

Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapter 21

¹ Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose *them* and bring *them* to Me. ³ And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.” ⁴ All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ⁵ “*Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.’*” ⁶ So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set *Him* on them. ⁸ And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread *them* on the road. ⁹ Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!*’ Hosanna in the highest!” ¹⁰ And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹ So the multitudes said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.” ¹² Then Jesus went into the temple of God^l and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. ¹³ And He said to them, “It is written, ‘*My house shall be called a house of prayer,*’ but you have made it a ‘*den of thieves.*’” ¹⁴ Then *the blind* and *the lame* came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant ¹⁶ and said to Him, “Do You hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read, ‘*Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise?*’” ¹⁷ Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there. ¹⁸ Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. ¹⁹ And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again.” Immediately the fig tree withered away. ²⁰ And when the disciples saw *it*, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither away so soon?” ²¹ So Jesus answered and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done. ²² And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” ²³ Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?” ²⁴ But Jesus answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: ²⁵ The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?” And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ ²⁶ But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.” ²⁷ So they answered Jesus and said, “We do not know.” And He said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.” ²⁸ “But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’ ²⁹ He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went. ³⁰ Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of *his* father?” They said to Him, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw *it*, you did not afterward relent and believe him. ³³ “Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. ³⁴ Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. ³⁵ And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other servants, more than

the first, and they did likewise to them.³⁷ Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'³⁸ But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.'³⁹ So they took him and cast *him* out of the vineyard and killed *him*.⁴⁰ "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?"⁴¹ They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease *his* vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."⁴² Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: *'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'*?"⁴³ "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it."⁴⁴ And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."⁴⁵ Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them.⁴⁶ But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.

Gospel of St. Luke, Chapter 10

1 After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. **2** Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. **3** Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. **4** Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. **5** But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' **6** And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. **7** And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. **8** Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. **9** And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' **10** But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, **11** 'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.' **12** But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city. **13** "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. **14** But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. **15** And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades. **16** He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me." **17** Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." **18** And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. **19** Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. **20** Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." **21** In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. **22** All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." **23** Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; **24** for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it." **25** And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" **26** He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" **27** So he answered and said, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'" **28** And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." **29** But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is

my neighbor?" **30** Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. **31** Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. **32** Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. **33** But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. **34** So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. **35** On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' **36** So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" **37** And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." **38** Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. **39** And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. **40** But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." **41** And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. **42** But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

Romans Chapter 12

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. **2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. **3** For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. **4** For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, **5** so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. **6** Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; **7** or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; **8** he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. **9** Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. **10** Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; **11** not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; **12** rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; **13** distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. **14** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. **15** Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. **16** Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. **17** Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. **18** If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. **19** Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. **20** Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

I Corinthians Chapter 6

1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? **2** Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? **3** Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? **4** If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the

church to judge? **5** I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? **6** But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! **7** Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? **8** No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! **9** Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, **10** nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. **11** And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. **12** All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. **13** Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. **14** And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. **15** Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! **16** Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." **17** But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. **18** Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. **19** Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? **20** For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

I Corinthians Chapter 13

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. **2** And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. **3** And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. **4** Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; **5** does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; **6** does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; **7** bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. **8** Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. **9** For we know in part and we prophesy in part. **10** But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. **11** When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. **12** For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. **13** And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Martyr Mamas of Caesarea in Cappadocia

Commemorated on September 2

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

The Holy Great Martyr Mamas was born in Paphlagonia, Asia Minor in the third century of pious and illustrious parents, the Christians Theodotus and Rufina. The parents of the saint were arrested by the pagans for their open confession of their faith and locked up in prison in Caesarea in Cappadocia.

Knowing his own bodily weakness, Theodotus prayed that the Lord would take him before being subjected to tortures. The Lord heard his prayer and he died in prison. St Rufina died also after him, after giving birth to a premature son. She entrusted him to God, beseeching Him to be the Protector and Defender of the orphaned infant.

God heard the dying prayer of St Rufina: a rich Christian widow named Ammia reverently buried the bodies of Sts Theodotus and Rufina, and she took the boy into her own home and raised him as her own son. St Mamas grew up in the Christian Faith. His foster mother concerned herself with the developing of his natural abilities, and early on she sent him off to study his grammar.

