

Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapter 5

1 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. **2** Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: **3** "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **4** Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. **5** Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. **6** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. **7** Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. **8** Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. **9** Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. **10** Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11** "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. **12** Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. **13** "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. **14** You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. **16** Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. **17** "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. **18** For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. **19** Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **20** For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. **21** "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' **22** But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. **23** Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. **25** Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. **26** Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny. **27** "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' **28** But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. **29** If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. **30** And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. **31** "Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' **32** But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery. **33** "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' **34** But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; **35** nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. **36** Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. **37** But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. **38** "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' **39** But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. **40** If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. **41** And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. **42** Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. **43** "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' **44** But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, **45** that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. **46** For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? **47** And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? **48** Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapter 16

1 Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. **2** He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; **3** and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. **4** A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed. **5** Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. **6** Then Jesus

said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." **7** And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread." **8** But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? **9** Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? **10** Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? **11** How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?--but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." **12** Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. **13** When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" **14** So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." **15** He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" **16** Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." **17** Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. **18** And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. **19** And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." **20** Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. **21** From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. **22** Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" **23** But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." **24** Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. **25** For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. **26** For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? **27** For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. **28** Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Gospel of St. John Chapter 6

1 After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. **2** Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased. **3** And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. **4** Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. **5** Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" **6** But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. **7** Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little." **8** One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, **9** "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?" **10** Then Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. **11** And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. **12** So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost." **13** Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. **14** Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." **15** Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone. **16** Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, **17** got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. **18** Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing. **19** So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid. **20** But He said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." **21** Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going. **22** On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but His disciples had gone away alone-- **23** however, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks-- **24** when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. **25** And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?" **26** Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. **27** Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." **28** Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of

God?" **29** Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." **30** Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?" **31** Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' " **32** Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. **33** For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." **34** Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." **35** And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. **36** But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. **37** All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. **38** For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. **39** This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. **40** And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." **41** The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." **42** And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven?'" **43** Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. **44** No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. **45** It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. **46** Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. **47** Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. **48** I am the bread of life. **49** Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. **50** This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. **51** I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." **52** The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" **53** Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. **54** Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. **55** For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. **56** He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. **57** As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. **58** This is the bread which came down from heaven--not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." **59** These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. **60** Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" **61** When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? **62** What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? **63** It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. **64** But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. **65** And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." **66** From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. **67** Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" **68** But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. **69** Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." **70** Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" **71** He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.

Ephesians Chapter 5

1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. **2** And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. **3** But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; **4** neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. **5** For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. **6** Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. **7** Therefore do not be partakers with them. **8** For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light **9** (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), **10** finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. **11** And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. **12** For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. **13** But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. **14** Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." **15** See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, **16** redeeming the time, because the days are evil. **17** Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. **18** And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, **19** speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making

melody in your heart to the Lord, **20** giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **21** submitting to one another in the fear of God. **22** Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. **23** For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. **24** Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. **25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, **26** that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, **27** that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. **28** So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. **29** For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. **30** For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. **31** "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." **32** This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. **33** Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Philippians Chapter 4

1 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. **2** I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. **3** And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life. **4** Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. **6** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; **7** and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. **8** Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. **9** The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you. **10** But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. **11** Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: **12** I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. **13** I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. **14** Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. **15** Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. **16** For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. **17** Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. **18** Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. **19** And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. **20** Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. **21** Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. **22** All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household. **23** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

St. George, the Holy and Great Martyr

Commemorated on April 23

(from "The Prologue from Ochrid" of St. Nikolai Velimirovich at

<http://www.westsrbdio.org/prolog/prolog.cqj>)

This glorious and victorious saint was born in Cappadocia the son of wealthy and virtuous parents. His father suffered for Christ and his mother then moved to Palestine. When George grew up, he entered the military, where in his twentieth year, attained the rank of a Tribune and as such was in the service of the Emperor Diocletian. When Diocletian began the terrible persecution against Christians, George came before him and courageously confessed that he is a Christian. The emperor had him thrown into prison and ordered that his feet be placed in a stockade of wooden hobbles and that a heavy stone be placed on his chest. After that, the emperor commanded that George be tied to a wheel under which was a board with large nails and he was to be rotated until his entire body became as one bloody wound. After that, they buried him in a pit with only his head showing above the ground and there they left him for three days and three nights. Then George was given a deadly poison to drink by some magician. But, through all of these sufferings, George continuously prayed to God and God healed him instantly and saved him from death to the great astonishment of the people. When he resurrected a dead man through his prayer, many then accepted the Faith of Christ. Among these also was Alexandra, the wife of the Emperor Athanasius, the chief pagan priest and the farmers: Glycerius, Valerius, Donatus and Therinus. Finally the emperor ordered George and his wife Alexandra beheaded. Blessed Alexandra died on the scaffold before being beheaded. St. George was beheaded in the year 303 A.D. The miracles which have occurred over the

