

Basic Concepts.

1. The World.

All that we see: heaven, the sun, the moon, stars, clouds, the earth on which we live, the air we breathe, the earth on which we live, including the grass, trees, mountains, rivers, seas, fish, birds, beasts, animals, and finally people — God created all of this. Yes indeed, **the world is the creation of God!** When we see God's world then we understand how beautifully and wisely it was made.

Here we are in a meadow. Overhead, the blue sky with white clouds is stretched out like a tent, and on the earth there is thick, green grass, sprinkled with flowers. In the grass we can hear the sounds of various insects, butterflies fluttering around the flowers, and bees and gnats of different kinds flying through the air. The whole earth is like a huge, beautiful carpet. But there is no carpet woven by the hand of man that can be compared with the beauty of God's meadow.

Let us take a walk in the woods. There we can see a multitude of different kinds of trees, the mighty oak, the lordly pine, the spotted birch, the fragrant linden, the maple, the tall fir tree and the thick chestnut tree. There are little clearings with bushes and all kinds of herbs. Everywhere we hear the voices of birds, the buzzing and chirping of insects. Hundreds of different kinds of animals live in the forest. And how many different kinds of berries, mushrooms, and flowers there are! The forest is like a great world unto itself.

And here is the river. It quietly flows, sparkling in the sun, among the forests, fields, and meadows. How much fun it is to go for a swim! All around it is hot, but in the water it is cool and pleasant. How many different kinds of fish, frogs, waterbugs, and other living creatures there are! It has its own life, its own little world.

How magnificent the ocean is, with its huge and rich underwater world of living creatures.

How beautiful the mountains are with their lofty peaks covered with eternal snow and ice, high above the clouds.

The world is marvelous in its beauty, and all that is in it is full of life.

It is impossible to count all the plants and animals that populate the earth, from the very smallest, which are invisible to our eyes, to the very largest. They live everywhere — on the land, in the water, in the air, in the soil, and even deep beneath the earth. It is God Who gave all this life to the world.

The world of God is rich and varied! At the same time, in all this vast variety there reigns a marvelous and definite order established by God, or, as we often say, the "laws of nature," All the plants and animals are distributed throughout the world in keeping with this order. What each one is supposed to eat, that is what it eats. And there is a definite and logical purpose given to everything. Everything in the world is born, grows, and dies — one thing is replaced by another. God gave a special time and place and purpose to everything.

Man alone lives everywhere on the earth and has dominion over everything. God granted him reason and an immortal soul. He gave man a special and great purpose: to know God, to be like Him, that is, to become constantly better and inherit eternal life.

In their external appearance people are different, but they all have the same reasonable and immortal soul. Through this soul people are lifted above the animal world and become like God.

Now let us look into the deep, dark night, from earth up to heaven. How many stars we see scattered there. There is an infinite number of them! Many of the stars are just like our star, the sun. There are some that are many times larger than ours, but they are so far away from the earth that they seem to us to be tiny, twinkling pinpoints of light. They are all in motion in an orderly and harmonious manner, according to definite paths and laws. Our earth amid the heavenly vastness seems like a tiny speck of light.

The world of God is vast, uncontainable! We can neither account for nor measure it all, for only 'God, Who created everything, knows the measure and weight and number of all things.

God created the entire world for the life and benefit of people, for each of us. God's love for us is infinite!

If we love God and live according to His law, then much that is unintelligible in the world will become understandable and clear to us. Let us love God's world and live in friendship, love, and joy with everyone. Then this joy will never end, and no one will take it away

from us, for God Himself will be with us.

In order to remember that we belong to God, to be closer to Him and to love Him, that is, to fulfill our purpose on earth and to inherit eternal life, we must know more about God, know His holy will, that is, **GOD'S LAW**.

Questions: Who created the world and gave it life? Who made definite order in the world (or as we often say, established the laws of nature), and what does this consist of? What purpose did God give to man? For whom did God create the world? Why is it necessary for us to know God's Law?

2. About God.

God created the whole world **out of nothing**, by His Word alone. God can do all that He wishes. God is the highest existence. There is no one nor anything equal to Him anywhere, neither on earth nor in Heaven. We, mankind, cannot fully comprehend Him by our reason. We would know nothing about Him unless He Himself had not revealed it to us. What we know about God has all been revealed to us by God Himself.

When God created the first people, Adam and Eve, He appeared to them in Paradise, revealing Himself to them, revealed how He created the world, and how people must believe in the One True God and fulfill His will. This teaching of God was first passed on orally from generation to generation, but later, at the inspiration of God, it was written down by Moses and by the other prophets in the sacred books.

Finally, the **very Son of God, Jesus Christ**, appeared on earth and revealed all that mankind needs to know about God. He revealed to mankind a great mystery: **God is One** but a **Trinity in Three Persons**. The first Person is **God the Father**; the second Person is **God the Son**, the third Person is **God the Holy Spirit**. These are not three gods but one God in three Persons, **the Trinity in one essence and indivisible**.

All three Persons have the same divine dignity; there is not a senior one among them nor a junior; as **God the Father** is true **God**, so also **God the Son** is true **God**, and likewise, the **Holy Spirit** is true **God**.

They are different only in that **God the Father** is not begotten and does not proceed from anyone; **God the Son is begotten** of God the Father; the **Holy Spirit proceeds** from God the Father.

Jesus Christ through the revelation of the mystery of the All-holy Trinity taught us not only to worship God truly, but also to love God as all three Persons of the Most-holy Trinity — the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All eternally abide with one another in unceasing love and make up one Being. God is all-perfect love.

The great mystery, which God revealed to us concerning Himself, is **the mystery of the Holy Trinity**, which our weak mind cannot contain or understand.

St. Cyril, the teacher of the Slavs, tried to explain the mystery of the Most-holy Trinity. He said, "Do you see in the heavens the brilliant sphere of the sun and how from it light is begotten and warmth proceeds? God the Father is like the sphere of the sun, without beginning or end. From Him is eternally begotten God the Son, like light from the sun; just as there comes warmth together with light from the sun, the Holy Spirit proceeds. Each one is distinguished separately: the sphere of the sun and the light and the warmth — these are not three suns, but one sun in the heavens. So also, in the Holy Trinity: there are three Persons but God is one and indivisible." Blessed Augustine says: "You see the Trinity if you see love." This means that we can understand the mystery of the Holy Trinity more readily with the heart, that is by love, than with our feeble mind.

The teaching of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was written down by His disciples in a sacred book, which is called the **Gospel**. The original word for Gospel is the Greek word *Evangelion*, which means glad tidings or good news.

The sacred books, gathered together into one book, are called the **Bible**. This is from Greek word which means "**book**."

