until after her death.

St Irene observed the Feast of St Basil (January 1) with great devotion, since he also came from Cappadocia. One year, after celebrating the feast, St Irene heard a voice during the night telling her to welcome the sailor who would come to the door the next day. She was told to rejoice and eat the fruit which the sailor would bring her. During Matins, a sailor did come to the door and remained in church until after Liturgy. He told her that he had come from Patmos, where he boarded a ship. As the ship set sail, he noticed an old man on the shore calling for them to stop. In spite of a good wind, the ship came to a sudden halt. Then the old man walked across the water and entered the ship. He gave the sailor three apples which God was sending to the patriarch "from His beloved disciple John." Then the old man gave the sailor three more apples for the abbess of Chrysovalantou. He told the sailor that if Irene ate the apples, all that her soul desired would be granted, "for this gift comes from John in Paradise."

St Irene fasted for a week, giving thanks to God for this wonderful gift. For forty days, she ate small pieces of the first apple every day. During this time she had nothing else to eat or drink. On Holy Thursday, she told the nuns to receive the Holy Mysteries, then gave each one a piece of the second apple. They noticed an unusual sweetness, and felt as if their very souls were being nourished.

An angel informed St Irene that she would be called to the Lord on the day after St Panteleimon's feast. The monastery's feast day fell on July 26, so St Irene prepared by fasting for a week beforehand. She took only a little water and small pieces of the third apple sent to her by St John. The whole monastery was filled with a heavenly fragrance, and all discord disappeared.

On July 28, St Irene called the nuns together in order to bid them farewell. She also told them to select Sister Mary as her successor, for she would keep them on the narrow way which leads to life (Matthew 7:14). After entreating God to protect her flock from the power of the devil, she smiled when she saw the angels who had been sent to receive her soul. Then she closed her eyes and surrendered her soul to God.

St Irene was more than 101 years old when she died, yet her face appeared young and beautiful. A great crowd of people came for her funeral, and many miracles took place at her tomb.

In some parishes it is customary to bless apples on the feast of St Irene Chrysovalantou.

**From Fr. Thomas Hopko, "The Orthodox Faith: An Elementary Handbook on  
the Orthodox Church--Volume 3: Bible and Church History--The Fifth Century"**

**Inner Struggles**

At the beginning of the fifth century when Alexandria and Constantinople were feuding over their respective positions in the Church and in the empire, Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople, made known his refusal to honor Mary, Christ's mother, with the traditional title of Theotokos. He claimed that the one born from Mary is merely the "man" in whom the eternal Logos of God came to dwell, but not the Logos Himself. Thus, Mary could not properly be called Theotokos, which means the one who gave birth to God.

Saint Cyril, the bishop of Alexandria (d.444), forcefully rejected the teaching of Nestorius, claiming that it is proper to call Mary Theotokos since the one born from her, "according to the flesh," is none other than the divine Logos of God. The only-begotten Son of God was "begotten of the Father before all ages" coming down from Heaven for man's salvation, being born in the flesh, and becoming man from the Virgin. Thus, the Son of God and the Son of Mary is one and the same Son.

### **The Third Ecumenical Council**

Nestorius and his followers refused to yield to Saint Cyril's appeals for repentance. Thus, in 431, in the city of Ephesus, a small group of bishops under Saint Cyril's direct control held a council to affirm the Alexandrian doctrine and to reject that of Nestorius. The decisions of this meeting were formally recognized in 433 by the Eastern bishops who had not been present. The Council of 431 subsequently became known as the Third Ecumenical Council.

### **The Robber Council**

Again the decisions of this council were not immediately accepted. Controversy over the issue in question continued to rage. Saint Cyril and the majority of the Eastern bishops - who were inclined to oppose his teaching because of their fear that it did not adequately express the genuine humanity of Jesus - were able to come to a common understanding. After his death, however, Cyril's fanatical followers again broke with the bishops of Constantinople and the East. In 449, a large number of bishops who considered themselves faithful to Saint Cyril's position, held another council in Ephesus. This council came to be known as the latrocinium or robber council. It formulated a doctrine about the person and nature of Christ which so stressed the Lord's divinity that His humanity all but completely disappeared. Thus, confusion and division continued to exist among Christians.