grave of St. George are without number. Numerous are his appearances, either in dreams or openly, to those who have invoked him and implored his help from that time until today. Enflamed with love for Christ the Lord, it was not difficult for this saintly George to leave all for the sake of this love: rank, wealth, imperial honor, his friends and the entire world. For this love, the Lord rewarded him with the wealth of unfading glory in heaven and on earth and eternal life in His kingdom. In addition, the Lord bestowed upon him the power and authority to assist all those in miseries and difficulties who honor him and call upon his name.

Martyr Peter the Aleut
Commemorated on September 24
(from <http://oca.org/FSlives.asp>)

Saint Peter the Aleut is mentioned in the Life of St Herman of Alaska (born in 1756 or 1760 and died on December 13, 1837). Simeon Yanovsky (who ended his life as the schemamonk Sergius in the St Tikhon of Kaluga Monastery), has left the following account:

"On another occasion I was relating to him how the Spanish in California had imprisoned fourteen Aleuts, and how the Jesuits (actually Franciscans) were forcing all of them to accept the Catholic Faith. But the Aleuts would not agree under any circumstances, saying, 'We are Christians.' The Jesuits argued, 'That's not true, you are heretics and schismatics. If you do not agree to accept our faith then we will torture all of you to death.' Then the Aleuts were placed in prisons two to a cell. That evening, the Jesuits came to the prison with lanterns and lighted candles. Again they tried to persuade two Aleuts in the cell to accept the Catholic Faith. 'We are Christians,' the Aleuts replied, 'and we will not change our Faith.' Then the Jesuits began to torture them, at first the one while his companion was a witness. They cut off one of the joints of his feet, and then the other joint. Then they cut the first joint on the fingers of his hands, and then the other joint. Then they cut off his feet, and his hands. The blood flowed, but the martyr endured all and firmly repeated one thing: 'I am a Christian.' He died in such suffering, due to a loss of blood. The Jesuit also promised to torture his comrade to death the next day.

But that night an order was received from Monterey stating that the imprisoned Aleuts were to be released immediately, and sent there under escort. Therefore, in the morning all were sent to Monterey with the exception of the dead Aleut. This was related to me by a witness, the same Aleut who had escaped torture, and who was the friend of the martyred Aleut. I reported this incident to the authorities in St Petersburg. When I finished my story, Father Herman asked, 'What was the name of the martyred Aleut?' I answered, 'Peter. I do not remember his family name.' The Elder stood reverently before an icon, made the Sign of the Cross and said, "Holy New Martyr Peter, pray to God for us!"

We know very little about St Peter, except that he was from Kodiak [Alaska], and was arrested and put to death by the Spaniards in California because he refused to convert to Catholicism. The circumstances of his martyrdom recall the torture of St James the Persian (November 27).

Both in his sufferings and in his steadfast confession of the Faith, St Peter is the equal of the martyrs of old, and also of the New Martyrs who have shone forth in more recent times. Now he rejoices with them in the heavenly Kingdom, glorifying God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, throughout all ages.

St. Mary Magdalene
Commemorated on July 22
(edited from <http://oca.org/FSlives.asp>)

The Holy Myrrh-Bearer Equal of the Apostles Mary Magdalene. On the banks of Lake Genesareth (Galilee), between the cities of Capharnum and Tiberias, was the small city of Magdala, the remains of which have survived to our day. Now only the small village of Mejhdel stands on the site.

A woman whose name has entered forever into the Gospel account was born and grew up in Magdala. The Gospel tells us nothing of Mary's younger years, but Tradition informs us that Mary of Magdala was young and pretty, and led a sinful life. It says in the Gospels that the Lord expelled seven devils from Mary (Luke. 8:2). From the moment of her healing Mary led a new life, and became a true disciple of the Savior.

