

Monday, November 23

Evening Prayer

Orthodox Saints

Opening Sentence

Let my prayer be set forth in your sight as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Psalm 141:2

Confession

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen.

Invitatory

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

O Gracious Light Phos hilaron

O gracious light,
pure brightness of the everliving Father in heaven,
O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!
Now as we come to the setting of the sun,
and our eyes behold the vesper light,
we sing your praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices,
O Son of God, O Giver of Life,
and to be glorified through all the worlds.

Psalm 106

Part II *Et fecerunt vitulum*

19

Israel made a bull-calf at Horeb *
and worshiped a molten image;

20

And so they exchanged their Glory *
for the image of an ox that feeds on grass.

21

They forgot God their Savior, *
who had done great things in Egypt,

22

Wonderful deeds in the land of Ham, *
and fearful things at the Red Sea.

23

So he would have destroyed them,
had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, *
to turn away his wrath from consuming them.

24

They refused the pleasant land *
and would not believe his promise.

25

They grumbled in their tents *
and would not listen to the voice of the LORD.

26

So he lifted his hand against them, *
to overthrow them in the wilderness,

27

To cast out their seed among the nations, *
and to scatter them throughout the lands.

28

They joined themselves to Baal-Peor *
and ate sacrifices offered to the dead.

29

They provoked him to anger with their actions, *
and a plague broke out among them.

30

Then Phinehas stood up and interceded, *
and the plague came to an end.

31

This was reckoned to him as righteousness *
throughout all generations for ever.

32

Again they provoked his anger at the waters of Meribah, *
so that he punished Moses because of them;

33

For they so embittered his spirit *
that he spoke rash words with his lips.

34

They did not destroy the peoples *
as the LORD had commanded them.

35

They intermingled with the heathen *
and learned their pagan ways,

36

So that they worshiped their idols, *
which became a snare to them.

37

They sacrificed their sons *
and their daughters to evil spirits.

38

They shed innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and daughters, *
which they offered to the idols of Canaan,
and the land was defiled with blood.

39

Thus they were polluted by their actions *
and went whoring in their evil deeds.

40

Therefore the wrath of the LORD was kindled against his people *
and he abhorred his inheritance.

41

He gave them over to the hand of the heathen, *
and those who hated them ruled over them.

42

Their enemies oppressed them, *
and they were humbled under their hand.

43

Many a time did he deliver them,
but they rebelled through their own devices, *
and were brought down in their iniquity.

44

Nevertheless, he saw their distress, *

when he heard their lamentation.

45

He remembered his covenant with them *
and relented in accordance with his great mercy.

46

He caused them to be pitied *
by those who held them captive.

47

Save us, O LORD our God,
and gather us from among the nations, *
that we may give thanks to your holy Name
and glory in your praise.

48

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting; *
and let all the people say, "Amen!"
Hallelujah!

Gloria Patri

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Gospel

Matthew 19:1-12 (NRSV)

1 When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. 2 Large crowds followed him, and he cured them there. 3 Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?" 4 He answered, "Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." 7 They said to him, "Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?" 8 He said to them, "It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery." 10 His disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." 11 But he said to them, "Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given. 12 For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can."

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Canticle 15 The Song of Mary
Magnificat Luke 1:46-55

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; *
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed: *
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him *
in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm, *
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, *
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things, *
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel, *
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
The promise he made to our fathers, *
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

- Departure of St. Timothy, Bishop of Ansena
- Departure of St. Zechariah I, the 64th Pope of Alexandria
- Sainted Amphylokhios, Bishop of Iconeia (+394)
- Sainted Gregory, Bishop of Acragantum (VI-VII)
- Holy Noble Born Great Prince Alexander Nevsky, named in monastic-schema Alexei, WonderWorker of All Russia (+1263)
- Sainted Mitrophan, in monastic-schema Makarii, Bishop of Voronezh (+1703)
- Martyrs Sisinius, Bishop of Kyzika (III)
- Theodore of Antioch (IV)

On this day we commemorate the departure of St. Timothy, Bishop of Ansena. He was righteous and

pious from his youth. He became a monk while he was still a young man and lived a virtuous life.

Because of his virtues, goodness and knowledge he was chosen Bishop of the City of Ansenia. He preached to the believers and guided the people to the Lord. The Governor seized him and tortured him using various ways, inside and outside the prison, for three consecutive years. There Governor shed the blood of many prisoners and only a few remained in prison, this father was one of them.