### **The Fourth Ecumenical Council**

In 451, another council was called, this time in the city of Chalcedon, to solve the problem of the doctrine of Christ. This council, now recognized in the Church as the Fourth Ecumenical Council, succeeded in defending the teaching of Saint Cyril and the Ephesian Council of 431. It also satisfied the demands of the Eastern bishops that the genuine humanity of Jesus would be clearly confessed. In its definition, the Council of Chalcedon closely followed the teaching, formulated in a letter, of Pope Saint Leo of Rome.

The Chalcedonian definition states that Jesus Christ is indeed the Logos incarnate, the very Son of God "born of the Father before all ages." It affirms that the Virgin Mary is truly Theotokos since the one born from her "according to the flesh" in Bethlehem, is the uncreated, divine Son of God, one of the Holy Trinity. In His human birth, the Council declared, the Word of God took to Himself the whole of humanity, becoming a real man in every way, but without sin. Thus, according to the Chalcedonian definition, Jesus of Nazareth is one person or hypostasis in two natures - human and divine. He is fully human. He is fully divine. He is perfect God and perfect man. As God, He is "of one essence" (homoousios) with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. As man, He is "of one essence" (homoousios) with all human beings.

The union of divinity and humanity in Christ is called the hypostatic union. This expression means that in the one, unique person of Christ, divinity and humanity are united in such a way that they are neither mixed together and confused, nor separated and divided. Christ is one person Who is both human and divine. The Son of God and the Son of Mary is one and the same person.

### **The Monophysites**

The decision of the Council of Chalcedon was not accepted by the extreme disciples of Saint Cyril of Alexandria, nor by those who came to be associated with them. These Christians, called monophysites, rejected the Chalcedonian Council on the basis that the council spoke of two natures, thus rejecting the old formula of Saint Cyril which claimed that in His incarnation, Christ has but one nature. The supporters of the Chalcedonian decision claimed and still claim that though their words are different from those of the holy father, their doctrine is exactly the same and is simply expressed with greater precision. The disagreement was never settled, however, and although many attempts at reunion were made in the fifth and sixth centuries - and again in recent years - the dissenters from the Chalcedonian decision remain separated from the Orthodox Church.

Today, the so-called Monophysite Christians are in the Coptic Church of Egypt, the Ethiopian Church, the Syrian Jacobite Church, the Syrian Church of India, and the Armenian Church. These churches are often called the Lesser Eastern Churches or the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

### **The Councils**

The Third and Fourth Ecumenical Councils made a number of canons of a disciplinary and practical nature. The Council of Ephesus forbade the composition of a "different faith" from that of the first two councils (Canon 7). This canon has been used by the Orthodox in opposition to the addition of the word filioque to the Creed as it came to be used in the Western Churches. The Council of Chalcedon gave to Constantinople, the New Rome, "equal privileges with the old imperial Rome" because the new capital city was "honored with the emperor and the senate" (Canon 28).

### **The West**

The fifth century witnessed the decline of the Christian empire in the West with the fall of Rome to the barbarians. The inception of the Western dark ages followed quickly after the death of a man whose voluminous and highly debated writings exercised the greatest single influence in Western Christianity, both Roman and Reformed: Augustine, the bishop of Hippo (d.430).

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## **Humans and Animals in the Kingdom**

by Robert Flanagan

(From [Jacob's Well](#), Newspaper of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey, Orthodox Church in America, Spring/Summer 1997)

"(The saint's) consideration extends even to animals and to things, because in every creature he sees a gift of God's love, and does not wish to wound that love by treating His gifts with negligence or indifference." - Fr Dimitru Staniloae (Prayer and Holiness)

A story is told of a nineteenth century Orthodox nun in Russia. Her small garden had been ravaged by animals. "What should I be frightened of? Of wild beasts?...." She talked to (the) animals, and they began not to bother her vegetables". Similar stories are told of St Seraphim who made friends with a bear, and of other saints of the traditionally Orthodox lands. For this article we will be taking our stories from lands not thought of as traditionally Orthodox -- Britain, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, the countries of the Celtic peoples, which, until the 11th century were part of the unified Orthodox Catholic Church and whose saints and spiritual life have much to offer the contemporary world.