The boy learned easily and willingly. He was not of an age of mature judgment but distinguished himself by maturity of mind and of heart. By means of prudent conversations and personal example young Mamas converted many of his own peers to Christianity.

The governor, Democritus, was informed of this, and the fifteen-year-old Mamas was arrested and brought to trial. In deference to his illustrious parentage, Democritus decided not to subject him to torture, but instead sent him off to the emperor Aurelian (270-275). The emperor tried at first kindly, but then with threats to turn St Mamas back to the pagan faith, but all in vain. The saint bravely confessed himself a Christian and pointed out the madness of the pagans in their worship of lifeless idols.

Infuriated, the emperor subjected the youth to cruel tortures. They tried to drown the saint, but an angel of the Lord saved St Mamas and bade him live on a high mountain in the wilderness, not far from Caesarea. Bowing to the will of God, the saint built a small church there and began to lead a life of strict temperance, in exploits of fasting and prayer.

Soon he received a remarkable power over the forces of nature: wild beasts inhabiting the surrounding wilderness gathered at his abode and listened to the reading of the Holy Gospel. St Mamas nourished himself on the milk of wild goats and deer.

The saint did not ignore the needs of his neighbors. Preparing cheese from this milk, he gave it away freely to the poor. Soon the fame of St Mamas's life spread throughout all of Caesarea.

The governor sent a detachment of soldiers to arrest him. When they encountered St Mamas on the mountain, the soldiers did not recognize him, and mistook him for a simple shepherd. The saint then invited them to his dwelling, gave them a drink of milk and then told them his name, knowing that death for Christ awaited him. The servant of God told the servant of the Emperor to go on ahead of him into Caesaria, promising that he would soon follow. The soldiers waited for him at the gates of the city, and St Mamas, accompanied by a lion, met them there.

Surrendering himself into the hands of the torturers, St Mamas was brought to trial under a deputy governor named Alexander, who subjected him to intense and prolonged tortures. They did not break the saint's will, however. He was strengthened by the words addressed to him from above: "Be strong and take courage, Mamas."

When they threw St Mamas to the wild beasts, these creatures would not touch him. Finally, one of the pagan priests struck him with a trident. Mortally wounded, St Mamas went out beyond the city limits. There, in a small stone cave, he gave up his spirit to God, Who in the hearing of all summoned the holy Martyr Mamas into His heavenly habitation. He was buried by believers at the place of his death.

Christians soon began to receive help from him in their afflictions and sorrows. St Basil the Great speaks thus about the holy Martyr Mamas in a sermon to the people: "Remember the holy martyr, you who live here and have him as a helper. You who call on his name have been helped by him. Those in error he has guided into life. Those whom he has healed of infirmity, those whose children were dead he has restored to life, those whose life he has prolonged: let us all come together as one, and praise the martyr!"

Martyr Christina of Tyre
Commemorated on July 24
(from <http://oca.org/FSlives.asp>)

The Martyr Christina lived during the third century. She was born into a rich family, and her father was governor of Tyre. By the age of 11 the girl was exceptionally beautiful, and many wanted to marry her. Christina's father, however, envisioned that his daughter should become a

pagan priestess. To this end he placed her in a special dwelling where he had set up many gold and silver idols, and he commanded his daughter to burn incense before them. Two servants attended Christina.

In her solitude, Christina began to wonder who had created this beautiful world. From her room she was delighted by the stars of the heavens and she constantly came back to the thought about the Creator of all the world. She was convinced that the voiceless and inanimate idols in her room could not create anything, since they themselves were created by human hands. She began to pray to the One God with tears, entreating Him to reveal Himself. Her soul blazed with love for the Unknown God, and she intensified her prayer all the more, and combined it with fasting.

One time Christina was visited by an angel, who instructed her in the true faith in Christ, the Savior of the world. The angel called her a bride of Christ and told her about her future suffering. The holy virgin smashed all the idols standing in her room and threw them out the window. In visiting his daughter Christina's father, Urban, asked her where all the idols had disappeared. Christina was silent. Then, having summoned the servants, Urban learned the truth from them.