When the Lord destroyed Diocletian and replaced him by the righteous Emperor Constantine the Great, Constantine freed all the prisoners of faith in all the countries under his authority. Father Timothy was released and went back to his diocese and gathered all the priests therein. They prayed to the Lord all night long. Father Timothy prayer for the salvation of the soul of the Governor who had tortured him saying: "Lord, this Governor has brought me great blessing by bringing me closer to You, be good to him so that he might become close to You". The congregation were astonished at the purity of heart of this father who was fulfilling his Master's command: "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" (Matthew 5:44).

When the Governor heard that, he marvelled saying: "I had thought that he would curse me for what I inflicted upon him, for I had ill treated him greatly, but instead he is blessing me. Truly the faith of these people is a divine faith.

The Governor sent for to Abba Timothy to inquire about the principles of the Christian faith. The father explained to him the cause of the Incarnation of the Son of God and what the prophets had spoken many years before concerning Him and how their prophesies were fulfilled giving him proof from the scriptures. The Governor believed in the Lord Jesus and the father baptized him. Subsequently, the Governor resigned his post and became a monk.

The Bishop continued to teach his flock, guarding them until he departed in peace.

Also on this day in the year 1027 A.D., the great saint Abba Zechariah, the 64th Pope of Alexandria departed. He was a native of Alexandria and was ordained a priest there. He was a good and meek person.

When St. Philotheus, the 63rd Pope, departed the Bishops assembled to choose, with God's guidance, the person who would succeed him. While they were gathered in the Church of St. Mark discussing the matter, they were informed that a rich man from Alexandria called Ibrahim Ben-Bishr, who was close to the Governor (Khalifa) had given him a bribe and obtained a decree to be appointed Patriarch. The Governor sent him to Alexandria, accompanied with some soldiers.

The Bishops were shocked and saddened and they entreated God with one accord to keep the one who

was coming to shepherd His Church through bribery and the Governor's influence away. They asked God to choose a fitting person for His Church.

Meanwhile, Abba Zechariah was coming down the stairs of the church carrying a vessel. His foot slipped and he fell and came tumbling down the stairs to the floor while still holding the vessel intact in his hands. The Bishops and the Priests marvelled at this and they enquired about him from the people of Alexandria. Everyone conceded his piety and knowledge and agreed with the Bishops, to ordain him Patriarch.

When Ibrahim Ben-Bishr arrived, he found that they had already ordained Abba Zechariah Patriarch. When the Bishops read the Governor's letter, they appeased Ibrahim and ordained him priest, then an Archpriest. They also promised to ordain him bishop when one of the diocese became available.

Abba Zechariah had suffered many tribulations, among which, a monk had made many accusations against him before the Governor who became (Khalifa) in the year 989 A.D. The Governor seized the Pope and cast him to the lions, but the lions did not harm him. The Governor thought that the lion keeper had taken a bribe from the Pope. The Governor kept the lions without food for a long time, then he slaughtered a sheep and smeared the clothes of the Pope with its blood. He then cast the Pope a second time to the lions, but again, they did not harm him, for the Lord had domesticated them. The Governor marvelled and ordered the Pope be lifted up.

The Governor then cast him into prison for three months during which he threatened to kill him if he did not forsake his Christian faith. The Patriarch was not moved. The Governor again promised to appoint him the Chief Judge of the land, but again the Patriarch was not impressed. Finally, because of the mediation of one of the princes, he released him.

Abba Zechariah went to the Desert of Scete, stayed there for nine years during which the people suffered great tribulations. Also, several churches were destroyed during that time.

Christ had compassion on His Church and removed these trials from the people and turned the Governor away from his injustice. The Governor ordered the churches that were destroyed to be restored and ordered that everything that was taken from them be returned and that the bells of the churches ring again.

Abba Zechariah lived twelve years after that during which he cared for building new churches and restoring those that were destroyed. He remained in the Papacy for 28 years and departed in peace.

Sainted Amphylokhios, Bishop of Iconeia, was born in Caesarea Cappadocia, a city having given the world among the greatest fathers and teachers of the Orthodox Church. He was a first cousin to Saint Gregory the Theologian, and a close friend of Saint Basil the Great. He was their student, follower and

of like-mind with them. Saint Amphylokhios toiled hard on the field of Christ. Up until the time when the Lord summoned him for hierarchical service, he lived in the wilderness as a strict ascetic for about forty years. In the year 372 the bishop of Iconeia died. Angels of the Lord thrice appeared in visions to Saint Amphylokhios, summoning him to go to Iconeia for hierarchical service. The truthfulness of these visions was proven by that the Angel, appearing to him the third time, sang together with the saint the Angelic song: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord Sabaoth." The heavenly messenger led the saint to the nearest church, where an assembly of Angels consecrated Amphylokhios bishop.

The saint, on the way back to his cell, encountered seven bishops who were seeking after him through the command of God, so as to establish him as archpastor of Iconeia.

Sainted Amphylokhios told them, that he was already consecrated by the Angels.