The Gospel relates that Mary followed after the Lord, when He went with the Apostles through the cities and villages of Judea and Galilee preaching about the Kingdom of God. Together with the pious women Joanna, wife of Choza (steward of Herod), Susanna and others, she served Him from her own possessions (Luke 8:1-3) and undoubtedly shared with the Apostles the evangelic tasks in common with the other women. The Evangelist Luke, evidently, has her in view together with the other women, stating that at the moment of the Procession of Christ onto Golgotha, when after the Scourging He took on Himself the heavy Cross, collapsing under its weight, the women followed after Him weeping and wailing, but He consoled them. The Gospel relates that Mary Magdalene was present on Golgotha at the moment of the Lord's Crucifixion. While all the disciples of the Savior ran away, she remained fearlessly at the Cross together with the Mother of God and the Apostle John.

The Evangelists also list among those standing at the Cross the mother of the Apostle James, and Salome, and

other women followers of the Lord from Galilee, but all mention Mary Magdalene first. St John, in addition to the Mother of God, names only her and Mary Cleopas. This indicates how much she stood out from all the women who gathered around the Lord.

She was faithful to Him not only in the days of His Glory, but also at the moment of His extreme humiliation and insult. As the Evangelist Matthew relates, she was present at the Burial of the Lord. Before her eyes Joseph and Nicodemus went out to the tomb with His lifeless Body. She watched as they covered over the entrance to the cave with a large stone, entombing the Source of Life.

Faithful to the Law in which she was raised, Mary together with the other women spent following day at rest, because it was the great day of the Sabbath, coinciding with the Feast of Passover. But all the rest of the peaceful day the women gathered spices to go to the Grave of the Lord at dawn on Sunday and anoint His Body according to the custom of the Jews.

It is necessary to mention that, having agreed to go on the first day of the week to the Tomb early in the morning, the holy women had no possibility of meeting with one another on Saturday. They went separately on Friday evening to their own homes. They went out only at dawn the following day to go to the Sepulchre, not all together, but each from her own house.

The Evangelist Matthew writes that the women came to the grave at dawn, or as the Evangelist Mark expresses, extremely early before the rising of the sun. The Evangelist John, elaborating upon these, says that Mary came to the grave so early that it was still dark. Obviously, she waited impatiently for the end of night, but it was not yet daybreak. She ran to the place where the Lord's Body lay.

Mary went to the tomb alone. Seeing the stone pushed away from the cave, she ran away in fear to tell the close Apostles of Christ, Peter and John. Hearing the strange message that the Lord was gone from the tomb, both Apostles ran to the tomb and, seeing the shroud and winding cloths, they were amazed. The Apostles went and said nothing to anyone, but Mary stood about the entrance to the tomb and wept. Here in this dark tomb so recently lay her lifeless Lord.

Wanting proof that the tomb really was empty, she went down to it and saw a strange sight. She saw two angels in white garments, one sitting at the head, the other at the foot, where the Body of Jesus had been placed. They asked her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" She answered them with the words which she had said to the Apostles, "They have taken my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." At that moment, she turned around and saw the Risen Jesus standing near the grave, but she did not recognize Him.

He asked Mary, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom dost thou seek?" She answered thinking that she was seeing the gardener, "Sir, if thou hast taken him, tell where thou hast put Him, and I will take Him away."

Then she recognized the Lord's voice. This was the voice she heard in those days and years, when she followed the Lord through all the cities and places where He preached. He spoke her name, and she gave a joyful shout, "Rabbi" (Teacher).

Respect and love, fondness and deep veneration, a feeling of thankfulness and recognition at His Splendor as great Teacher, all came together in this single outcry. She was able to say nothing more and she threw herself down at the feet of her Teacher to wash them with tears of joy. But the Lord said to her: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and tell them: 'I ascend to My Father, and your Father; to My God and to your God.'"

She came to herself and again ran to the Apostles, to do the will of Him sending her to preach. Again she ran into the house, where the Apostles still remained in dismay, and proclaimed to them the joyous message, "I have seen the Lord!" This was the first preaching in the world about the Resurrection.

