

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2020
AFTERFEAST OF THE ELEVATION OF THE CROSS
GREAT MARTYR EUSTATHIUS

The Holy Great Martyr Eustathius was named Placidus before his Baptism. He was a military commander under the emperors Titus (79-81) and Trajan (98-117). Even before he came to know Christ, Placidus performed acts of charity, helping the poor and destitute. Therefore, the Lord did not leave the virtuous pagan remain in the darkness of idolatry. Once while hunting in a forest, he saw a stag which would stop now and then to look him right in the eye. Placidus pursued it on horseback, but could not catch up. The stag leaped over a chasm and stood on the other side facing him. Placidus suddenly saw a radiant Cross between its antlers. In surprise the military commander heard a voice coming from the Cross saying, "Why do you pursue Me, Placidus?" "Who are You, Master?" asked Placidus. The Voice replied, "I am Jesus Christ, Whom you do not know, yet you honor Me by your good deeds. I have appeared here on this creature for your sake, to capture you in the net of My love for mankind. It is not fitting that one as righteous as you should worship idols and not know the truth. It was to save mankind that I came into the world." Placidus cried out, "Lord, I believe that You are the God of Heaven and earth, the Creator of all things. Master, teach me what I should do." Again the Lord replied, "Go to the bishop of your country and receive Baptism from him, and he will instruct you." Placidus returned home and joyfully recounted everything to his wife Tatiana. She in turn told him how the evening before, in a mysterious dream, she had been told, "Tomorrow you, your husband and your sons shall come to Me and know that I am the true God. The spouses then proceeded to do as they had been bidden. They hastened to the Christian bishop, who baptized all their family, and communed them with the Holy Mysteries. Placidus was renamed Eustathius, his wife was called Theopiste, and their children, Agapius and Theopistus. On the following day, St Eustathius set out to the place of his miraculous conversion and in fervent prayer he offered up thanks to the Lord for having called him onto the path of salvation. Again St Eustathius received a miraculous revelation. The Lord Himself foretold his impending tribulations: "Eustathius, you shall suffer many misfortunes, as did Job, but in the end you will conquer the devil." Soon St Eustathius was plunged into misfortune: all his servants died of the plague and his cattle perished. Brought to ruin, but not despairing in spirit, St Eustathius and his family secretly abandoned their home, to live unknown, humble and in poverty. They went to Egypt to board a ship sailing for Jerusalem. During the voyage a new woe beset the saint. The ship owner, enchanted by Theopiste's beauty, cruelly set Eustathius and his children ashore, keeping the wife for himself.

In great sorrow the saint continued on his way, and new woe beset him. Coming to a tempestuous river, he went to carry his two sons across in turn. When he had brought one across, the other was seized by a lion and carried off into the wilderness. As he turned back towards the other, a wolf dragged that child into the forest. Having lost everything, St Eustathius wept bitterly, but he realized that Divine Providence had sent him these misfortunes to test his endurance and devotion to God. In his inconsolable grief, St Eustathius went on farther, prepared for new tribulations. In the village of Badessos he found work and spent five years in unremitting toil. St Eustathius did not know then that through the mercy of God, shepherds and farmers had saved his sons, and they lived right near him. He also did not know that the impudent shipowner had been struck down with a terrible disease and died, leaving St Theopiste untouched. She lived in peace and freedom at the place where the ship landed. During this time it had become difficult for the emperor Trajan to raise an army for Rome to deal with a rebellion, for the soldiers would not go into battle without their commander Placidus. They advised Trajan to send men out to all the cities to look for him.

Antiochus and Acacius, friends of Placidus, sought him in various places. Finally, they arrived in the village where St Eustathius lived. The soldiers found Eustathius, but they did not recognize him and they began to tell him of the one whom they sought, asking his help and promising a large reward. St Eustathius, immediately recognized his friends, but did not reveal his identity to them.

He borrowed money from one of his friends and fed the visitors. As they looked at him, the travellers noted that he resembled their former commander. When they saw a scar on his shoulder from a deep sword-wound, they

realized that it was their friend there before them. They embraced him with tears and told him why they were seeking him.

St Eustathius returned to Rome with them and again became a general. Many new recruits were drafted into the army from all over the empire. He did not know that two young soldiers who served him, and whom he loved for their skill and daring, were actually his own sons. They did not know that they were serving under the command of their own father, nor that they were brothers by birth.

While on campaign, the army led by Eustathius halted at a certain settlement. The soldier-brothers were talking in their tent. The elder one spoke about his life, how he had lost his mother and brother, and how in a terrifying way he had been parted from his father. The younger brother then realized that before him was his very own brother, and told him how he had been rescued from the wolf.

A woman overheard the soldiers' conversation, since their tent was pitched right next to her house, and this woman realized that these were her sons. Still not identifying herself to them, but not wanting to be separated from them, she went to their commander, St Eustathius, to ask him to take her to Rome with him. She said she had been a prisoner, and wanted to go home. Then she came to recognize the commander as her husband, and with tears she told him about herself and about the two soldiers who were actually their sons. Thus, through the great mercy of the Lord, the whole family was happily reunited.

