

Daily Orthodox - December 21st, 2024

Today is Saturday of the 26th Week after Pentecost.

Fasting Obligations

- **OCA, GOARCH, Antioch:** Wine and oil permitted.

Today, we commemorate...

1. **The Holy Martyr Juliana and 630 Martyrs with her**

“ This glorious virgin and martyr was born in Nicomedia of pagan parents. Hearing the Gospel preached, she turned to Christ with all her heart and began to live in exact obedience of the Lord's commandments. Eleusius, a senator, was her betrothed. In order to turn him away, Juliana told him that she would marry him only if he became the eparch of that city. She suggested this to him, thinking that this young man would never attain such a high position. Nevertheless, Eleusius tried and, by flattery and bribery, attained the post of Eparch of Nicomedia. Juliana then revealed to him that she was a Christian and could not enter into marriage with him until he embraced her Faith, saying: "What does it benefit us to be united physically but divided spiritually?" Embittered by this, Eleusius denounced her to her father. The enraged father scorned her, beat her, and then handed her over to the eparch for torture. The eparch ordered that they severely beat her, then she was cast into prison, all wounded and bloody. However, the Lord healed her in prison, and she appeared before the eparch completely well. He then threw her into a glowing furnace but the fire did not burn her. Seeing this miracle, many believe in Christ God. Five hundred men and one hundred and thirty women were converted. The eparch condemned them all to death and ordered them all to be beheaded. Thus their souls entered Paradise. Then the wicked judged condemned holy Juliana to be beheaded. With

a joyful spirit, Juliana went out to the place of execution, prayed to God on her knees, and placed her head on the block. Her head was severed and her soul went to the Kingdom of Christ's eternal light in the year 304. God's punishment quickly befell Eleusius: as he was sailing on the sea, his ship broke up and he fell into the water. He did not find death in the water, but swam to an island, where dogs tore him to pieces and devoured him.

2. **Saint Peter, Metropolitan of Kiev and Moscow** (1326)

“ Peter was born in the province of Volhynia and embraced the monastic life at the age of twelve. He was a wonderful ascetic and iconographer. He founded a monastery on the river Rata and became its abbot. Against his will, he was appointed Metropolitan of Kiev and consecrated in Constantinople by Patriarch Athanasius. As metropolitan, he endured much at the hands of the envious and the heretics. He governed the Church for eighteen years as a good and zealous shepherd. During his lifetime he built a crypt for himself in the Church of the Dormition, where his holy and miracle-working relics repose even today. He entered into rest in the year 1326 and went to his true homeland.

3. **The Holy Martyr Themistocles of Myra in Lycia** (251)

“ As a shepherd, the young Themistocles tended sheep in a field near the city of Myra in Lycia. At that time the persecutors of Christians were pursuing St. Dioscorides, and they came upon Themistocles in the field. They asked him if he saw the one being pursued and if he knew where he was hiding. Themistocles, although he knew, refused to say, but instead declared himself a Christian. He was tortured and beheaded at the time of Decius in the year 251.

4. *St. Macarius the Faster*, abbot of Khakhuli Monastery (11th c.)
5. *St. Juliana*, princess of Vyazma (Novotorzhok) (1406)
6. *Blessed Procopius of Vyantka*, fool-for-Christ (1627)
7. *St. Philaret* (Theodosius in schema), metropolitan of Kiev (1857)
8. *New Hieromartyr Nicetas*, bishop of Belev (1937)
9. *Finding of the relics* (1950) of *New Monk-martyr Ephraim of Nea Makri* (1426)

For more information on today's saints or commemorations not provided, see

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives> (Slavic) and/or <https://www.goarch.org/chapel> (Greek).

Reflection

Reflections are added when it includes additional stories from the life of a saint commemorated today.

“ Whoever climbs to the Kingdom of Christ must encounter obstacles, and these obstacles are numerous and varied. Especially dangerous are the evils of the demons. Therefore, every man zealous for the spiritual life must be especially cautious and not accept every shining vision from the other world as a divine revelation. That even the devil is able to appear as an angel of light is shown in the life of the Holy Martyr Juliana. When this holy virgin lay in prison, the devil appeared to her in angelic light, and he counseled her to offer sacrifice to the idols so as to end her tortures. The frightened Juliana asked: "Who are you?" The devil replied: "I am an angel of God! God is greatly concerned about you. Therefore, He sent me with the message that you should submit to the eparch, so that your body will not be destroyed by pain; the Lord is gracious and will forgive you because of the weakness of your wounded body." The martyr was horrified at these words. Confused, she fell down in tears in prayer to God, asking Him to reveal who had spoken with her. Then a voice from heaven came to her: "Be brave, Juliana, I am with you; I give you authority and power over him who came to you, and from him alone will you discover who he is." And the devil was bound and forced to acknowledge that he was the same one who had deceived Eve in Paradise, who had told Cain to murder Abel, Herod to slaughter the children of Bethlehem, the Jews to stone Stephen, Nero to crucify Peter upside down and to behead Paul, and so forth. Thus, this holy virgin, girded with the power of God, did not allow herself to be deluded by the evil spirit, but she defeated him by her vigilant and ardent prayers to God.

Daily Scriptures

Slavic and Greek

- **Epistle:** Galatians 3:8-12

[ed. note: This is the Slavic reading for both the day and for the Saturday before Nativity, thus the odd arrangement here.]

“ <8> And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." <9> So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. <10> For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." <11> But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." <12>

Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."

- **Gospel (Slavic: for the Saturday before Nativity):** Luke 13:18-29

“ <18> Then He said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? <19> It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches." <20> And again He said, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? <21> It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." <22> And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. <23> Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, <24> "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. <25> When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' <26> then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' <27> But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' <28> There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. <29> They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.

Slavic

- **Gospel (Day):** Luke 16:10-15

“ <10> He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. <11> Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? <12> And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? <13> "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." <14> Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. <15> And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