The Apostles proclaimed the Glad Tidings to the world, but she proclaimed it to the Apostles themselves.

Holy Scripture does not tell us about the life of Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection of Christ, but it is impossible to doubt, that if in the terrifying minutes of Christ's Crucifixion she was the foot of His Cross with His All-Pure Mother and St John, she must have stayed with them during the happier time after the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ. Thus in the Acts of the Apostles St Luke writes that all the Apostles with one mind stayed in prayer and supplication, with certain women and Mary the Mother of Jesus and His brethren.

Holy Tradition testifies that when the Apostles departed from Jerusalem to preach to all the ends of the earth, then Mary Magdalene also went with them. A daring woman, whose heart was full of reminiscence of the Resurrection, she went beyond her native borders and went to preach in pagan Rome. Everywhere she proclaimed to people about Christ and His teaching. When many did not believe that Christ is risen, she repeated to them what she had said to the Apostles on the radiant morning of the Resurrection: "I have seen the Lord!" With this message she went all over Italy.

Tradition relates that in Italy Mary Magdalene visited Emperor Tiberias (14-37 A.D.) and proclaimed to him Christ's Resurrection. According to Tradition, she took him a red egg as a symbol of the Resurrection, a symbol of new life with the words: "Christ is Risen!" Then she told the emperor that in his Province of Judea the unjustly condemned Jesus the Galilean, a holy man, a miracleworker, powerful before God and all mankind, had been

executed at the instigation of the Jewish High Priests, and the sentence confirmed by the procurator appointed by Tiberias, Pontius Pilate.

Mary repeated the words of the Apostles, that we are redeemed from the vanity of life is not with perishable silver or gold, but rather by the precious Blood of Christ.

Thanks to Mary Magdalene the custom to give each other paschal eggs on the day of the Radiant Resurrection of Christ spread among Christians over all the world. On one ancient Greek manuscript, written on parchment, kept in the monastery library of St Athanasius near Thessalonica, is a prayer read on the day of Holy Pascha for the blessing of eggs and cheese. In it is indicated that the igumen in passing out the blessed eggs says to the brethren: "Thus have we received from the holy Fathers, who preserved this custom from the very time of the holy Apostles, therefore the holy Equal of the Apostles Mary Magdalene first showed believers the example of this joyful offering."

Mary Magdalene continued her preaching in Italy and in the city of Rome itself. Evidently, the Apostle Paul has her in mind in his Epistle to the Romans (16: 6), where together with other ascetics of evangelic preaching he mentions Mary (Mariam), who as he expresses "has bestowed much labor on us." Evidently, she extensively served the Church in its means of subsistence and its difficulties, being exposed to dangers, and sharing with the Apostles the labors of preaching.

According to Church Tradition, she remained in Rome until the arrival of the Apostle Paul, and for two more years following his departure from Rome after the first court judgment upon him. From Rome, St Mary Magdalene, already bent with age, moved to Ephesus where the holy Apostle John unceasingly labored. There the saint finished her earthly life and was buried.

Her holy relics were transferred in the ninth century to Constantinople, and placed in the monastery Church of St Lazarus. In the era of the Crusader campaigns they were transferred to Italy and placed at Rome under the altar of the Lateran Cathedral. Part of the relics of Mary Magdalene are said to be in Provage, France near Marseilles, where over them at the foot of a steep mountain a splendid church is built in her honor. [Please note that the left hand of St. Mary Magdalene is kept as an incorrupt relic (after almost 2000 years) at the Simonos Petras Monastery in Mt. Athos, Greece and miraculously has the normal body temperature of the hand of a living person.]

The Orthodox Church honors the holy memory of St Mary Magdalene, the woman called by the Lord Himself from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.

Formerly immersed in sin and having received healing, she sincerely and irrevocably began a new life and never wavered from that path. Mary loved the Lord Who called her to a new life. She was faithful to Him not only when He was surrounded by enthusiastic crowds and winning recognition as a miracle-worker, but also when all the disciples deserted Him in fear and He, humiliated and crucified, hung in torment upon the Cross. This is why the Lord, knowing her faithfulness, appeared to her first, and esteemed her worthy to be first to proclaim His Resurrection.