In a rage the father began to slap his daughter's face. At first, the holy virgin remained quiet, but then she told her father about her faith in the One True God, and that she had destroyed the idols with her own hands. Urban gave orders to kill all the servants in attendance upon his daughter, and he gave Christina a fierce beating and threw her in prison. Having learned about what had happened, St Christina's mother came in tears, imploring her to renounce Christ and to return to her ancestral beliefs. But Christina remained unyielding. On another day, Urban brought his daughter to trial and urged her to offer worship to the gods, and to ask forgiveness for her misdeeds. Instead, he saw her firm and steadfast confession of faith in Christ.

The torturers tied her to an iron wheel, beneath which they lit a fire. The body of the martyr, turning round on the wheel, was scorched on all sides. They then threw her into prison.

An angel of God appeared at night, healing her wounds and strengthening her with food. Her father, seeing her unharmed, gave orders to drown her in the sea. An angel sustained the saint while the stone sank down, and Christina miraculously came out of the water and reappeared before her father. In terror, the torturer imputed this to sorcery and he decided to execute her in the morning. That night he himself suddenly died. Another governor, Dion, was sent in his place. He summoned the holy martyr and also tried to persuade her to renounce Christ, but seeing her unyielding firmness, he again subjected her to cruel tortures. The holy martyr was for a long while in prison. People began to flock to her, and she converted them to the true faith in Christ. Thus about 300 were converted.

In place of Dion, a new governor Julian arrived and resumed the torture of the saint. After various torments, Julian gave orders to throw her into a red-hot furnace and lock her in it. After five days they opened the furnace and found the martyr alive and unharmed. Seeing this miracle take place, many believed in Christ the Savior, and the torturers executed St Christina with a sword.

**St. Sophia the Mother of Orphans/Martyr Sophia of Thrace
Commemorated on June 4**

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

Saint Sophia was born in Aenus, Rhodope, and was the mother of six children. Though she was occupied with worldly cares and responsibilities, she still kept the commandments of God and lived a virtuous life.

After her children died, she became a mother to orphans, and gave assistance to widows. She sold her property and gave the money to the poor. She led an austere life, eating bread and water. The Psalms of the Prophet-King David were always on her lips, and tears flowed continuously from her eyes. She would do without the necessities of life herself rather than allow a poor person to leave her home with empty hands.

Because of her humility and her love for the poor, God blessed her in the following way. In her home was a container of wine which she reserved for the poor. She noticed that no matter how much she took from the container, it remained full. However, as soon as she told someone about the miracle and glorified God, the container became empty. St Sophia became sorrowful, believing that the wine diminished because of her unworthiness. Therefore, she increased her ascetical efforts until her health suffered.

Sensing that the end of her life was near, she received the monastic tonsure. St Sophia fell asleep in the Lord at the age of fifty-three.

Martyr Philothea the Monastic (1522-1589)
Commemorated on February 19
(from <http://oca.org/FSlives.asp>)

The Monastic Martyr Philothea was born in Athens in 1522. Her parents, Syriga and Angelos Benizelos, were renowned not only for being eminent and rich, but also deeply devout. Often the kind-hearted Syriga had implored the Most Holy Theotokos for a child. Her fervent prayers were heard, and a daughter was born to the couple. They named her Revoula.

The parents raised their daughter in deep piety and right belief, and when she was twelve years old they gave her away in marriage. Her husband turned out to be an impious and crude man, who often beat and tormented his wife. Revoula patiently endured the abuse and she prayed to God, that He might bring her husband to his senses.

After three years Revoula's husband died, and she began to labor in fasting, vigil and prayer. The saint founded a women's monastery in the name of the Apostle Andrew the First-Called (November 30 and June 30). When the monastery was completed, the saint was the first to accept monastic tonsure, with the name Philothea.

During this time Greece was suffering under the Turkish Yoke, and many Athenians had been turned into slaves by their Turkish conquerors. St Philothea utilized all her means to free her fellow countrywomen, ransoming many from servitude. Once, four women ran away from their Turkish masters, who demanded that they renounce their Christianity, and took refuge in the monastery of St Philothea.