For many years Sainted Amphylokhios tended the Iconeia flock entrusted to him by the Lord. The prayer of the righteous one was so intense, that he was able to implore of the Lord healing of spiritual and bodily infirmities of his flock. The wise archpastor, gifted as writer and preacher, unceasingly taught piety to his flock. A strict Orthodox theologian, the saint relentlessly confronted the Arian and Eunomian heresies. He participated in the events of the Second OEcumenical Council (381), and he headed the struggle against the heresy of Macedonios. Letters and tracts of Saint Amphylokhios are preserved, in which the completed form is combined with a profoundly dogmatic and apologetic content. The holy Bishop Amphylokhios of Iconeia peacefully expired to the Lord in the year 394.

Sainted Gregory, Bishop of Acragantum, was born on the island of Sicily, in the village of Pretorium, not far from the city of Acragantum, of the pious parents Chariton and Theodotia. The infant Gregory was baptised by the bishop of Acragantum, Pataimonus. At ten years of age the lad, ardent in study, mastered writing and was able to read, and to sing church-song. At 12 years of age Saint Gregory was entrusted to the clergy, and he was put under the spiritual guidance of the archdeacon Donatus. Saint Gregory spent the next 10 years in the Acragantum church. Then however an Angel of the Lord appeared to the holy youth, who had a fervent desire to visit Jerusalem, and said that God had blessed his intention.

At Jerusalem Saint Gregory was presented to Patriarch Makarios (563-574), who retained the pious youth for service in his own cathedral church, ordaining him deacon. The soul of Saint Gregory thirsted for monastic striving, and the Patriarch gave his blessing, letting him go to a monastery on the Mount of Olives. After a year Saint Gregory departed this monastery for a wilderness-elder, who over the course of four years taught him spiritual wisdom, humility and the principles of monastic life. The ascetic, foreseeing in Saint Gregory a future great luminary of the Church, gave him blessing to forsake the solitary life.

Having left the elder, Saint Gregory dwelt for a certain time at Jerusalem, and then set off to

Constantinople, where he was received with love by the brethren of the monastery of the holy Martyrs Sergios and Bakkhos. The ascetic efforts of the Monk Gregory, his spiritual experience and theological knowledge brought him to the attention of the Patriarch of Constantinople Eutykhios (552-565), at the insistence of whom the saint participated in the acts of the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553). At the completion of the Council Saint Gregory set off for Rome, so as to make veneration there at the graves of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

During this while the bishop of Acragantum died. The elder clergy and illustrious citizens of Acragantum journeyed to Rome with a request for the Pope to determine a successor for their cathedra-chair from among a list of candidates they were presenting. The Pope however declined their proposal through an inspiration from above, and instead summoned Saint Gregory to serve them as bishop.

For a few years Saint Gregory peacefully guided the flock entrusted to him by God. He was a defender of the down-trodden, a wise preacher, and miraculous-healer. And in the dignity of archbishop Saint Gregory led the life of an ascetic monk, fervently observing monastic vows. The flock loved their hierarch and trusted in him. But there were also malicious people, who had resolved to slander him. These vicious people in secret, while Saint Gregory was in church, led a bribed harlot into his chambers, and then in front of the crowd which accompanied the vладыка [bishop] after Divine-services to the doors of his house, they then led her out and accused Saint Gregory of the deadly sin of fornication. They put the holy bishop there under guard. The people attempted to defend their vладыка, but were unsuccessful. At the trial the harlot gave false testimony against Saint Gregory. And just as she pronounced the words of slander, she went into a fit of frenzied raging. The judges accused the saint of sorcery. Saint Gregory was sent for judgement to the Roman bishop together with a report about his "crimes." The Pope, having read through the report of charges, did not want to see the accused and gave orders to remand him in prison. The saint endured his humiliation humbly, dwelling in constant prayer. His prayerful effort and wonderworking gift quickly became known through the city and the surrounding region. Pious Romans began to gather at the prison, whom the imprisoned saint taught about the righteous life, and for the sick he implored of the Lord their healing.

After two years there came to the Pope a perspicacious elder by the name of Mark, who had known Saint Gregory since youth. The elder did not believe the report of charges and he persuaded the Pope to convene a Council to decide the matter of Gregory. At the invitation of the Pope, many clergy from the city of Acragantum came to the Council, together with all those making accusation against the saint, including the harlot. From Constantinople to Rome came three bishops and the imperial dignitary Marcian. Along the way Marcian had fallen grievously ill. At the advice of many a person who had received healing through the prayers of Saint Gregory, servants carried the dying man to the prison, where the wonderworking saint languished. Through the prayers of Saint Gregory the Lord granted healing to Marcian.