Greatmartyr Marina (Margaret) of Antioch in Pisidia Commemorated on July 17

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

The Holy Great Martyr Marina was born in Asia Minor, in the city of Antioch of Pisidia (southern Asia Minor), into the family of a pagan priest. In infancy she lost her mother, and her father gave her into the care of a nursemaid, who raised Marina in the Orthodox Faith. Upon learning that his daughter had become a Christian, the father angrily disowned her. During the time of the persecution against Christians under the emperor Diocletian (284-305), when she was fifteen years old, St Marina was arrested and locked up in prison. With firm trust in the will of God and His help, the young prisoner prepared for her impending fate.

The governor Olymbrios, charmed with the beautiful girl, tried to persuade her to renounce the Christian Faith and become his wife. But the saint, unswayed, refused his offers. The vexed governor gave the holy martyr over to torture. Having beaten her fiercely, they fastened the saint with nails to a board and tore at her body with tridents. The governor himself, unable to bear the horror of these tortures, hid his face in his hands. But the holy martyr remained unyielding. Thrown for the night into prison, she was granted heavenly aid and healed of her wounds. They stripped her and tied her to a tree, then burned the martyr with fire. Barely alive, the martyr prayed: "Lord, You have granted me to go through fire for Your Name, grant me also to go through the water of holy Baptism."

Hearing the word "water", the governor gave orders to drown the saint in a large cauldron. The martyr besought the Lord that this manner of execution should become for her holy Baptism. When they plunged her into the water, there suddenly shone a light, and a snow-white dove came down from Heaven, bearing in its beak a golden crown. The fetters put upon St Marina came apart by themselves. The martyr stood up in the fount of Baptism glorifying the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. St Marina emerged from the fount completely

healed, without any trace of burns. Amazed at this miracle, the people glorified the True God, and many came to believe. This brought the governor into a rage, and he gave orders to kill anyone who might confess the Name of Christ. 15,000 Christians perished there, and the holy Martyr Marina was beheaded. The sufferings of the Great Martyr Marina were described by an eyewitness of the event, named Theotimos.

Up until the taking of Constantinople by Western crusaders in the year 1204, the relics of the Great Martyr Marina were in the Panteoponteia monastery. According to other sources, they were located in Antioch until the year 908 and from there transferred to Italy. Now they are in Athens, in a church dedicated to the holy Virgin Martyr. Her venerable hand was transferred to Mount Athos, to the Batopedi monastery.

Daily Cycle or Hours of Prayer in the Church (edited from <http://www.orthodoxprayer.org/Hours.html>)

The daily prayer cycle begins at sundown with Vespers. This tradition comes to us via the Jewish tradition, the way the disciples and Christ would have prayed.

Vespers

"Let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice." Psalm 141

The tradition of praying a sundown coincides with the time of lighting the lamps, before the time of electricity. This was a definite transition time in ancient times, something we have lost in our electrical power world where there is no need to change what we are doing because of the setting of the sun. But, this transition required a definite change of activity in the days before electricity. In the Church at this time of day, as the sun sets, we traditionally gather in the Church to give thanks for all the blessings our Lord has granted us this day. This prayer service begins with the psalm of creation (Psalm 103(104)).

Compline

"In Peace I will both lie down and sleep, for You alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety." Psalm 4

After our evening meal and before we go to sleep we say personal prayers which is how the service of compline is usually done. Here we reflect on the difficulties of the day and examine how we handled them and ask for forgiveness our shortcomings as well as our negligence of things we did not do we should of done. Great Compline is a church service used to commemorate occasions such as the Eve of the Nativity and is also used during weekdays in Lent.

Prayer as we go to sleep

Midnight prayer

"At midnight I will rise and praise you." Psalm 119

In the monasteries the monks will rise at midnight for prayer. We know this tradition goes back at least as far as the time of David.

Matins or Orthros

"O God, You are my God, early will I seek You!" Psalm 63

At dawn we rise at sunrise and experiencing the goodness of God praise Him, give thanks, make petitions, and seek His blessing for the activities of the coming day.