The Turks, having learned where the Greek women had gone, burst into the saint's cell, and beat her. They took her to the governor, who threw the holy ascetic into prison. In the morning, a mob of Turks had gathered, and they led her out of the prison. The governor said that if she did not renounce Christ, she would be hacked to pieces.

Just when St Philothea was ready to accept a martyr's crown, a crowd of Christians assembled by the grace of God. They pacified the judges and freed the holy ascetic. Returning to her monastery, St Philothea continued with her efforts of abstinence, prayer and vigil, for which she was granted the gift of wonderworking. In Patesia, an Athens suburb, she founded a new monastery, where she struggled in asceticism with the sisters.

During the Vigil for St Dionysius the Areopagite (October 3), the Turks seized St Philothea and tortured her. Finally, they threw her down on the ground half-dead. The sisters tearfully brought the holy martyr, flowing with blood, to Kalogreza, where she died on February 19, 1589. Shortly thereafter, the relics of the holy Monastic Martyr Philothea were brought to the Athens cathedral church.

St. John of Kronstadt (1829-1908)
Commemorated on December 20
(edited from <http://oca.org/FSlives.asp>)

St John of Kronstadt was born in the village of Sura in Archangel province on October 19, 1829, and was called John in honor of St John of Rila (August 18). His parents were very poor but were very devoted to the Church. Even though he was poor, as a young boy John learned to feel compassion for others in their misfortune. His neighbors frequently asked him to pray for

them, as they noticed this special grace-endowed gift in him. When John was ten, his parents were able to raise some money and send him to the local school which was attached to the church. At first, the boy had an extremely difficult time with his studies. He worked for days on end, but still failed to keep up.

Writing about his life he once recalled an evening when everyone had already gone to bed. "I could not sleep, and I still failed to understand anything I was taught. I still read poorly and could not remember anything I was told. I became so depressed I fell to my knees and began to pray. I don't know whether I had spent a long time in that position or not, but suddenly something shook my whole being. It was as if a veil had fallen from my eyes, and my mind had been opened, and I remembered clearly my teacher of that day and his lesson. I also recalled the topic and the examples he had given. I felt so light and joyous inside." After this experience he did so well he became one of the first in his class to be chosen to go to seminary, and after seminary to the Theological Academy in St Petersburg (a great honor at that time).

Throughout his studies, John thought about the importance of forgiveness, meekness, and love, and came to believe that these were the very center and power of Christianity, and that only one path - the path of humble love - leads to God and the triumph of His righteousness. He also thought a great deal about the Savior's death on the Cross at Golgotha, and pitied those who did not know Jesus Christ. He wished to preach to them about His death and Resurrection. He dreamed about becoming a missionary to distant China, but saw that there was a great deal of work for a genuine pastor of Christ's flock both in his own city and the surrounding towns.

When John graduated from the Academy he met Elizabeth Nesvitsky who lived in the town of Kronstadt. . . . he proposed, and they were married. After his studies, John still desired to learn more about his faith and his Church.

It was in this frame of mind that he prepared to be a priest and to enter public ministry. He was ordained a deacon on December 10, 1885, and then priest on December 12. He was assigned to St Andrew's Cathedral in the city of Kronstadt. He said, "I made myself a rule to be as sincere as possible in my work, and of strictly watching myself and my inner life."

Fr John wanted most of all to earn the love of the people in his care; because only a loving attitude could provide the firm support and help he needed as he faced the difficult work of the priesthood. His constant thought was how he would come before the Last Judgment and have to give an account, not only for his own deeds, but also the deeds of his flock, for whose education and salvation he was responsible. To him no one was a stranger; everyone who came to him for help became a friend and relative. He would tell people "The Church is the best heavenly friend of every sincere Christian." He conducted divine services daily and offered the prayers of the faithful. He called all who rarely receive Holy Communion to prepare themselves and live their lives in a Christian way so that they could receive more often. Listening to Fr John, many people changed their lifestyle, repented sincerely, and joyfully received Holy Communion on a regular basis.