Questions: Can we completely comprehend with our mind what God is and by ourselves learn about Him? Where do we learn about God and how He is the Creator of the world? Who revealed the teaching about God, that He is One but a Trinity in Persons? How are the Persons of the Holy Trinity called? How are They distinguished from One Another? What is the Gospel and what is the Bible?

3. The Attributes of God

God revealed to us concerning Himself that He is a **bodiless and invisible spirit** (John 4:24).

What does it mean that God has neither a body, nor bones, as we have, and does not have in Himself anything that makes up our visible world, and therefore we cannot see Him?

In order to explain this, let us take an example from our earthly world. We do not see the air, but we see its actions and results; the movement of the air has great power which can move huge ships and complex machines. We feel and we know that we cannot live without the air that we breathe. So also we do not see God, but we see His activity and its results, His wisdom and power are everywhere in the world, and we feel them in ourselves.

The invisible God, out of love for us, at various times appeared to righteous people in a visible form — in images, or, reflections of Himself, that is to say, in such a form that they could behold Him. Otherwise they would have perished from directly beholding His majesty and glory.

God said to Moses, ***There shall no man see Me, and live*** (Ex. 33:20). If the sun blinds us with its brilliance, and we cannot look upon this creation of God lest we be blinded, then how much more so, on God Who created it. ***For God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all*** (1 John 1:5), and He dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16).

God is Eternal

(Ps. 89:3, Ex. 40:28).

All that we see in the world began at one time or another. It was born, and at some time it will also come to an end, it will die, it will be destroyed. All that is in the world is temporal; everything has its beginning and its end.

Once there was no Heaven, there was no earth, no time, but there was God, because He has no beginning. Having no beginning, He has no end. God always was and always shall be. God is outside time. **God always is.**

Therefore, He is called eternal.

God is unchanging

(James 1:17, Mal. 3:6).

There is nothing in the world constant or unchanging; everything constantly changes, grows, ages and disintegrates. One thing is replaced by another.

Only God is constant; there is no change in Him. He does not grow, does not age. He in no way, and on no account and at no time ever changes. Just as He always was, so He is now, and so He shall remain forever. God is always the same.

Therefore He is called unchanging.

God is omnipotent

(Gen. 17:1, Luke 1:37).

If a man wants to make something, he needs material; without material he cannot make anything. With paint and canvas man can paint a beautiful picture; from metal he can make a complex and useful machine. But he can never make, for instance, the earth on which we live, or the sun which gives light and warmth, and many other things.

Only for God is everything possible; there is nothing that He cannot do. He wished to create the world and He created it out of nothing by His word alone. God can do all that He wishes. Therefore He is called omnipotent.

God is omnipresent

(Ps. 138:7-12).

God always, throughout all time, is present everywhere. There is no place in the world where He is not present. No one can hide from Him anywhere. God is everywhere. Therefore, He is called omnipresent.

God is omniscient

(I John 3:20, Heb. 4:13).

Man can learn many things, know a great deal, but no man can know everything. Moreover, man cannot know the future, and cannot hear everything and see everything. Only God alone knows everything, what was, what is, and what will be. For God there is no difference between day and night. He sees and hears everything at all times. He knows each of us, and not only what we do and say, but also what we think and what we want. God always hears everything, sees everything, and knows everything.

Therefore, He is called omniscient (knowing all things).

God is all-good

(Matt. 19:17).

People are not always good. It often happens that a person does not love someone else.

Only God loves all of us and loves us perfectly, not as man loves. He gives all that we need for life. All that we see in the heavens and on the earth was created by the Lord for the good and benefit of man.

This is how one bishop teaches about God's love for us: "Who gave us life? The Lord! From Him we received a rational soul that can think and learn. From Him we received a heart that is able to love. Around us is the air, without which we cannot live.

"We are always supplied with water which is as necessary for us as the air. We live on the earth which supplies us all the food that is necessary for the maintenance and preservation of our life. We are supplied with light without which we could not do anything for ourselves. We have fire with which we can keep ourselves warm when it is cold and with which we can prepare the food we eat. All this is the gift of God. We have a father, mother, brothers, sisters, and friends. How much joy, help, and consolation they provide for us! But we would not have any of these were it not pleasing to the Lord to give them to us."

God is always prepared to give us everything that is beneficial to us, everything good, and He takes more care for us than the best father does for his children.

Therefore God is called all-good, or Most-merciful.

We call God our Heavenly Father.

God is all-righteous

(Ps. 7:12, Ps. 10:7).

Men often tell lies and are unjust. But God is perfectly just. He always preserves righteousness, and He judges people justly. He does not punish a righteous man without a reason, and He does not leave a man unpunished for any evil deed, unless the man himself corrects his life by repentance and good deeds. Therefore, God is called all-righteous and all-just.

God is all-sufficient

(Acts 17:25).

Man is always in need of something, therefore he is often dissatisfied.

God alone has everything and is not in need of anything for Himself; on the contrary, He gives everything to all. Therefore, He is called all-sufficient.

God is all-blessed

(1 Tim. 6:15).

God is not only all-sufficient, but He always has within Himself the very highest joy — complete blessedness, the very greatest happiness.

Therefore, God is called all-blessed. We can never find true joy in life, except in God alone.

We call God **creator**, or **maker**, because He created all things, visible and invisible.

We likewise call God **almighty**, **master**, and **king**, because He, by His almighty will, rules and reigns and directs all that was created by Him, holding them in His power and authority.

We call God Divine **provider**, because He provides for all things and takes care of all things.

Questions: What are the attributes of God? Why do we call God a spirit, eternal, unchanging, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, all-good, all-righteous, all-sufficient and all-blessed? Why do we call Him creator and maker? Why do we call Him almighty, master, king, and provider?

4. Prayer.

God loves His creation; He loves each of us. *"And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"* (2 Cor. 6:18).

Therefore we can always at any time turn to God, to our Heavenly Father, as if to our own father or mother. Our turning to God is prayer.

This means that **prayer** is **conversation or speaking with God**. It is as necessary for us as air and food. Everything we have is from God, we have nothing of our own. Life, abilities, health, food: all these things are given to us by God.

Therefore, in times of both joy and sadness, whenever we need anything, we must turn to God in prayer, for the Lord is extremely good and merciful to us. If we ask from a pure heart, with faith and fervor concerning our needs, He will unfailingly fulfill our wish, and grant all we need. We must completely rely on His holy will and patiently wait, for God alone knows what we need and when to give it to us, what is useful and what is harmful.

People who are slothful about praying to God do great harm to their souls; for as they depart from God, God departs from them.

Without prayer man ceases to love God, he forgets about Him, and he does not fulfill His purpose on earth, he sins.