First Hour

"To You I pray, O Lord; in the morning You hear my voice!" Psalm 5

Before the use of clocks the hours of the day were determined from sunrise. So the first hour is probably at 7:00am. At this hour we ask God to guard us from everything that could harm us in either body or soul. As our senses are being awakened we ask for spiritual awakening through Jesus Christ who is the "true light who comes into the world." This is usually joined with the Matins prayers. This is the time at which Christ was led into the Praetorium before Pilate.

Prayer: Psalm 5

Order my steps in Your word and so shall no wickedness have dominion over me.
Deliver me from all wrongful dealings of men, and so I shall keep Your commandments.
Show the light of your countenance upon Your servant and teach me Your statutes.
Let my mouth be filled with Your praise, O Lord, that I may sing of Your glory and honor all the day long.
O Christ the true light, enlightening and sanctifying every man who comes into the world.
Let the light of Your countenance shine on us, that in it we may behold the ineffable light.
Guide our footsteps aright in keeping Your commandments.
Through the intercessions of Your all-pure Mother and of all the saints. Amen.

Third Hour

"Take not Your Holy Spirit from me." Psalm 51

This is about 9:00am and is the hour when the Holy Spirit came down upon the apostles on Pentecost. We give thanks to God for this gift and ask that He never deprive us of the fruits and graces of the Spirit. We also commemorate the condemnation of Christ by Pilate.

Psalm 25.

Prayer

O Lord, You sent down Your Most Holy Spirit upon Your Apostles at the Third Hour. Take Him not from us, O Good One, but renew Him in us who pray to You.

Prayer of Saint Basil the Great

O Lord our God, You have given Your peace to men and sent down the gift of Your All-Holy Spirit to Your disciples and Apostles, opening their lips with fiery tongues by Your power.

Open also my lips and teach me, sinner that I am, how and for what I ought to pray.

Guide my life, O calm Haven of the storm-tossed, and reveal the way in which I should walk.

Renew in me a right spirit and make my mind steady with a governing spirit, so that guided and guarded each day by Your good Spirit, I may be enabled to practice Your commandments, always remembering Your glorious presence which looks upon the deeds men do.

Do not let me be deceived by corrupting delights of this world, but rather strengthen in me the desire to attain the treasures of the world to come.

For You are blessed and praised in all Your saints, unto ages of ages. Amen.

Through the prayers of the holy Fathers, may the Lord have mercy on us. Amen.

Sixth Hour

"There they crucified Him... It was now about the sixth hour" Luke 23: 33,44

This is about 12 noon, the time when the divine drama of Christ began. It is when Pilate released Him to the Jews and they condemned Him and He was nailed to the Cross. We rejoice in the infinite life of God and show our gratitude, for through this event He wrought our salvation.

Psalm 54

Prayer: O Christ God, on the sixth day and hour, You nailed to the cross the sin which rebellious Adam committed in paradise. Tear asunder also the bond of our iniquities, and save us!

You have wrought salvation in the midst of the earth, O Christ God.

You stretched out Your all-pure hands upon the Cross, You gathered together all the nations that cry aloud to You: Glory to You, O Lord!

Prayer of Saint Basil the Great

O God, Lord of hosts and Maker of all created things, who in Your great compassion and mercy sent down Your Only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, for the redemption of mankind, and by His precious cross destroyed the writing of our sins, thereby triumphing over the source and power of darkness.

O Lord and Lover of man, accept also the thanksgiving and fervent prayers of us sinners.

Deliver us from every dark and harmful transgression and from all the visible and invisible enemies which seek to destroy us.

Nail our flesh to the fear of You, and do not incline our hearts to words or thoughts of guile, But wound our souls with Your love, that ever looking to You, and guided by You in the light, and beholding You, the Light ineffable and ever lasting, we may offer ceaseless praise and thanksgiving to You:

To the Father who has no beginning, together with Your only-begotten Son and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Ninth Hour

"And at the ninth hour...Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last." Mark 15: 34,37

This occurs about 3:00 pm, the time that Jesus died on the Cross. It is when he promised His kingdom to the repentant thief. We give thanks singing hymns of these saving events.

Psalm 84

Prayer

O Christ God, at the ninth hour You tasted death in the flesh for our sake: mortify the rebellion of our flesh and save us!

In the midst of two thieves, Your Cross was revealed as the balance-beam of righteousness.