At that time the government exiled murderers, thieves and other criminals to Kronstadt. Life was horrible for the exiles. Even children of exiles would become thieves and criminals. He would go to their dugouts, hovels and shacks to visit with them. Not satisfied with staying for five or ten minutes to administer some rite and then leave, Fr John believed he was coming to visit a priceless soul, his brothers and sisters. He would stay for hours, talking, encouraging, comforting, crying, and rejoicing together with them.

From the beginning he also concerned himself with the material needs of the poor. He would shop for food, go to the pharmacy for prescriptions, to the doctor for help, many times giving the poor his last few coins. The inhabitants of Kronstadt would see him returning home barefoot and without his cassock. Often parishioners would bring shoes to his wife, saying to her, "Your husband has given away his shoes to someone, and will come home barefoot." He would also write articles for the newspaper exhorting the people of Kronstadt to "support the poor morally and materially." These appeals touched the hearts of many and Fr John organized many

charitable efforts. Realizing that his individual charity was insufficient for aiding the needy, he founded the Orthodox Christian House Parish Trusteeship of St Andrew the First-Called. This brotherhood coordinated many charitable efforts throughout the city and helped many needy people.

In 1857, he began teaching in the local city schools. He would tell people, "If children cannot listen to the Gospel, it is only because it is taught like any other subject, with boredom and indifference. Such teaching defeats the purpose of the Gospel. It fails because it forces students only to read words and memorize them instead of making them live in their lives." To Fr John there were no incapable students. He taught in such a way that poor pupils as well as good ones were able to understand. His attention was aimed not so much at forcing students to memorize as to fill their souls with the joy of living according to Christian values, sharing with them the holy thoughts which filled his soul.

When speaking to other priests about their vocation he would say, "You are a representative of the faith of the Church, O priest; you are a representative of Christ the Lord Himself. You should be a model of meekness, purity, courage, perseverance, patience, and lofty spirit. You are doing the work of God and must not let anything discourage you."

St John has performed more miracles than almost any other saint, with the possible exception of St Nicholas. Through his prayers he healed the sick, gave hope to the hopeless, and brought sinners to repentance.

Fr. John labored endlessly in his work for the Lord preaching, teaching, and helping those in need. Having spent his entire life serving God and His people, Fr John fell ill and died on December 20, 1908. Almost immediately, people from near and far began to make pilgrimages to the monastery where he was buried. Even today millions of Orthodox Christians in Russia and around the world pray to him to intercede for them as he had always done from his childhood.

St John was glorified by the Russian Orthodox Church on June 8, 1990.

Hiero-confessor Luke (Voino-Yasenetsky) (1877-1961)

Commemorated on June 11

(edited from http://www.stjohndc.org/Russian/saints/e_0609_luke_vj.htm)

On June 11, the Russian Orthodox Church celebrates the memory of Hiero-confessor Luke (Voino-Yasenetsky), Archbishop of Simferopol and Crimea. Holy Hierarch Luke was born in 1877 in the town of Kertch, in the Taurida District. He graduated from secondary school and art school in Kiev. In 1903, he graduated from Great Prince St. Vladimir Medical School at the University of Kiev, and for a long time worked as a local district physician.

In 1921, a time of intense persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church, when the future for clergy promised only the heavy Cross of becoming a Confessor and Martyr, he chose the path of service to the Church, and was ordained a priest. In 1923, he was tonsured a monk and then consecrated Bishop of Tashkent and Turkestan. The same year he was arrested and exiled to Siberia.

In 1926, Bishop Luke returned to Tashkent, but in 1930 was again arrested and sentenced to three years of exile. Upon his release, he once again returned to Tashkent, and spent his time in medical practice. A fruit of this work was the appearance of his book Notes on Purulent Surgery, which laid the foundation for an entire medical specialty. For that work, Bishop Luke was awarded the degree of Doctor of Medical Science in 1936, and his work continues to be used in medicine to this day.

In 1937, Vladyka was arrested, and spent more than two difficult years undergoing tortuous interrogation. Nonetheless, resting his hope in the Lord, he courageously endured those trials, not only refusing to agree to false accusations against him, but engaging in active protests – refusing to eat, and sending complaints to the highest authorities against the prosecutors' illegal actions. He would say to his fellow prisoners, "They demand that I remove my ryassa. I will

never do so. It, my ryassa, will be with me to my very death... I help people as a physician, and I help them as a servant of the Church....”