Soon thereafter the rebellion was crushed, and St Eustathius returned to Rome with honor and glory. The emperor Trajan had since died, and his successor Hadrian (117-138) wanted to celebrate the event of victory with a solemn offering of sacrifice to the gods. To the astonishment of everyone, St Eustathius did not show up at the pagan temple. By order of the emperor they searched frantically for him.

"Why don't you want to worship the gods?" the emperor inquired. "You, above all others, ought to offer thanks to them. They not only preserved you in war and granted you victory, but also they helped you find your wife and children." St Eustathius replied: "I am a Christian and I glorify and give thanks to Him, and I offer sacrifice to Him. I owe my life to Him. I do not know or believe in any other god than Him."

In a rage, the emperor ordered him to take off his military belt and brought him and his family before him. They did not succeed in persuading the steadfast confessors of Christ to offer sacrifice to idols. The whole family of St Eustathius was sentenced to be torn apart by wild beasts, but the beasts would not touch the holy martyrs.

Then the cruel emperor gave orders to throw them all alive into a red-hot brass bull, and St Eustathius, his wife Theopiste, and their sons Agapius and Theopistus endured a martyr's death. Before being placed in the bull, St Eustathius prayed, "Grant, O Lord, Thy grace to our relics, and grant to those who call upon us a place in Thy Kingdom. Though they call upon us when they are in danger on a river or on the sea, we entreat Thee to come to their aid."

Three days later, they opened the brass bull, and the bodies of the holy martyrs were found unscathed. Not one hair on their heads was singed, and their faces shone with an unearthly beauty. Many seeing this miracle came to believe in Christ. Christians then buried the bodies of the saints.

GREAT VESPERS

LORD I CALL: Four stikhera of the Resurrection in tone 6 followed by three for the feast and three for the saint

tone 6:

Possessing victory over hell, O Christ,

since You are free among the dead,

You ascended the Cross

raising with Yourself those who sat in the shades of death.//

O Almighty Savior, Who drew life from Your own light, have mercy on us!

Today Christ tramples on death,
for He is risen as He said!
Let us all sing this song,
for He has granted joy to the world:
“O Light unapproachable, O Fountain of life!//
Savior Almighty, have mercy on us!”

Where shall we sinners flee from You, for You are in all creation?
In heaven You dwell!
In hell You trampled on death!
In the depths of the sea?
Even there is Your hand, O Master!
To You we flee, and falling before You, we pray://
“As You rose from the dead, have mercy on us!”

In Your Cross, we glory, O Christ.
We sing and glorify Your Resurrection.
For You are our God,//
and we know no other than You.

Feast, tone 4:

Today Your precious Cross, O Savior Christ,
shone forth radiantly like the sun,
set up and elevated on the all-glorious Place of the Skull:
on Your all-holy mountain,
openly revealing that by it, O all-powerful One,//
You have raised our nature to the heavens,//
for You are the Lover of mankind.

Today, O unapproachable One,
the heavens declare your glory to men.
The image of the Cross, shining forth in radiance,
with unapproachable light,
has denounced the evil nature of God’s enemies.
Therefore, we glorify Your loving dispensation,//
O almighty Jesus, the Savior of our souls.

Stretching forth his hands, Moses vanquished Amalek,
prefiguring the image of the Cross.
Now we, bowing down before the Tree of the Cross,
trample the cunning plots of the enemy underfoot,
since we have Christ as our champion,
Who was lifted up on it in the flesh,//
slaying the serpent and saving mankind.

Saint, tone 4:

Your calling was from on high, and not from men, O Eustathius,
for Christ Himself, the Lover of man, appeared to you
and captured you in the nets of faith, O blessed one,
He washed away your sins with your baptism and the trials of life.
As Master, He extends patience to you, //
showing you to be a renowned conqueror.

Joyfully, in your youth, O Eustathius,
you received instruction in the virtues.
Bereft of your children and spouse,
you valiantly endured captivity,
suffering humiliating slavery.
But your courage in battle made you loving and radiant, //
O ever-memorable saint.

You offered yourself to God as divine incense,
rendered most fragrant in the fire:
A beautiful burnt offering, an acceptable sacrifice,
a living and perfect oblation,
bearing fruit with all your household.
Therefore the mansions of heaven and the armies of the saints
have now received both you and yours, //
O truly wondrous Eustathius.

GLORY...for the saint, tone 2:

Eustathius sets himself before us
as a second Job in his life,
in his sufferings and his struggles.
He is a model of the virtues and tower of patience,
truly surpassing Job in that virtue,
together with his spouse and his children,
faithful in life and unshaken in trials,
a victor in the midst of sufferings.
We set him forth in supplication before Christ, //
that He may grant enlightenment to our souls and cleansing for our sins.