Questions: What does it mean to pray to God? Is it necessary to pray to God? When does God answer our prayer? Is it good for people not to pray to God?

5. Sin.

Sin, or **Evil**, is a violation of God's law. Transgression, or sin, is **violating the will of God**.

How did people begin to sin, and who was the first to violate the will of God?

Before the creation of the visible world and man, God created **angels**. Angels are bodiless **spirits**, invisible and immortal. All the angels were created good and God gave them complete freedom to love God or not, and to live with God or without God.

One of the most radiant and powerful angels did not wish to love God, to depend on Him, and fulfill the will of God, but desired to become like God Himself, to live independently. This angel ceased to obey God and began to resist God in everything. Thus he became the enemy of God, and many other angels went with him.

For such a rebellion against God these angels were all deprived of the light and blessedness that had been given to them, and they became evil, dark spirits.

All these dark, evil spirits are now called **demons or devils**. The main devil who was once the most radiant of the angels is called Satan, the enemy of God.

The Devil inspires people not to obey God, but to sin. The Devil deceives. By cleverness and deceit he taught the first people created by God, Adam and Eve, to violate the will of God.

All people come from Adam and Eve, who first fell into sin, and therefore we are born with an inclination to sin. Being constantly committed from generation to generation, sin has taken power over all men and has submitted everyone to itself. All men — to a greater or lesser degree — are sinners.

It is sin that constantly separates man from God and leads to suffering, illness, and death — temporal and eternal. It is for this reason that mankind began to suffer and die. Men alone, by their own efforts, could not overcome the evil that had spread throughout the world, or destroy death. God in His compassion gave help to men, sending to earth His Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Questions: What is sin? Who was the first to violate the will of God? Who is the Devil, or Satan? Who are the angels, and when were they created? Who are the evil spirits, and how are they called? Who taught men to sin, and how? Why are all of us born sinners? From Whom does sin separate mankind, what does it lead to, and why do all men die? Can men by themselves, by their own efforts, conquer evil and destroy death? How did God help people overcome evil and eternal death?

6. The Sign of the Cross.

We call ourselves **Christians** because we believe in God as we were taught to believe by the Son of God Himself, our Lord **Jesus Christ**.

Jesus Christ not only taught us to believe in God correctly, but He also **saved us from the power of sin and eternal death**.

The Son of God, Jesus Christ, out of love for us sinners came down from Heaven and, as a man, suffered instead of us for our sins: He was **crucified, He died on the Cross**, and on the third day He resurrected. As the sinless Son of God, **by His Cross** (that is, by

suffering and death on the Cross for the sins of all men and of all the world), He conquered not only sin but also death itself — **He arose from the dead**, and He made the Cross the weapon of His victory over sin and death.

As the vanquisher of death, Who arose on the third day, He saved us also from eternal death. He will resurrect all of us, all the dead, when the last day of the world comes; He will resurrect us for joyful, eternal life with God.

The **Cross** is the **weapon**, or the **sign, of Christ's victory over sin and death**.

One teacher gave the following example in order to explain to his students how Jesus Christ could conquer evil in the world by His Cross:

For many years the Swiss fought against their enemies, the Austrians. Finally the opposing armies met in a certain valley for a decisive battle. The Austrian soldiers, wearing their armor, were drawn up in battle array with their lances extended forward, and the Swiss, beating them with their maces (heavy clubs with weights on the end), tried without success to break the ranks of the enemy. Several times the Swiss threw themselves on the enemy with blind courage, but every time they were thrown back. They were not strong enough to break through the thick row of lances.

Then one of the Swiss soldiers, Arnold Winkler, sacrificed himself, ran ahead, grabbed with both arms several of the spears pointed at him, and allowed them to pierce his chest. In this way an opening was made for the Swiss and they broke into the ranks of the Austrians and won a decisive and final victory over their enemies.

So the hero, Winkler, sacrificed his own life and died, but he made it possible for his people to conquer the enemy.

In the same way, our Lord Jesus Christ received in His breast the terrible spears of sin and death which were invincible for us. He died on the **Cross**, but He also **arose**, as the vanquisher of sin and death, and thus opened for us the way to eternal victory over evil and death. That is, He opened the way to eternal life.

Now everything depends on us: if we wish to be delivered from the power of evil, sin and eternal death, then we must **follow** Christ, that is, **believe** in Christ, **love** Him, and fulfill His holy will, being obedient to Him in everything, live with Christ.

This is why, in order to express our faith in Jesus Christ our Saviour,

we wear a Cross on our body, and during prayer we form the Cross over ourselves with our right hand, or make the **sign of the Cross**.

For the sign of the Cross we put the fingers of our right hand together as follows. We bring the tips of the first three fingers together (the thumb, index and middle ones), and bend the last two (the "ring" and little fingers) against the palm.

The first three fingers together express our faith in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, as the Trinity one in essence and indivisible, and the two fingers bent show how the Son of God, when He came down from Heaven, being God, became man; that is, they signify His two natures — divine and human.

In order to make the sign of the Cross, with our fingers in this position, we touch our **forehead**, for the blessing of our mind, our **stomach**, for the blessing of our internal feelings, then our right and left **shoulders**, for the blessing of our bodily strength.

The sign of the Cross gives us great strength to repel and conquer evil and to do good, but we must remember to make the sign of the Cross correctly and without haste, otherwise it will not be the sign of the Cross, but just waving our hand around, which only gladdens the demons. By making the sign of the Cross carelessly we show a lack of reverence for God. This is a sin. This sin is called **sacrilege**.

We make the sign of the Cross, or "cross ourselves," at the beginning of prayer, during prayer, at the end of prayer, and when we draw near to anything holy: when we enter the church, when we reverence the Cross or an icon. We should cross ourselves at every important moment in our life: in danger, in sorrow, in joy, and so on.

When we cross ourselves, mentally we say, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Thus we express our faith in the All-holy Trinity and our desire to live and labor for the glory of God.

The word "**amen**" means in truth, truly, let it be so, so be it.

Questions: What do we express when we make the sign of the Cross? How do we arrange our fingers in order to make the sign of the Cross, and what does this mean? When we make the sign of the Cross why do we touch our forehead, stomach and shoulders? Why is it important to make the sign of the Cross correctly and without haste? When should we make the sign of the Cross? What sin do we commit if we make the sign of the Cross carelessly?

7. Standing and Bows During Prayer.

In order to express to God our reverence before Him and our worship of Him, during prayer we stand, and do not sit; only the sick and elderly are allowed to pray sitting down. Standing while at prayer is an ancient and God-ordained tradition. In Old Testament times, the congregation of Israel stood in the Temple (Neh. 9:4,5; 8:7, 2 Chron. 20:5,13), the Saints stand in Heaven before the Throne of God (Is. 6:2, 1 Kings 22:19, Dan. 7:10, Rev. 7:11), and even Jesus Christ Himself said, "*When ye **stand** praying*" (Mark 9:25). Therefore Christians, according to apostolic teaching, **stand** through the Divine Services, where it is often proclaimed: "Let us stand aright."