In 1940, Bishop Luke was sentenced to five years of exile in the Krasnoyarsk area. At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War [World War II], Bishop Luke offered the authorities his services as a doctor, and in 1941 was appointed consultant to the hospitals of Krasnoyarsk. In 1942, Vladyka was elevated to the rank of Archbishop and appointed to the Krasnoyarsk kathedra, which at the time did not have a single church. Through Archbishop Luke’s efforts, in 1943 a church was opened in a suburb of Krasnoyarsk . “All of Eastern Siberia, from Krasnoyarsk to the Pacific Ocean, gave no sign of church life...” he wrote to Patriarch Sergius. “If churches in various parts of the Krasnoyarsk area are not opened in the near future, there is a risk that the people will lapse into religious savagery....”

In 1944, the archbishop was appointed to the kathedra in Tambov. In 1946, for outstanding scientific work in the area of medicine, he was awarded the Stalin Prize; he donated almost all of the money to help children who had suffered as the result of the War. In 1946 Vladyka was appointed to the kathedra of Crimea, where at first he combined archpastoral service with medical assistance to the people, but later dedicated himself to Church service, zealously working to build up Christ’s vineyard, something that, under the conditions of life under Communist authorities, then demanded great courage and faith. Archbishop Luke reposed on June 11, 1961, on the day the Russian Orthodox Church celebrated the memory of All Saints of the Russian Land.

Holy Hiero-confessor St. Luke (Voino-Yasenetsky) was a precious vessel of Divine grace. Like his heavenly patron, the Holy Apostle St. Luke, he was a physician who continued Apostolic work; like the Apostle Paul he preached Christ’s Gospel not only in church but in prison, in exile, to friends, to persecutors, to well-wishing supporters, and while enduring sorrows at the hands of false friends. He was one of those people of unique importance to people who cannot do something for themselves alone, who cannot limit themselves their activities to only what pleases them. For such people, the duty of serving one’s neighbor is not an empty phrase, and for that reason in their activities they do not make choices by mere chance, do not build on a foreign foundation, but strive to find what needs to be done, right here and right now, and what will benefit all society. These are builders and workers who boldly come out onto the field of life in response to the Lord’s challenge. To the ten talents given them by the Lord they return an additional ten. And that is the embodiment of the Gospel model for all of us.

The complete text of the life of Hiero-confessor Luke (Voino-Yasenetsky) may be found in the book Lives of the 20th Century: New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, Tver, 2007.

**From “The Sacramental Life of the Orthodox Church” by Fr. Alciviadis C. Calivas
in A Companion to the Greek Orthodox Church**

MARRIAGE

Christian Marriage. Orthodox theology has always presented Christian marriage as something absolutely unique, and indeed, eternal. In marriage, human love "is being projected into the Kingdom of God" (John Meyendorff), reflecting the intimate union between Christ and the faithful which St. Paul speaks of (Ephes.5). Married life is a special vocation which requires the grace of the Holy Spirit; and it is this very grace which is conferred in the Marriage Service.

The contemporary Marriage Service of the Orthodox Church is itself divided into two parts: the office of betrothal and the office of crowning. In the first, the rite includes the exchange of rings, demonstrating that both partners enter into marriage of their own volition. At the second, "crowns" placed upon the heads of the partners signify the grace of the Holy Spirit. These crowns are crowns of both joy and martyrdom. Because the couple has been united for eternity, there is joy; but because every marriage involves enormous self-sacrifice on the part of each

partner, both also become "martyrs" in their own right.