NOW AND EVER...the Dogmatikon in tone 6:

Who will not bless you, O most holy Virgin?
Who will not sing of your most pure childbearing?
The only-begotten Son shone timelessly from the Father,
but from you He was ineffably incarnate.
God by nature, He became Man for our sake,
not divided into two persons but manifest as One in two natures.
Entreat Him, O pure and all-blessed Lady, //

to have mercy on our souls!

APOSTIKHA: All stikhera of the Resurrection in tone 6:

Your Resurrection, O Christ our Savior,
the Angels in heaven sing!
Enable us on earth//
to glorify You in purity of heart!

Destroying the gates of hell,
breaking the chains of death,
You resurrected the fallen human race as almighty God!//
O Lord, Who rose from the dead, glory to You!

Desiring to return us to Paradise,
Christ was nailed to the Cross and placed in a tomb.
The Myrrhbearing Women sought Him with tears, crying,
“Woe to us, O Savior!
How do You deign to descend to death?
What place can hold Your life bearing body?
Come to us as You promised!
Take away our wailing and tears!”
Then the Angel appeared to them:
“Stop your lamentations!
Go, proclaim to the Apostles:
‘The Lord is risen,//
granting us purification and great mercy!’”

Having been crucified as You willed,
by Your burial You captured death, O Christ,
and rose on the third day as God in glory,//
granting the world unending life and great mercy!

GLORY...for the saint, tone 6:

How can we fittingly praise you,
who were adamant in your soul?
Deprived of your wife, children and possessions,
you transcended nature,
uttering the blessed and ever-memorable cry of Job:
“The Lord gave and the Lord took away.
As the Lord willed, so has it been.”
God, Whom you loved and Whom you fervently desired
again gave back your most cherished ones,;
for whom you thoughtfully cared as they suffered with you.
Reaching the end of manifold torments with them,
receiving them as your fellow intercessors,

O long-suffering Eustathius,//
pray that we may be delivered from our sins!

NOW AND EVER...for the feast, tone 6:

O Cross of Christ,
hope of Christians and guide for the lost,
haven of the storm-tossed and victory in battles,
strength and confirmation of the world,
physician of the sick and Resurrection of the dead;//
have mercy on us!

Troparia

Resurrection, tone 6

The angelic powers were at Thy tomb;
the guards became as dead men.
Mary stood by Thy grave,
seeking Thy most pure Body.
Thou didst capture hell,
not being tempted by it.

Greatmartyr Eustathius, tone 4

Your holy martyr Eustáthius and his wife and sons, O Lord,
through their sufferings have received incorruptible crowns from You, our God.
For having Your strength, they laid low their adversaries,
and shattered the powerless boldness of demons.//
Through their intercessions, save our souls!

Cross, tone 1

O Lord, save Your people
and bless Your inheritance!
Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians
over their adversaries;
and by virtue of Your Cross,//
preserve Your habitation!

THE DIVINE LITURGY

TROPARIA

Resurrection, tone 6

The angelic powers were at Thy tomb;
the guards became as dead men.
Mary stood by Thy grave,
seeking Thy most pure Body.
Thou didst capture hell,

not being tempted by it.

Cross, tone 1

O Lord, save Your people,
And bless Your heritage.
Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians
Over their adversaries;
And by virtue of Your Cross,
Preserve Your habitation.

Saint John of Damascus

Teacher of Orthodoxy, piety, and purity!
Enlightener of the universe!
And divine inspiration to monastics
by your teachings we are all enlightened,
and by your spiritual music, O all-wise John of Damascus,
pray to Christ our God for the salvation of our souls!

KONTAKIA

Resurrection, tone 6

When Christ God the Giver of Life,
raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His mighty hand,
He bestowed resurrection on the human race.
He is the Savior of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of all.

Saint Eustathius, tone 2

Having openly imitated the Passion of Christ,
and having eagerly drunk of His cup, O Eustathius,
you became a partaker and follow heir of His glory,
receiving divine forgiveness from on high from the God of all.

Feast, tone 4

As You were voluntarily crucified for our sake,
Grant mercy to those who are called by Your name;
Make all Orthodox Christians glad by Your power,
Granting them victories over their adversaries,
By bestowing on them the invincible trophy, Your weapon of peace.

PROKEIMENON, tone 7: Extol the Lord our God; worship at His footstool for it is holy!
Vs. The Lord reigns; let the people tremble.

EPISTLE: (203) Galatians 2:16-20 Brethren, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified... "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found

sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? God forbid! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me..." **2 CORINTHIANS 4:6-15** Brethren, it is God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ... But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always bearing in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you... And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore have I spoken," we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the thanksgiving of many, may abound to the glory of God...

Alleluia in the first tone: Remember Thy congregation which Thou hast purchased of old.
vs. God is our King before the ages: He hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth.

GOSPEL: (37) Mark 8:34-9:1 At that time, when He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." and He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power." **(92) Matthew 22:35-46** At that time, one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David." He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord', saying: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"'? If David then calls Him 'Lord', how is He his Son?" And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

COMMUNION HYMN: Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! The light of Your countenance has shown on us I Lord. Alleluia....