In recognizing our sinfulness and unworthiness before God, and as a sign of our humility, we make **bows** during our prayers. There are bows **from the waist**, when we bow from the waist, and **to the ground**, when we bow down on our knees and touch our head to the ground (a prostration).

Questions: Why should we stand and not sit during prayer? Why do we make bows during prayer? What kinds of bows are there?

8. Different Types of Prayer.

If we and those close to us are healthy and safe, if we have a place to live, clothes to wear, food to eat, then we ought to give praise and give thanks to God in our prayers.

Such prayers are called **praise** and **thanksgiving**.

If some kind of misfortune, sickness, or woe happens or if we need something, then we must ask for God's help.

These prayers are called **petitions**.

If we do something wrong, sin, and we are guilty before God, then we must ask His forgiveness — repent.

These prayers are called **penitential**.

Since we are sinful before God (we constantly sin), we must always, before we ask God for anything, first repent and then ask God

concerning our needs. This means that penitential prayer must always precede our petitions in prayer.

Questions: What must we offer to God when He sends us blessings? What are the prayers called when we praise and thank God? What do we offer God in prayer when some misfortune befalls us or we do something wrong?

9. When God Hears Our Prayer.

When we prepare to pray, we must first make peace with everyone to whom we have done evil, and even with those who have anything against us, and after that, with reverence and attention, stand for prayer. During prayer we must direct our mind so that it does not think about anything else, so that our heart wishes only one thing: to pray better and please God.

If we pray without making peace with our neighbors, if we pray hurriedly, if we talk or laugh during prayer, then our prayer will not be pleasing to God. God will not hear such a prayer, and He might even punish us.

For more diligent and intense prayer, and for a good pious life, **fasting** has been established.

The time of fasting, or lent, is the period when we must think more about God, about our sins before God, when we must pray more, repent, not get upset or hurt anyone, but rather, help everyone, read God's law, and so on. And to make it easier to fulfill all this we must first of all eat less — not eat any meat, eggs, or milk, that is, animal and dairy products, but eat only "lenten" food, that is, from plants: bread, vegetables, fruit, and fish (if allowed). We fast because the rich foods from animal and dairy products call forth a desire not to pray, but to sleep, or to act foolishly. When we develop the habit of not giving in to our desires for more or rich foods it makes it easier to fight against sin.

The greatest and longest fast comes before Pascha. It is called "Great Lent."

Questions: When can we hope that God will hear our prayer? What must we do to make our prayer reverent and fervent? Will God hear our prayer if we pray with haste and distraction? What has been established for diligent and intense prayer? What is fasting?

10. Where and How We Can Pray to God.

We can pray to God everywhere because God is everywhere: at home, in church, on every path. The Christian must pray every day, morning and evening, before and after eating, before and after every kind of work.

This kind of prayer is called **prayer at home** or **private prayer**.

On **Sundays** and **holy days**, and also on weekdays when we are free from work, we should go to church, where other Christians like us gather. There we all pray together.

This kind of prayer is called **public prayer** or **prayer in church**.

Questions: Where can we pray to God? Why can we pray to God everywhere? What is prayer called when we pray at home? What is prayer called when we pray in church?

11. The Church Building.

The church ("temple") is a special house consecrated to God — "the House of God" in which the Divine Services are conducted. In the church there abides the special grace or mercy of God, which is given to us through those who conduct the Divine Services, namely, the clergy (bishops, priests and deacons).

The external appearance of the church differs from other buildings in that there is a **dome** which symbolizes Heaven rising over the church. At the top of the dome is its **peak**, where the Cross stands, to the glory of the Head, Jesus Christ. Over the entrance to the church there is usually built a **bell tower** where the bells are hung. The ringing of the bells serves to summon the faithful to prayer — to the Divine Services, and to give notice of the most important parts of the service taking place in the church.

At the entrance to the church there is a **porch** (courtyard, or entrance way). The inside of the church is divided into three parts: 1) the **narthex**, 2) the **church** itself, or the **nave, or middle part** of the church, where the people stand, 3) the **Altar**, or Sanctuary,

where the services are conducted by the clergy and where the most important part of the whole church is located — **the Holy Table** (altar table), on which the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist is celebrated.

The altar is separated from the central part of the church by the **iconostasis**, which consists of several rows of **icons** and has three doors. The central doors are called **the Royal Doors**, because through them the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the King of glory, passes invisibly in the Holy Gifts (in Holy Communion). Therefore, no one may pass through the Royal Doors except the clergy.

The reading and chanting of prayers that are served in the church by the clergy are called **Divine Services**.

The most important divine service is the **Liturgy**. It is conducted before noonday. During this service the entire earthly life of the Saviour is commemorated, and the **Mystery of the Eucharist (Holy Communion), which Christ himself instituted at the Mystical Supper**, is celebrated.

The Mystery of Holy Communion is the consecration of bread and wine by God's Grace, when they become the true Body and true Blood of Christ. In appearance they remain bread and wine, but we receive the **true Body and true Blood of the Saviour**, under the appearance of bread and wine, in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, have eternal life and change ourselves.

Since the church is a **very holy place**, where **God Himself** is present invisibly by special mercy, we must enter it with prayer, and conduct ourselves quietly and reverently. During the Divine Services it is forbidden to talk, and even more so to laugh. It is forbidden to stand with your back to the Altar. Each person stands in his place and does not walk from one place to another. Only in case of sickness is it permitted to sit down and rest. It is wrong to leave the church before the end of the Divine Service.

We must approach Holy Communion **calmly** and **without haste, with our arms crossed over our breast**. After Communion we kiss the chalice without making the sign of the Cross, in order not to strike the chalice accidentally.

Questions: What is the church? What is its outside appearance like? How is the church divided inside? What is the iconostasis? Where are the Royal Doors? What is the Holy Table and what is celebrated on it? What is the most important Divine Service? What is commemorated at the Divine Liturgy? What is the Mystery of Holy Communion? Who instituted this Mystery? How should we conduct

ourselves in church?

12. The Priest's Blessing.

The clergy (that is, specially ordained people who celebrate the Divine Services) are our spiritual fathers. Bishops and priests sign us with the sign of the Cross. This is called a **blessing**.

When the priest blesses us, he forms the Greek letters **IC XC**, that is, Jesus Christ, with the fingers of his hand. This means that through the priest our Lord Jesus Christ Himself blesses us. Therefore, we must receive the blessing of the clergy with reverence.