At the Council the slanderers attempted to uphold their accusations, and as their chief proof they presented to the judge the deranged harlot, declaring that Gregory had bewitched her. But the saint in making prayer over her cast out the devil. The woman came to her senses and told the Council the whole truth. The slanderers were brought to shame and judged. Marcian even wanted to execute them, but

Saint Gregory implored forgiveness for them.

Saint Gregory returned in honour to his own cathedral, and surrounded by the love of his flock, he guided the Church until his own peaceful end.

The Holy NobleBorn Prince Alexander Nevsky was born on 30 May 1220 in the city of Pereslavl'-Zalessk. His father Yaroslav, in Baptism Feodor (+1246), "a prince gentle, kindly and genial", was the younger son of Vsevolod III Large-Nest [Bol'shoe Gnezdo] (+1212), brother of the Holy NobleBorn Prince Yuri Vsevolodovich (+1238, commemorated 4 February). The mother of Saint Alexander, Feodosia Igorevna, a Riazan princess, was the third spouse of Yaroslav. Their older son was the Holy NobleBorn Prince Feodor (+1233, commemorated 5 June), having expired to the Lord at age 15. Saint Alexander was their second son.

His childhood was spent at Pereslavl'-Zalessk, where his father was prince. The princely tonsure of the lad Alexander (a ceremony of initiation to be soldier) was done in the Saviour Transfiguration Cathedral of Pereslavl' by Sainted Simon, Bishop of Suzdal' (+1226, commemorated 10 May), one of the compilers of the Kievo-Pechersk Paterikon (*Lives of the Fathers*). From the blessing of the starets [elder] hierarch Saint Alexander received his first blessing for military service in the Name of God, for defense of the Russian Church and the Russian Land.

In 1227 Prince Yaroslav, at the request of the people of Novgorod, was sent by his brother the GreatPrince of Vladimir Yuri, to rule as prince in Novgorod the Great. He took with him his sons, Saints Feodor and Alexander. Dissatisfied with the Vladimir princes, the people of Novgorod soon invited Saint Michael of Chernigov (+1246, commemorated 20 September), and in February 1229 Yaroslav with his sons departed to Pereslavl'. The matter ended peacefully: in 1230 Yaroslav with his sons returned to Novgorod, and the daughter of Saint Michael, Feodosia, was betrothed with Saint Feodor, the elder brother of Saint Alexander. After the death of the bridegroom in 1233 the young princess went to a monastery and became famous in monastic exploits as the Sainted Nun Evphrosinia of Suzdal' (+1250, commemorated 25 September).

From his early years Saint Alexander went along on the campaigns of his father. In 1235 he participated in a battle at the River Emajogi (in present-day Estonia), where the forces of Yaroslav totally routed the Germans. In the following year 1236 Yaroslav went to Kiev, "settling" his son, Saint Alexander, to rule independently as prince at Novgorod. In 1239 Saint Alexander entered into marriage, taking as wife the daughter of the Polotskian prince Briacheslav. Some histories relate, that in the Holy Baptism of the princess it was on the name-day of her saintly-spouse and that she was named Alexandra. His father, Yaroslav, blessed them at betrothal with the holy wonderworking icon of the Theodorovsk Mother of God (in Baptism they had named the father Theodore, or Feodor). This icon was thereafter constantly before Saint Alexander as his praying image; and afterwards in memory of him it was taken from the Gorodetsk Monastery, where he died, by his brother Vasiliï Yaroslavich of Kostroma (+1276), and

transferred to Kostroma.

A very troublesome time had begun in Russian history: from the East there came the Mongol Horde destroying everything in their path; from the West encroached the Teutonic Knights military-force, blasphemously having named itself, with the blessing of the Roman pope, "Cross-bearers," by wearing the Cross of the Lord. In this terrible hour the Providence of God raised up for the salvation of Rus' holy Prince Alexander -- a great warrior man-of-prayer, ascetic and upholder of the Land of Russia -- "Without the command of God there would not have been his prince." Abetted by the invasion of Batu, by the ruin of Russian cities, by the dismay and grief of the nation, by the destruction of its finest sons and leaders, an horde of crusaders made incursions into the borders of the Fatherland. First were the Swedes. "A king of Roman faith from the Midnight land," of Sweden, in 1240 gathered up a great armed force and sent them to the Neva on many ships under the command of his son-in-law, Yarl (i.e., Prince) Birger. The haughty Swede made a dispatch of his messengers to Novgorod to Saint Alexander: "If thou wishest, resist -- for I am already here and I take captive thy land."