It is characteristic of the saints of the Celtic lands that they saw all of reality as a single unity, the wholeness of which had been torn asunder by the sin of Adam, and was restored by the saving act of Christ. In their lives they embodied the restoration of wholeness in creation, whether by communication with angels and spirits, or by kinship with all of the natural world.

This characteristic of the Celtic saints is fully Orthodox in character. In his great treatise "On the Incarnation" St Athanasius says: "(God) provided the work of creation also as a means by which the Maker might be known....Three ways thus lay open to them, by which they might obtain the knowledge of God. (First), they could look up to the immensity of heaven, and by pondering the harmony of creation come to know its Ruler, the Word of the Father."

St Athanasius goes on to say that this way was not sufficient, that "men, bowed down by the pleasures of the moment and by the frauds and illusions of the evil spirits, did not lift up their heads towards the truth." Even though this were the case, the natural world, seen in the light of Christ, remains a way to know God, that is, a way of salvation.

Included in the natural world, of course, is the animal kingdom. Animals are familiar to us as pets and in zoos, and can be provokers of fear when met in the wild. We have wildly different reactions to them depending on where we meet them. This is definitely a characteristic of "this world", the place where the evil one, the spirit of division, holds court. It is his victory when fear rises up in us when a mouse runs across the floor, when a bat flies low over our heads at night, or when a mosquito bites us.

There is a story told of St Kevin of Glendalough. Standing at prayer in a traditional Celtic monastic position with his arms outstretched in the form of a cross, a blackbird came and built a nest and laid her eggs in it. In order not to disturb the eggs, St Kevin stayed in the position until the eggs were hatched. At one point an angel came to Kevin and ordered him to stop the penance. The saint replied, "It is no great thing for me to bear this pain of holding my hand under the blackbird for the sake of heaven's king." It is this oneness with the created order, God's created order, that shines forth in many stories told of the Celtic saints. It is this same oneness that shines in the story of the Russian nun mentioned at the beginning of this essay.

There is more than this simple cooperation with creation however. There is also the harmony that the animals themselves bring to the human sphere. St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne engaged in another common Celtic monastic practice, that of praying in water up to the armpits, often for long periods of time. It is said that one day another monk went out to see exactly what St Cuthbert did. After watching him for a long time in the water, the monk saw St Cuthbert come out and lie on the shore, at which time two seals came out of the water and breathed on his feet and warmed his body with theirs.

We have a sign which marks the beginning of the restoration of unity in the entire fallen creation. This is the sojourn of Christ in the desert: "He was with the wild beasts, and the angels served Him" (Mk 1:13). The heavenly and earthly creatures destined to become the new creation in the God-Man Jesus Christ are assembled around Him. There is a pointed reference to this restoration in the life of St Isaac of Syria. He wrote that:

The humble man approaches wild animals, and the moment they catch sight of him their ferocity is tamed. They come up and cling to him as their Master, wagging their tails and licking his hands and feet. They scent as coming from him the same fragrance that came from Adam before the transgression, the time when they were gathered together before him and he gave them names in Paradise. This scent was taken away from us, but Christ has renewed it and given it back to us at his coming. It is this which has sweetened the fragrance of humanity.

In other words, the state of likeness to God in Christ to which he had risen enabled him to be with the wild beasts just as Adam was in his naming of them.

This may be the reason why pets are so important to humans. It is a sign of the new creation, of the restoration of kinship between two different parts of creation. With one or two (or more!) animals in the household, it is an icon of both Paradise and of the kingdom of God as each of us are called to name our animals as Adam did, and live in communion with them without fear. This is a way in which it can be said that our pets smell in us the fragrance, or, one might say, the perfume, of Adam before the fall. . . .

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