When we hear in the church the words of blessing, "Peace unto all" and others, in reply to them we should bow without making the sign of the Cross. In order to receive a personal blessing from a bishop or a priest, we should place our hands in the form of a cross: the right hand on the left with the palms upward. When we have received the blessing we kiss the hand that blesses us — we kiss, as it were, the invisible hand of Christ the Saviour Himself.

Questions: Who signs us with the sign of the Cross? What is this called? What does the priest form with the fingers of his hand when he gives a blessing? What does this mean? How should we place our hands when we ask for a blessing? What should we do when we have received a blessing?

13. Icons.

In the church on the iconostasis, along the walls, and at home in the corners are the **holy icons**, before which we say our prayers.

An **icon** or **image** is what we call the representation of God Himself, the Mother of God, the angels, or the saints. This representation is consecrated with Holy Water and prayer. Through this blessing the Grace of the Holy Spirit is imparted to the icon, and we reverence the icon as being holy. There are icons, through which the Grace of God that abides in them is revealed even by miracles, for instance in the healing of the sick.

The Saviour Himself gave us His portrait. Moved to compassion, He wiped His sacred face with a towel and miraculously depicted His face on this towel for the sick prince Abgar. When the sick prince prayed before this icon of the Saviour, that had not been made with hands, he was healed of his illness.

When praying before an icon, we must remember that the icon is not God Himself or a saint of God, but only the depiction of God or His saint. Therefore, we must not pray to the icon, but to God or the saint who is depicted on it.

The holy icon is a sacred book. In a sacred book we reverently read the words of God, and on a holy icon we reverently behold the holy faces which, like the Word of God, lift up our mind to God and His saints, and inflame our heart with love for our Creator and Saviour.

Questions: What do we call the holy icons? Where are the holy icons placed at home and in the church? Why are they called holy icons? Who blessed the use of holy icons by His example? What do we remember when we pray before the holy icons? What icon of the Saviour is named the Icon Not-Made-by-Hands?

How God is Portrayed in the Holy Icons.

God is an invisible Spirit. However, He appeared to holy men in a visible image. Therefore, we depict God in the icons in the form in which He appeared.

We depict the **Most-holy Trinity** in the form of three angels sitting at a table. This is because the Lord once appeared to Abraham in the form of three angels. In order to represent more clearly the spirituality of the angels that appeared to Abraham, we represent them with wings.

God the Son is represented in the form in which he appeared when he came down from heaven for our salvation and became man: an infant in the arms of the Mother of God, teaching the people and working miracles, transfigured, suffering on the Cross, lying in the tomb, resurrecting and ascending.

God the Holy Spirit is represented in the form of a dove, as He revealed Himself at the time of the Baptism of the Saviour in the Jordan by John the Baptist; and in the form of tongues of fire, as He descended visibly on the holy Apostles on the fiftieth day after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Questions: If God is an invisible Spirit, how can He be depicted in the holy icons in a visible form? How do we depict the All-holy

Trinity in the holy icons, and why do we depict Him in this way? How do we depict God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in the holy icons, and why do we depict Them in this way?

Others Besides God Who Are Depicted in the Holy Icons.

Besides God we depict in the holy icons **the Mother of God, the holy angels and holy people.**

We should pray to them not as to God, but as being close to God, as having pleased Him by their holy life. Out of love for us they pray for us before God, and we should ask for their help and intercession because the Lord for their sake will more speedily hear our sinful prayers.

It is worthy of note that the first icons of the Mother of God painted by the disciple of the Lord, St. Luke, have been preserved down to our time. There is a tradition that when the Mother of God saw Her portrait, she said, "The Grace of My Son will dwell with this icon." We pray to the Mother of God because She is closest of all to God, and at the same time, She is also close to us. Because of Her motherly love and Her prayers God forgives us many things and helps us in many ways. She is a great and compassionate intercessor for all of us!

Questions: Besides God, who is depicted in the holy icons? How should we pray to the Mother of God, the holy angels and holy people? Who painted the first icon of the Mother of God? Why do we pray to the Mother of God more than to the other saints?

The Holy Angels.

In the beginning when neither the world nor men existed yet, God created the **holy angels.**

Angels are bodiless spirits, therefore invisible and immortal. The Lord God granted to them loftier powers and abilities than to mankind. Their mind is more perfect than ours. They always fulfill the will of God. They are without sin, and now they are so filled with the Grace of God in doing good, that they do not desire in any way to sin.

Many times the angels have appeared in visible form, taking on a physical appearance, when God sent them to people to relate or to announce His will. The word "**angel**" means "**messenger.**"

Every Christian is granted by God at his Baptism a **Guardian Angel** who invisibly protects him during all his earthly life from misfortunes and dangers; he warns against sin, guards us at the

terrible hour of death, and does not depart after death.

The angels are depicted in icons in the form of handsome youths, as a sign of their spiritual beauty. Their wings show that they speedily fulfill the will of God.

Questions: When were the holy angels created? What are angels? What powers and abilities did God grant them? Can the holy angels sin? When did angels appear visibly and what does the word "angel" mean? How do we call the holy angels that God gives us at Baptism? Why are the holy angels depicted in the form of youths and with wings?

About the Saints.

On the icons also we represent **holy people** or **the saints of God**. We call them by this name because when they lived on earth, they pleased God by their righteous life. And now, dwelling in Heaven with God, they pray for us to God and help us who live on earth.

The saints have different titles: **prophets, apostles, martyrs, hierarchs, holy monks, unmercenaries, blessed ones, and the righteous.**

The prophets are the saints of God who, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, foretold the future, primarily about the Saviour. They lived before the coming of the Saviour.

The **apostles** were the closest disciples of Jesus Christ, whom He sent during His earthly life to preach. After the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them, they preached the Christian faith in all lands. At first there were twelve of them, and later, seventy more.

Two of the apostles, **Peter and Paul**, are called **leaders of the apostles**, because they labored in preaching the faith of Christ more than the others. Four of the apostles, **Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John the Theologian**, who wrote the Gospels, are called Evangelists.

Saints who spread the Christian faith in various places like the apostles, are called **Equal-to-the-Apostles**, as for example, **Mary Magdalene**, the first woman-martyr **Thecla**, the pious monarchs **Constantine** and **Helen**, the pious Russian prince Vladimir, Saint Nina, the Enlightener of Georgia, and others.

The martyrs are those Christians who accepted terrible tortures and even death for their faith in Jesus Christ. If they died in peace, that

is, not as an immediate result of their sufferings for Christ, then we call them **confessors**.

The first to suffer for the Holy Faith after especially terrible sufferings for faith in Christ were **Archdeacon Stephen** and **St. Thecla**, and therefore they are called the **first martyrs**.