The complete love each of the partners has for the other, should be the motivating factor in Christian marriage. In such a context marriage exists not only for the procreation of children, but also that a mutual love may be expressed, sustained and extended to others. While it is not to be denied that God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, children must always be considered a gift from God and not the sole reason for marriage. Certainly, children do contribute to making marriages an authentic image of the Trinity; and St. John Chrysostom spoke of the family as "a little Church"

Divorce. Because marriage implies a decision of free will on the part of both partners, there will always be the possibility of error. When a marriage fails, the Orthodox Church has generally declared that . . . the bond did not demonstrate its necessarily eternal character. It would not be totally accurate, however; to say that the Orthodox Church grants divorces, although such a practice has crept into the practice of some local Churches. Divorce is actually a civil matter which recognizes the breaking of a legal contract; the Church can merely recognize that an attempt at building up a true marriage has failed. Without going into an exhaustive analysis of the historical and canonical developments, it should be mentioned that the Orthodox Church today normally allows the laity three attempts at establishing a true marriage. A fourth marriage is positively forbidden. Clergy, however, are permitted to marry only once and this must be prior to ordination. Finally, it remains only to comment upon the penitential character assigned to a marriage rite in which both partners are being married for the second or third time. A special service exists for these situations in which the prayers are more somber and the entire service far more subdued. In this way, the Church reminds both the partners and the entire people of God that one lasting marriage is the Christian norm.

Addendum by the 2011 Bible and Church History Tournament Committee

According to the canonical tradition of our Church, an Orthodox Christian should marry only another Orthodox Christian. This is the ideal. However, by the principle of Orthodox economy, an Orthodox Christian is permitted to marry a Catholic or Protestant Christian who has been baptized by water in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity. This marriage must take place in the Orthodox Church. If an Orthodox person marries his/her Catholic, Protestant or even Orthodox spouse in a Catholic or Protestant wedding or in a civil ceremony, the Orthodox person chooses to excommunicate him/herself from the Church—please see what this means below. (S)he may reinstate him/herself in the Orthodox Church by the Sacrament of Holy Confession and by having his/her marriage blessed in the Orthodox Church.

An Orthodox Christian may not marry in the Church a member of a non-Christian religion (Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, etc.) or a member of the following cults who deny the Holy Trinity or in any other way depart from traditional Christianity: such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons (Church of Latter-Day Saints), Christian Science, Quakers, Seventh Day Adventists, some Pentecostal groups who do not baptize their members in water in the Name of the Holy Trinity, etc. An Orthodox Christian who marries any member of these religions chooses to excommunicate him/herself from the Church and may not receive Holy Communion. (S)he also may not serve as a sponsor at a wedding or at a baptism, and (s)he may not have an Orthodox funeral. (S)he may be reinstated in the Church by the Sacrament of Holy Confession.

Edited from Fr. Thomas Hopko, "The Orthodox Faith: An Elementary Handbook on the Orthodox Church--Volume 3: Bible and Church History--Sixth Century"

Emperor Justinian I and the Monophysites

The sixth century of Orthodox Church history in the East was dominated by the person and policies of the Emperor Justinian 1 (527-65).

Justinian understood the relationship between the Church and the state to be one of unity and cooperation between the priesthood (which "concerns things divine") and the empire (which "presides over morals"). His goals were to regain the western part of his empire from the barbarian invaders, and to win back the monophysites to the Orthodox faith of the Council of Chalcedon. He hoped to reunite completely the one Church and empire. Justinian accomplished his first goal by the efforts of his armies which were led by the general Belisarius. He failed in his second goal, although his attempts were bold and persistent.

Justinian's main attempt to win back the monophysites to the Orthodox Church was through the official condemnation of three theologians whom the supporters of the Council of Chalcedon generally favored, but whom the opponents of Chalcedon despised. By imperial decree in 544, and by decision of a council held in 553 (traditionally referred to as the Second Council of Constantinople and the Fifth Ecumenical Council) Justinian formally condemned the so-called Three Chapters. These were the objectionable writings of Theodoret of Cyr and Ibas of Edessa, and the writings and the person of Theodore of Mopsuestia.

The condemnation of the Three Chapters displeased the strict supporters of the Chalcedonian Council. They did not agree with the wrong and ambiguous Doctrines of these three theologians, but they did not see any reason for their condemnation. Justinian's efforts to appease the monophysite opponents of Chalcedonian Orthodoxy through the condemnation of the Three Chapters was ultimately fruitless. The measure did not convince the dissenters to reunite with the Church or the Empire.