For while the one was led down to hell by the burden of his blaspheming, the other was lightened of his sins to the knowledge of things divine.

O Christ our God, glory to You!

Prayer of Saint Basil the Great

O Master, Lord Jesus Christ our God, You have led us to the present hour, in which, as You hung upon the life-giving tree, You made a way into Paradise for the penitent thief, and by death destroyed death:

Cleans us, Your unworthy servants, for we fall into sin continuously and are not worthy to lift up our eyes and look upon the heights of heaven. Forgive us for departing from the path of righteousness and following the desires of our own hearts.

We implore Your unending goodness: Spare us, O Lord, according to the multitude of Your mercies, and save us for Your holy name's sake, for our days are passing away in vanity.

Take us from the hand of the adversary and forgive our sins, and mortify in us all impure thoughts.

Help us to lay aside our old ways so that we may be clothed with new resolve and may dedicate our lives to You, our Master and Benefactor, so that by following Your commandments, we may come to the eternal rest which is the abode of all those who rejoice.

For You are the true joy and exultation of those who love You, O Christ our God, and to You we ascribe glory, together with the Father who is without beginning and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Through the prayers of our holy fathers, may the Lord have mercy on us Amen.

For most people who do not live a monastic life, following this routine is not very practical. It is practical, however, to pause for a minute at these times to say a short prayer such as the Jesus Prayer or the Prayer of the Hours. If you listen to Ancient Faith radio on the internet they offer short prayers on the hours.

Living in the Liturgical Cycles of the Church The Weekly Cycle

(edited from talk of Reader Daniel Olson at <http://www.allsaintsofamerica.org/orthodoxy/olson.html>)

The second liturgical cycle is the weekly cycle. This cycle is not based on a natural cycle, since the seven-day week does not appear in nature. The week was given to us by God in a direct revelation. While the different themes of the weekly cycle are repeated every week, the actual hymns that express these themes are divided into an eight-week cycle based upon the eight musical modes or tones of the Church's musical system. This means that the volume of liturgical material that makes up the weekly cycle is so large that only after eight weeks is this material again repeated.

The hymns of the weekly cycle are collected into one large book—which often divided into two volumes. This book is called the Octoechos or Book of the Eight Tones, which is often printed in two volumes.

The most important day of the week is the first day, which we call Sunday, but is also known as the Lord's day. On this day, every week, the Church commemorates Christ's resurrection. This is such an important day liturgically, that it's always celebrated just like a great feast—that is, it always has a vigil [or Vespers] the evening before. Sunday is so important that it almost never gives place to any other commemoration. The only possible exceptions are the great feasts of the Lord, which always take precedence—even over Sundays.

The character of Sunday is always festive, so during fast seasons the fast is always relaxed to a certain extent on Sunday. Thus, during Great Lent oil and wine are always allowed on Sundays,

The second day—Monday—is dedicated to the Angels—the bodiless hosts. Most monastics and even some pious laymen keep this day as a voluntary fast day. By fasting, they deny the needs of the body and in this small way they strive to imitate those heavenly beings who are bodiless by nature.

The third day—Tuesday—is dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. Christ Himself said that there was no greater man born of woman, and the Church recognizes this greatness by giving the Forerunner a special place in the weekly cycle.

The fourth day—Wednesday—is dedicated to the Holy Cross of the Lord. It was on this day that Judas agreed to betray Christ, thus setting in motion the events of the Passion. This is a fast day which is obligatory for all Orthodox Christians.

The fifth day—Thursday—is dedicated to the holy Apostles and also to Saint Nicholas. The fact that Saint Nicholas has been given a place in the weekly cycle indicates the great veneration that the Church accords him.

The sixth day—Friday—which is the day of Christ's crucifixion, is again dedicated to the Holy Cross. Like Wednesday, it is a fast day for all Orthodox Christians.

The seventh day—Saturday—is dedicated to all the saints and also to all the faithful departed. Saturday was the day of rest in Old Testament times and always had a festal character. The Church has maintained this festal character to a certain extent in its liturgical practice. We can also see this by the fact that during fasting seasons the Church's fasting rules are exactly the same for Saturdays as they are for Sundays. . . .