Those who died for the Holy Faith after especially cruel tortures, such as not all the martyrs were subjected to, are called **great martyrs**, as for example, holy **Great Martyr George**, and the holy **Great Martyrs Barbara** and **Catherine**.

The confessors on whose faces the persecutors branded or tattooed blasphemous words are called **branded**.

Hierarchs are bishops and prelates who pleased God by a righteous life, such as **St. Nicholas** the Wonderworker, **St. Alexis**, Metropolitan of Moscow, and others.

Hierarchs and priests who suffered persecution for Christ are called **hieromartyrs**.

The hierarchs **Basil the Great**, **Gregory the Theologian**, and **John Chrysostom** are called **ecumenical teachers**, teachers of the entire Christian Church.

Holy monks and nuns are righteous people who abandoned the life of the world in society and pleased God by preserving their virginity (not entering into marriage), by fasting and prayer, and dwelling in the wilderness or in monasteries. Some examples are **Sergius of Radonezh**, **Seraphim of Sarov**, **St. Anastasia**, and others.

Holy monks that endured suffering for Christ are called **Monk Martyrs**.

Unmercenaries are saints who served their neighbors with the unmercenary healing of illnesses; that is, without payment they healed illnesses, both physical and spiritual. They include **Cosmas** and **Damian**, the **Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon**, and others.

The **Righteous** led a righteous life that was pleasing to God, living as we do in the world, with a family, as for example, **Joachim** and **Anna** and others.

The first righteous people on the earth were the patriarchs of the human race, who are called **forefathers**. They include **Adam**, **Noah** and **Abraham**.

Questions: Who are depicted in the holy icons, apart from God and the Mother of God and the holy angels? What names do they have? Whom do we call prophets, apostles, martyrs, hierarchs, holy monks, unmercenaries and righteous?

About Haloes on the Icons.

Around the heads of the Saviour, the Mother of God and the holy saints of God, in the icons and pictures of them there is depicted a radiance or a circle of light which is called a **halo**.

In the halo of the Saviour there are three letters: **Ο ΩΗ**, which translated from Greek into English mean "**Being**," or "**He Who Is**," for God alone always exists.

Over the head of the Mother of God are placed the letters: **ΜΡ ΘΥ**. These are the first and last letters of the Greek words which mean "Mary, Mother of God."

A halo is the depiction of the shining of light and glory of God which transfigure a man who is united with God.

This invisible shining of the light of God in the saints sometimes becomes visible for people around them.

Thus, for example, the holy Prophet Moses had to hide his face with a veil so that people would not be blinded by the light that proceeded from his face.

Also the face of St. Seraphim of Sarov shone like the sun during his talk with Nicholas Motovilov about the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. Motovilov himself wrote that it was not possible for him to look at the face of St. Seraphim.

Thus the Lord glorified His holy saints, who shine with the light of His glory even here on earth.

Questions: What do we call the circle of light which is depicted around the head of the Saviour, the Mother of God and the saints? What does the halo signify?

14. Why we call ourselves Orthodox Christians.

We call ourselves Orthodox Christians because we believe in our

Lord Jesus Christ exactly as is written in the "**Creed**" and belong to the **One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church** that was founded by the Saviour Himself on earth and which is directed by the Holy Spirit in preserving correctly, gloriously, and without change the teaching of Jesus Christ. That is, we belong to the Orthodox Christian Church.

All the other Christians who confess a faith in Christ which is not the same as the Orthodox Church, do not belong to her and are called the non-Orthodox or heterodox. This includes Catholics (the Roman Catholic Church) and Protestants (Lutherans, Baptists, and sectarians).

Questions: What do we call ourselves and why? What are other Christians called, who do not belong to the Holy Orthodox Church?

Prayers.

1. Short Prayers.

Every Orthodox Christian is obliged to pray every day, morning and evening, before and after eating, before and after work, before and after lessons, etc.

In the morning we pray in order to thank God that He has kept us through the night, and to ask for His Fatherly blessing and help for the day that is beginning.

In the evening, before going to sleep, we also give thanks to the Lord for the day that has successfully concluded and we ask Him to keep us during the night.

In order to do our work successfully and safely we also, before all else, should ask God to bless and assist the work that lies before us, and upon finishing, to give thanks to God.

For the expression of our feelings to God and to His holy saints, the Church has given us different prayers. Here are some which are most commonly used:

**IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.**

In the name — by the name, to the honor, to the glory; **amen** — in truth, truly, let it be so, so be it.

This prayer is called the beginning prayer, because we say it before all the other prayers when we begin to pray.

In it we ask God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, that is the All-holy Trinity, invisibly to bless us by His name for the work that is before us.

Questions: What is this prayer called? Whom do we call upon in this prayer? What do we want when we say the prayer: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"? What is the meaning of "Amen?"

Bless, O Lord!

We say this prayer at the beginning of all work.

Question: What do we ask for in this prayer?

Lord, Have Mercy!

Have mercy — be merciful, forgive.

This is an ancient prayer and is used by all Christians. Even a little child can easily remember it. We say it when we remember our sins. For the glory of the Holy Trinity, we Christians say this prayer three times. We also say it twelve times, asking for God's blessing on every hour of the day and night, and we also say it forty times, for the sanctification of our entire life.

Prayer of Praise to the Lord God.

Glory To Thee, Our God, Glory To Thee.

Glory — praise.

In this prayer, we do not ask God for anything, but only glorify Him. We can also say a shorter prayer: **GLORY TO GOD**. We say this prayer at the end of work, as a sign of our thankfulness to God for His mercy to us.

The Prayer of the Publican.

God Be Merciful To Me A Sinner.

This is the prayer of the publican (tax collector) who repented of his sins and received forgiveness. It is taken from the parable of the Saviour which He once told people for their instruction. Here is the parable. Two men went to the Temple to pray. One of them was a pharisee, the other a publican. The pharisee stood in front of everyone and prayed to God in this way: "*I give Thee thanks, O God, that I am not such a sinful person as that publican. I give a tenth of my possessions to the poor, I fast twice a week.*" But the publican, realizing that he was a sinner, stood at the entrance to the Temple and did not even dare to lift his eyes to Heaven. He struck himself on the breast and said: "*God be merciful to me a sinner!*" The prayer of the publican was more acceptable and pleasing to God than that of the proud pharisee because the publican was humble and remembered to ask for forgiveness.

Questions: What is this prayer called? From where is it taken? Recount this parable. Why was the prayer of the publican more pleasing to God than that of the pharisee?

The Jesus Prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son Of God, Have Mercy On Me, A Sinner!

This prayer contains the whole message of Christianity within it. It is directed to our Saviour Jesus Christ, acknowledging Him as the Son of God and humbly asking His mercy upon us. We should try to repeat this prayer at all times, for it brings great benefit to the soul.