Saint Alexander, then not yet 20 years old, prayed a long while in the church of Saint Sophia, the Wisdom of God. And having recalled the Psalm of David, he said: "Judge, O Lord, those oppressing me and hinder those fighting with me, trample down the weapon and shield, rise up in help for me." Archbishop Spiridon blessed the holy prince and his army for the battle. Leaving from the church, Saint Alexander exhorted his troops with effective words of faith: "Not in power is God, but in truth. Some -- with a weapon, some -- on horses, but we in the Name of the Lord Our God do summon you! They have hesitated and set fire, we however are bravely risen!" With a not-large force, trusting in the Holy Trinity, the prince hastened towards the enemy -- to await help from his father, not knowing about whether would be an attack of the enemy, nor whether it was the time.

But there was a miraculous omen: standing on sea guard the warrior Pelgui, in Holy Baptism Philip, saw at dawn on 15 July a boat, and on it were the Holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb, in royal-purple attire. And said Boris: "brother Gleb, guide the oar, let us help our kinsman Alexander." When Pelgui reported about the vision to the approaching prince, Saint Alexander commanded that no one through piety should speak about the miracle, and he emboldened, valiantly urged on the army against the Swedes with a prayer. "And there was a great slaughter with the Latins, and it killed their innumerable multitude, and for their very leader it left a mark upon the face by a sharp spear." An Angel of God invisibly helped the Orthodox army: when morning came, on the opposite bank of the River Izhora, whither the army of Saint Alexander was not able to proceed, were a multitude of the killed enemy. For this victory at the River Neva, won on 15 July 1240, the nation named the saint, Alexander Nevsky.

The Teutonic Knights remained a dangerous enemy. In a lightning-quick campaign in 1241 Saint Alexander recaptured the ancient Russian fortress of Kopor'e, expelling the knights. But in 1242 the Germans succeeded capturing Pskov. The enemy boasted of "subjecting all the Slavic nation." Saint Alexander, having set forth in a winter campaign, liberated Pskov, that ancient Home of the Holy Trinity, and in spring of the year 1242 gave the Teutonic Order a decisive battle. On the ice of Lake Chud both armies clashed on 5 April 1242. Raising his hands towards the heavens, Saint Alexander prayed: "Judge me, O God, and judge my strife with a boastful nation and grant help to me, O God, as to

Moses of old against Amalek, and to my great-grandfather Yaroslav the Wise against accursed Svyatopolk." By his prayer, by the help of God and by the military exploit the crusaders were completely destroyed. There was terrible slaughter, such a crashing resounded of striking spears and swords that it seemed, as though the frozen lake were in motion and not visibly ice, since it was covered by blood. Having turned to flee, the enemy was pursued and hewn at by the army of Alexander -- "as though they speeded through the air, and nowhere was there for the enemy to flee." Afterwards they led a multitude of captives behind the holy prince, marching in disgrace.

Contemporaries clearly understood the universal historical significance of the Great Battle of the Ice: they celebrated the name of Saint Alexander through all of Holy Rus', "through all the lands, from the AEgyptian Sea to Mount Ararat, from both sides of the Varangian Sea to Great Rome."

The western boundaries of the Russian Land were safely secured, and it became time to guard Rus' from the East. In 1242 Saint Alexander Nevsky together with his father, Yaroslav, journeyed to the Horde. Metropolitan Kirill blessed them for this new service of many hardships: it was necessary to change the Tatars from enemies and plunderers into honourable allies, and there was necessary "the meekness of an angel and the wisdom of a snake."

The Lord crowned with success the holy mission of the defenders of the Russian Land, but this required years of hardship and sacrifice. Prince Yaroslav passed from this life. Having made an alliance with Khan Batu, he was required, however, to travel to faraway Mongolia, to the capital of all the nomadic empire. The situation of Batu himself being precarious, he sought out the support of the Russian princes, wishing to separate with his own Golden Horde from faraway Mongolia. And there in turn, they trusted neither Batu nor the Russians. Prince Yaroslav was poisoned. He died in agony, having but by 10 days outlived the Holy Martyr Michael of Chernigov, with whom once he was nearly a relative. Bequeathed by his father an alliance with the Golden Horde -- of necessity then for the averting of a new devastation of Rus' -- Saint Alexander Nevsky continued to hold secure. The son of Batu, Sartak, having accepted Christianity, was in charge of Russian affairs with the Horde, and became his friend and like a brother. Vowing his support, Saint Alexander gave Batu the possibility to enter into a campaign against Mongolia, to become the chief power in all the Great Steppes, and on the throne in Mongolia to raise up the tatar-Christian leader, Khan Munke (the majority of his tatar-Christians confessed Nestorianism).