The Fifth Ecumenical Council

In addition to rejecting the unorthodox and ambiguous teachings of the Three Chapters, the Fifth Ecumenical Council carefully clarified the Orthodox doctrine of the hypostatic union of divinity and humanity in Christ. In a long series of statements, the Council affirmed, without ambiguity, the traditional Orthodox faith that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is "one of the Holy Trinity," one and the same divine person (hypostasis) Who has united personally (hypostatically) in Himself the two natures of God and man, without fusing them together and without allowing their separation in any way.

The Fifth Council also officially condemned the teachings of Origen (d.254) and his sixth-century disciples who taught and practiced a "spiritualistic" version of Christianity which held many unorthodox doctrines. They taught that Christ was the only created spirit who did not become material through sin; that men's souls were pre-existent spirits; and that all creation will ultimately be saved through its spiritualization by God in Christ the Savior.

Emperor Justinian I and Reform

Justinian's reign also saw a concerted attack against the remnants of Hellenistic paganism in the empire. The University of Athens was closed in 529 and exclusively Christian learning and culture as promoted.

Justinian built many Church buildings in the imperial city and throughout the empire, particularly in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and on Mount Sinai in Egypt. His greatest creation was the temple dedicated to Christ the Wisdom of God in Constantinople - the magnificent Church of the Hagia Sophia. Iconography, engraving and mosaic work flourished during this time. The basilicas of Ravenna, the seat of the imperial authority in the West during the barbarian conquests, were built.

Liturgical Development

Many liturgical hymns were written, including the Christmas Kontakion and songs by Saint Romanos the Hymnographer (d.510). The emperor, Justinian, himself wrote the hymn Only-begotten Son, which is still sung at the synaxis of the divine liturgies in the Orthodox Church.

The sixth century witnessed a certain establishment and stabilization of liturgical worship throughout the Eastern Christian world, particularly because the liturgical practices of the imperial city of Constantinople were being accepted by other cities throughout the empire. The Church of Constantinople began to use certain liturgical feasts already in use in the Palestinian centers of Church life. These feasts were the Nativity and the Dormition of the Theotokos and the Presentation of Christ to the Temple. It is likely that the feast of the Transfiguration was celebrated in Constantinople by this time.

In addition to the festal celebrations of the capital city which spread throughout the empire, such elements as the formal liturgical entrances, and the chanting of the Trisagion and the Creed in the divine liturgy of the Church were added.

The convergence of several factors caused numerous changes in the Church's liturgical ritual and piety. These factors were the rise of the Constantinopolitan Church as the model for other churches; the development of the imperial churchly ritual; the appearance of the mystical theology of the writings under the name of Dionysius the Aeropagite; and the attempts of the imperial powers to pacify the monophysites.

At this time the practices of the Church of Constantinople were combined with the original Jewish-Christian worship of the early Church, the rule of prayer which had developed in the Christian monasteries, and the liturgical practices of the Church in Jerusalem, to form the first great synthesis of liturgical worship in Orthodox history.

Five Patriarchates

In the sixth century, Constantinople, at least in the minds of Eastern Christians, was firmly established as the primary see in the Christian pentarchy, which Justinian called the "five senses of the universe": Constantinople, Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The title ecumenical was given to all the chief offices in the imperial city. When John the Faster (528-95), the bishop of Constantinople, assumed the title of ecumenical patriarchate, the designation was forcefully opposed by Pope Saint Gregory the Great of Rome (590-604) as unbecoming of a Christian pastor. It is this same Saint Gregory whose name is traditionally connected with the Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts which the Orthodox celebration the weekdays of Great Lent.

[\(See Book 2 on Worship\)](#)

The West

In the West, in addition to Saint Gregory, the bishop of Rome who was a theologian and pastor of saintly reputation was Saint Benedict of Nursia (c.480-542) whose monastic disciples were to have great influence on the subsequent history of the Western Church. Among the saints of this century, mention must be made of Saint Columba and Saint Augustine of Canterbury, the contemporaries of Saint Gregory. These men were the most famous of the missionaries in Western Europe, England, and Ireland who labored among the barbarian tribes.

In Spain, in the sixth century, the word filioque was added to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. This action, which was done to stress the divinity of Christ to the invading barbarians - who were Arians - was destined to have grave consequences in later Church history.