Another Prayer to the Lord Jesus.

**O Lord Jesus Christ, Son Of God, Through The Prayers Of Thy Most Pure Mother And All The Saints, Have Mercy On Us.
Amen.**

Have mercy on us — be merciful to us, forgive us. **Jesus** — Saviour; **Christ** — the Anointed; **through the prayers** — for the sake of the prayers, or in answer to the prayers.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity. As Son of God, He is our True God, as is God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

We call Him Jesus, which means **Saviour**, because He saved us from sins and eternal death. For this, He, being the Son of God, dwelt in the all-immaculate Virgin Mary, and in His incarnation through the Holy Spirit, **took flesh and became man of Her**. That is, He

accepted a human body and soul — **He was born** of the Most-holy Virgin Mary, became the same kind of man as we are, except that He was without sin — **He became God-man**. And instead of us suffering and being tormented for our sins, He, out of love for us sinners, suffered for us, died on the Cross, and on the third day He rose, conquering sin and death, and He gave us eternal life.

Realizing our sinfulness and not relying on the power of our own prayers, in this prayer we ask all the saints and the Mother of God, Who has special grace to save us sinners by Her intercession for us before Her Son, to pray for us sinners before our Saviour.

Our Saviour is called Christ, the Anointed One, because He had in full measure those gifts of the Holy Spirit, which were given to the kings, prophets, and high priests in the Old Testament by anointing. Anointed also signifies the Lord's divine mission of salvation.

Questions: Who is the Son of God? What else do we also call Him? Why do we call Him Saviour? How did He accomplish our salvation?

Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

O Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit Of Truth, Who Art Everywhere Present And Fillest All Things, Treasury Of Good Things And Giver Of Life. Come And Dwell In Us, And Cleanse Us Of All Impurity, And Save Our Souls, O Good One.

In this prayer we pray to the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Holy Trinity.

In it we call the Holy Spirit **Heavenly King**, because He, as true God, equal to God the Father and God the Son, invisibly reigns over us, is over us and over the whole world. We call Him **Comforter**, because He comforts us in our sorrows and misfortunes, as He comforted the Apostles on the tenth day after the ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven.

We call Him **Spirit of truth** (as our Saviour Himself called Him), because He, as the Holy Spirit, teaches all of us only truth and righteousness, only what is beneficial for us and serves for our salvation.

He is God, He is everywhere present and fills all things with Himself; **Who art everywhere present and fillest all things**. He, as the ruler of the entire world, sees all things and, where something is needed, He gives it. He is the **Treasury of good things**, that is, the keeper of all good works, the source of everything good that we could ever need.

We call the Holy Spirit the **Giver of life**, because all that lives and moves in the world does so by the Holy Spirit. That is, everything receives life from Him; especially people receive spiritual life from Him, holy and eternal life beyond the grave, being cleansed by Him of their sins.

Since the Holy Spirit has such marvelous qualities — is present everywhere, fills all things with His Grace and gives life to all — we turn to Him with special requests: **come and dwell in us**, that is, constantly abide in us, as in His temple; **cleanse us of all impurity**, that is, of sin; make us holy, worthy of His abiding within us. **Save our souls, O Good One** from sins and those punishments which follow for sins, and by this grant us the Kingdom of Heaven.

Questions: Whom do we address in this prayer? Which person of the Holy Trinity is the Holy Spirit? What is He called in this prayer? Why is He called Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of truth, Who is everywhere present, and Who fillest all things? What do we ask Him for? What does this mean: "Come and dwell in us and cleanse us of all impurity, and save our souls, O Good One"?

The Angelic Hymn to the Most-holy Trinity, or, the "Trisagion."

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, Have Mercy On Us.

Mighty — powerful; **Immortal** — never dying, eternal.

This prayer is to be repeated three times in honor of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

It is called the **Angelic Hymn**, because the holy angels sing it as they surround the Throne of God in Heaven. People who believe in Christ began to use this prayer some four hundred years after the Birth of Christ. In Constantinople there was a tremendous earthquake that destroyed homes and other buildings. The frightened King, Theodosius II, and the people turned to God with prayer. During this general prayer, a certain pious youth in sight of all was lifted up to Heaven by an invisible force, and then by the same invisible force let down again to earth. He told the people around him what he heard in Heaven, how the angels were singing: **Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal**. The people, moved to compunction, repeated this prayer and added: **have mercy on us**, and the earthquake stopped.

In this prayer, we call the first Person of the Holy Trinity **God**, that is God the Father; **mighty** is God the Son, because He is also almighty, as is God the Father, even though as a man He suffered and died;

immortal is the Holy Spirit, because He not only is eternal as is the Father and the Son, but He grants life to all creatures and eternal life to people.

Since in this prayer the word **holy** is repeated three times, it is also called the **Thrice Holy** or **Trisagion Hymn**.

Questions: Whom do we address in this prayer? How many times should we repeat it? What is it called? Why is it called the angelic prayer? What do we know about the origin of this prayer? Why is it also called the "Thrice-holy?"

Doxology of the Holy Trinity.

Glory To The Father, And To The Son, And To The Holy Spirit, Both Now And Ever, And Unto The Ages Of Ages. Amen.

In this prayer we do not ask anything of God, but only glorify Him Who appears to men in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to Whom there belongs, both now and eternally, the same honor of glorification.

Question: Whom do we glorify or praise in this prayer?

Prayer to the Most-holy Trinity.

O Most-Holy Trinity, Have Mercy On Us. O Lord, Blot Out Our Sins. O Master, Pardon Our Iniquities. O Holy One, Visit And Heal Our Infirmities For Thy Name's Sake.

Most holy — holy in the highest degree; **Trinity** — the three Persons of God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; **sins and iniquities** — our deeds that are against the will of God; **heal** — make well; **infirmities** — weaknesses, sins; **for Thy name's sake** — for the glorification of Thy name.

This prayer is a prayer of petition. In it we turn first to all the three Persons together, and then to each Person of the Trinity separately: to God the Father, that He might cleanse our sins; to God the Son, that He might forgive our iniquities; to God the Holy Spirit that He might visit and heal our infirmities.

The words: **for Thy name's sake** again apply to all three Persons of the Holy Trinity together, and just as God is One, so also His name is one, and therefore we say "for Thy name's sake" and not "for Thy names' sakes."

Questions: What kind of prayer is this? Whom do we address in it? What do the words mean: "blot out our sins, pardon our iniquities,

visit and heal our infirmities?" To Whom do we turn when we say: "for Thy name's sake?" What do these words mean?

The Lord's Prayer.