Not all the Russian princes possessed the perspicacity of Saint Alexander Nevsky. Many in the struggle against the Mongol Yoke hoped for European help. Saint Michael of Chernigov, Prince Daniel of Galich, and Andrei the brother of Saint Alexander, conducted negotiations with the Roman pope. But Saint Alexander well knew the fate of Constantinople, seized and devastated in the year 1204 by crusaders. And his own personal experience taught him not to trust the West. Daniel of Galich for his alliance with the pope, giving him nothing in return, patched together a betrayal to Orthodoxy -- an unia with Rome. Saint Alexander did not wish this to be for his native Church. When ambassadors of the Roman pope appeared in 1248 to seduce him also, he wrote in answer about the faithfulness of Russians to the Church of Christ and to the belief of the Seven OEcumencal Councils: "These we know quite well, and from you we do not accept teaching." Catholicism was unsuitable for the Russian Church, and an unia signified a rejection of Orthodoxy, a rejection of the source of spiritual life, a rejection of the

predestined-by-God historical future, and the dooming of itself to spiritual death. In the year 1252 many a Russian city rose up against the Tatar Yoke, supporting Andrei Yaroslavich. The situation was very risky. Again there arose a threat to the very existence of Russia. Saint Alexander had to again journey to the Horde, in order to avert from the Russian lands a punitive Tatar incursion. Defeated, Andrei fled to the Swedes to seek the help of those very robbers whom his great brother had crushed with the help of God at the Neva. Saint Alexander became the monarchic Great Prince of All Rus': Vladimir, Kiev and Novgorod. A great responsibility before God and history lay upon his shoulders. In 1253 he repelled a new German incursion against Pskov; in 1254 he made a treaty about peace borders with Norway; in 1256 he went on a campaign to the Finnish land. The chronicler called it "the dark campaign" -- the Russian army went along through the polar night, "going non-passable places, like to see neither day nor night". Into the darkness of paganism Saint Alexander brought the light of Gospel preaching and Orthodox culture. All the coast region was enlightened and opened up by the Russians.

In 1256 Khan Batu died, and soon also was poisoned his son Sartak -- the one like-a-brother to Alexander Nevsky. The holy prince journeyed a third time to Sarai, in order to confirm peaceful relations of Rus' and the Horde with the new Khan, Berke. Although the successor to Batu had accepted Islam, he was in need of the alliance with Orthodox Rus'. In 1261, by the diligent efforts of Saint Alexander and Metropolitan Kirill, there was established a diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church at Sarai, the capital of the Golden Horde.

There ensued an epoch of great Christianisation of the pagan East, and in this was prophetically the speculation by Saint Alexander Nevsky of the historical vocation of Rus'. The holy prince used any possibility for the uplifting of his native land and the easing of its allotted cross. In 1262 by his decree in many of the cities were stopped the tatar collectors of tribute and the conscription of soldiers -- the "baskak"-officials. They waited for a Tatar reprisal. But the great intercessor of the nation again journeyed to the Horde and he wisely directed the event into quite another channel: having been dismissed for the uprising of the Russians, Khan Berke ceased to send tribute to Mongolia and proclaimed the Golden Horde an independent entity, making it a very shield for Russia from the East. In this great uniting of the Russian and Tatar lands and peoples was matured and strengthened the future multi-national Russian State, containing later on within the bounds of the Russian Church almost all the legacy of Ghenghis Khan to the coasts of the Pacific Ocean.

This diplomatic journey of Saint Alexander Nevsky to Sarai was his fourth and last. The future of Rus' was rescued, his duty before God was fulfilled. But his power was wholly devoted, and his life put to the service of the Russian Church. On the return journey from the Horde Saint Alexander fell deathly ill. Not having reached Vladimir, at Gorodets at a monastery the prince-ascetic gave up his spirit to the Lord on 14 November 1263, having finished his much-difficult earthly path with the accepting of the monastic-schema with the name of Alexei.

Metropolitian Kirill, the spiritual father and companion in the service of the holy prince, said in the funeral eulogy: "Know, my child, that already the sun has set for the Suzdal' land. There will not be a greater such prince in the Russian land." They took his holy body to Vladimir, the journey lasted nine

days, and the body remained undecayed. On 23 November, before his burial at the Nativity Monastery in Vladimir, there was manifest by God "a wondrous miracle and worthy of memory." When the body of Saint Alexander was placed in the crypt, the steward Sebastian and Metropolitan Kirill wanted to get his hand, in order to put in it the final-journey spiritual gramota [document]. The holy prince, as though alive, reached out his hand and took the gramota from the hand of the metropolitan. "And it accounted for their terror, and they barely stumbled from his tomb. Who would not be astonished at this, since he was dead and the body brought from far away in the winter time." Thus did God glorify the Saint -- Soldier-Prince Alexander Nevsky. The universal Church glorification of Saint Alexander Nevsky was performed under Metropolitan Makarii at the Moscow Cathedral in 1547. The canon to the saint was compiled then by the Vladimir monk Michael.

Sainted Mitrophan, Bishop of Voronezh, in the world Mikhail (Michael), was born 8 November 1623. In the synodikon [memorial-list] belonging to the saint, the list begins especially with persons of priestly dignity, and this gives a basis to suggest, that he was born into priestly lineage. From the Spiritual last-testimony of Sainted Mitrophan is known, that he "was born of pious parents and was raised by them in the incorrupt piety of the Eastern Church, in the Orthodox faith." Until age 40 the saint lived in the world: he was married, had a son Ioann and served as a parish priest. The place of pastoral activity of the priest Mikhail was the village of Sidorov, situated at the River Molokhta, a tributary of the Teza flowing to the Klyaz'ma, not far from the city of Shui (now Vladimir district).

Having lost his spouse, priest Mikhail took monastic vows with the name Mitrophan in the Zolotnikovsk wilderness in 1663. In the synodikon of the monastery the origin of Saint Mitrophan that begins with the words: "Origin of black clergy Mitrophan is of Sidorovsk." After three years of monastic life the priest-monk Mitrophan was chosen hegumen of the Yakroma Kosma monastery [cf. 14 October]. He guided the monastery for 10 years, showing himself zealous as its head. By his efforts here they raised up a church in honour of the All-Merciful Saviour Not-Made-by-Hand Image.

Patriarch Joakim (1674-1690), learning about the deep piety of Saint Mitrophan, raised him in 1675 to the dignity of archimandrite of the then known Makarievo-Unzhensk monastery. Under the supervision of the saint, a church was built there in honour of the Annunciation [Blagoveschenie] of the MostHoly Mother of God, together with a refectory and bell-tower. At the Moscow Sobor [Council] of 1681-1682 among the number of measures taken for the struggle against the old-ritualist schism, and with the goal in mind of improvement of Christian enlightenment among the Orthodox populace, it was resolved to increase the number of dioceses and to open up new cathedrals at: Voronezh, Tambov, Kholmogor and Great-Ustiug. Saint Mitrophan was summoned to the capital and on 2 April 1682 was ordained bishop of Voronezh by Patriarch Joakim and sixteen archpastors.

The beginning of bishop's service of Sainted Mitrophan co-incided with a terrible time of troubles for Rus' and a Church schism. Upon his arrival at Voronezh the saint first of all sent out to the pastors of his diocese a circular missive, in which he urged his pastors to moral improvement. "Venerable priests of God Most-High! -- wrote the saint, -- Lead the flock of Christ! Ye ought to possess bright mental eyes,

enlightened by the light of reasoning, in order to lead others to the correct path. In the words of the Lord, ye ought to be yourselves the light: "ye art the light of the world" (Mt 5:14). ... Christ the Saviour, entrusting the flock to His apostle, thrice said to him: pastor, as though inspiring him that the image of pastorate is threefold: the word of teaching, prayer in benefit of the Holy Mysteries, and the example of life. Act ye also by all three methods: give example by a good life, teach your people and pray for them, strengthening them by the Holy Mysteries; above all enlighten the unbelieving by holy Baptism, and lead sinners to repentance. Be attentive to the sick, so that their lives be not deprived of the communing of the Holy Mysteries and the anointing with holy oil."

Saint Mitrophan began his arch-pastoral activity with the building of a new cathedral church in honour of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Mother of God, replacing an old wooden temple. In 1692 the cathedral with chapels in honour of the Archistrategos Michael and Saint Nicholas was consecrated. In the 20 years that Sainted Mitrophan was bishop, the number of churches increased from 182 to 239, and two monasteries were founded: the Korotoyask Ascension [Voznesenie] and the Bitiugsk Trinity monasteries. And within the existing monasteries, he concerned himself about eradicating the unseemingly and disorders, emphasising strict life according to monastic rule.

The first Voronezh bishop eagerly concerned himself about the needs of his flock. He consoled both the poor and the wealthy, was a defender of widows and orphans, and an advocate of the wronged. His home served as an hostel for strangers and an hospice for the sick. The saint prayed not only for the living, but also for dead Christians, and particularly for soldiers fallen for the Fatherland, inscribing their names in the memorial list of the synodikon. Remembering them at Proskomedie [priest's preparation of the gifts preceding Liturgy], Sainted Mitrophan said: "If a righteous soul, then be there a greater portion of worthiness; if however be a sinner, then be there a communion with the mercy of God."

There existed a great friendship of Sainted Mitrophan with Sainted Pitirim, Bishop of Tambov (commemorated 28 July). They not only kept up correspondence, but also met for spiritual talk. The history of the founding near Tambov of the Tregulyaev John the Precursor monastery was connected with the friendship of the bishops. On 15 September 1688 Saint Mitrophan visited with Saint Pitirim. Three of them together (with them was the priest Vasilii) took a stroll, to a place of solitary prayers of the Tambov archpastor, and there they chose the place for the future monastery.

Saint Mitrophan, a man intensely patriotic, by his own moral authority, kind-heartedness and prayers contributed to the reforms of Peter I, the necessity and purpose of which he well understood. With the building of a fleet at Voronezh for a campaign against Azov, Saint Mitrophan urged the nation to fully support Peter I. This was particularly important, since many regarded the construction of a fleet as an useless affair. The saint did not limit himself only to advice to the tsar, but rendered also material support to the state treasury, which needed the money for the construction of the fleet, and he provided all the means, aware that they would go for the welfare of the nation.

The patriotic feelings of the saint were combined in his soul with unflinching faith and strict Orthodox conviction, on account of which he did not fear incurring the tsar's wrath. Thus, the saint refused to go to

court to Peter I, since there stood there statues of pagan gods, and although for disobedience to the imperial will disgrace threatened the saint, he remained uncompromising. Peter gave orders to remove the statues and from that time was imbued with greater respect for the bishop. Sainted Mitrophan died in 1703 in extreme old age, taking before death the schema with the name Makarii. The funeral was done 4 December. Tsar Peter I himself carried the coffin from the cathedral to the tomb. Taking leave, he said: "There remains for me no greater such holy elder. Memory eternal be to him." One of the remarkable memorials of the life and activity of Saint Mitrophan is his Spiritual Testament. In it he says: "By Divine destiny I have arrived at old age and now I have exhausted my natural strength. Wherefore I have adjudged this my final writing ... When my sinful soul is released from its union with the flesh, I entrust it to the bosom of the Wisdom of God having created it, that it might find favour as the work of His hands, and the sinful bones I grant to the mother of all, in expectation thence of the resurrection of the dead". Further on, addressing pastors and the flocks, the saint says: "The simple sinner giveth answer to God for only his soul alone, but priests can come to torment for many, in neglecting the sheep, from which they do gather milk and wool... For everyone such the rule of wise men is: do work, preserve a balance -- ye will be rich; drink temperately, eat little -- ye will be healthy; do good, shun evil -- ye will be saved." The commemoration of Sainted Mitrophan was established in 1832.

The Holy Martyr Sisinius, Bishop of Kyzika, suffered for Christ during the reign of Diocletian (284-305) under the governor of Kyzika, Alexander. After many and terrible torments the martyr was beheaded.

The Holy Martyr Theodore of Antioch, a fifteen year old lad, was condemned to fierce torments for confessing Christ by the emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363). The executioners were dismayed that the saint could rejoice at the time of tortures, and cease to feel the pain. They reported about this miracle to the emperor, and he gave orders to release the saint. The Martyr Theodore afterwards related, that when they were tormenting him, an Angel appeared and relieved the suffering, and after the torture the Angel left, and the saint began to feel the pain. The holy Martyr Theodore lived to old age and peacefully expired to the Lord.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in
heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Suffrages A

Show us your mercy, O Lord;

And grant us your salvation.

Clothe your ministers with righteousness;

Let your people sing with joy.

Give peace, O Lord, in all the world;

For only in you can we live in safety.

Lord, keep this nation under your care;

And guide us in the way of justice and truth.

Let your way be known upon earth;

Your saving health among all nations.

Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten;

Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

Create in us clean hearts, O God;

And sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

Collect of the Day: Pentecost, proper 29

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

A Collect for Peace

Most holy God, the source of all good desires, all right judgments, and all just works: Give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, so that our minds may be fixed on the doing of your will, and that we, being delivered from the fear of all enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through the mercies of Christ Jesus our Savior. *Amen.*

For Mission

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh, and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

World Cycle of Prayer

We pray for the people of Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone Web

Ecumenical Cycle of Prayer

We pray for our sisters and brothers, members of the Worldwide Church of God.

The Worldwide Church of God

For the Right Use of God's Gifts

Almighty God, whose loving hand has given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honor you with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For Knowledge of God's Creation

Almighty and everlasting God, you made the universe with all its marvelous order, its atoms, worlds, and galaxies, and the infinite complexity of living creatures: Grant that, as we probe the mysteries of your creation, we may come to know you more truly, and more surely fulfill our role in your eternal purpose; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For the Care of Children

Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

A Prayer of Self-Dedication

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated unto you; and then use us, we pray you, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

General Thanksgiving

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation,

preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

A Prayer of St. Chrysostom

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. Amen.

Benediction

Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia. Alleluia.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen. *Romans 15:13*