Our Father, Who Art In The Heavens,

1. Hallowed Be Thy Name.

2. Thy Kingdom Come.

3. Thy Will Be Done, On Earth, As It Is In Heaven.

4. Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread.

5. And Forgive Us Our Debts, As We Forgive Our Debtors.

6. And Lead Us Not Into Temptation.

7. But Deliver Us From The Evil One.

For Thine Is The Kingdom And The Power And The Glory Of The Father, And Of The Son, And Of The Holy Spirit, Now And Ever, And Unto The Ages Of Ages. Amen.

This prayer is called the **Lord's prayer**, because the Lord Jesus Christ Himself gave it to His disciples when they asked Him to teach them how to pray. Therefore, this prayer is most important for everyone.

In this prayer we address God the Father, the first Person of the Holy Trinity.

It is divided into **an address, seven petitions**, or seven requests, and a **doxology**.

The address: OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN THE HEAVENS. By these words we call on God, and calling Him the Heavenly Father, we call on Him to hear our requests or petitions.

When we say that He is in the Heavens, then we must understand the spiritual, invisible Heavens, and not the visible, blue vault that is stretched out above us and which we call "heaven."

1st petition: HALLOWED BE THY NAME, that is, help us live in righteousness and holiness and by our holy deeds to glorify Thy name.

2nd: THY KINGDOM COME, that is, make us worthy even here on the earth of Thy Heavenly Kingdom, which is **righteousness, love and peace**. Reign over us and rule us.

3rd: THY WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN, that is, may everything be not as we want but as is pleasing to Thee, and help us to submit to this, Thy will, and to fulfill it on the earth just as obediently, without complaining, as the holy angels fulfill it in Heaven, with love and joy. Thou alone knowest what is useful and needful for us, and desirest good for us, more than we ourselves.

4th: GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD, that is grant us on this day, for today, our daily bread. By the word "bread" here we mean all that is necessary for our earthly life: food, clothing, a dwelling, but most important of all, the all pure Body and precious Blood in the Mystery of Holy Communion, without which there is not any salvation or eternal life.

The Lord commanded us to ask not for wealth nor luxury, but only for the essential things, and to hope in God for all things, remembering that He, as a Father, is attentive and cares for us.

5th: AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS, that is, forgive us our sins just as we forgive those who wrong or hurt us.

In this petition, our sins are called "our debts," because the Lord gave us the strength and ability in order to do good deeds, but we often use them for sin and evil and become "debtors" before God. We are constantly in debt to God. And so, if we ourselves will not sincerely forgive our "debtors," that is, people who have committed sins against us, then God will not forgive us. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself told us about this.

6th: AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION. Temptation is the state when someone or something tries to get us to commit a sin, attempts to get us to do something wrong or foolish. Here we ask: do not let us fall into temptations which we cannot overcome; help us to overcome temptations that come to us.

7th: BUT DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL ONE, that is, deliver us from every evil in this world and from the father of evil, from the Devil, who is always ready to destroy us. Deliver us from this conniving, evil power and its deceptions, which are nothing before Thee.

Doxology: FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER,

AND THE GLORY OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, NOW AND EVER, AND UNTO THE AGES OF AGES. AMEN.

For unto Thee, our God, the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, belong the kingdom and the power and eternal glory. All this is right, truly so.

Questions: Why is this called the Lord's prayer? Whom do we address in this prayer? How is it divided? What does it mean: "Who art in the Heavens"? Explain the petitions: 1st, "Hallowed be Thy Name;" 2nd, "Thy Kingdom come;" 3rd, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven;" 4th, "give us this day our daily bread;" 5th, "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors;" 6th, "And lead us not into temptation;" 7th, "But deliver us from the evil one." What does the word "amen" mean?

The Angelic Salutation to the Mother of God.

O Theotokos And Virgin, Rejoice, Mary, Full Of Grace, The Lord Is With Thee; Blessed Art Thou Among Women, And Blessed Is The Fruit Of Thy Womb, For Thou Hast Borne The Saviour Of Our Souls.

Theotokos — the Birthgiver of God (Who gave birth to God); **full of grace** — filled with the Grace of the Holy Spirit; **blessed** — glorified or worthy of glorification; **the fruit of Thy womb** — He who was born of Thee, Jesus Christ.

This is a prayer to the Most-holy Theotokos, Whom we call full of Grace, that is, filled with the Grace of the Holy Spirit, and blessed above all women, because from Her our Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was so pleased to be born.

This prayer is also called the angelic greeting, because in it are the words of the angel (Archangel Gabriel): **Rejoice, Mary full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee: blessed art Thou among women**, which he said to the Virgin Mary when he appeared to Her in the city of Nazareth, announcing to Her the great joy, that of Her the Saviour of the world would be born. Also **blessed art Thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb** was spoken to the Virgin Mary by the righteous Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, when she met with Her.

The Virgin Mary is called **Theotokos** or "Birthgiver of God," because Jesus Christ, Who was born from Her, is true God.

She is called **virgin**, because She was a Virgin before the birth of

Christ, at the birth and after the birth, for She had given a vow to God not to be married, and She remained forever Virgin, giving birth to Her Son by the Holy Spirit in a miraculous way.

Questions: To Whom do we pray when we say this prayer: "O Theotokos and Virgin, rejoice?" What do we call the Virgin Mary in this prayer? What do these words mean: "full of Grace," and "blessed art thou among women?" How do we explain the words: "for thou hast born the Saviour of our souls?" Why is this prayer called the angelic greeting? What do these words mean: "Theotokos," "Virgin?"

Hymn of Praise to the Theotokos.

It Is Truly Meet To Bless Thee, The Theotokos, Ever-Blessed And Most-Blameless, And Mother Of Our God. More Honorable Than The Cherubim, And Beyond Compare More Glorious Than The Seraphim, Who Without Corruption Gavest Birth To God The Word, The Very Theotokos, Thee Do We Magnify.

It is truly meet — it is worthy, correct, proper; in truth, in all righteousness; **to bless thee** — to beatify, to glorify Thee; **ever blessed** — always having the highest joy, worthy of constant praise; **most-blameless** — completely innocent, pure, holy; **Cherubim and Seraphim** — the very highest angels who are closest to God; **God the Word** — Jesus Christ, the Son of God (as He is called in the Holy Gospel); **very** — real, true.

In this prayer, we praise the Theotokos as the Mother of our God, ever blessed and completely pure, and we magnify her, saying that She in Her honor and glory excels even the highest of the angels, the Cherubim and Seraphim; that is, the Mother of God in Her perfection stands higher than all, not only people, but even the holy angels. In a miraculous way, and without pain She gave birth to Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit. Christ, Who became man through Her, is at the same time the Son of God come down from Heaven, and therefore She is the true Birth-giver of God, the Theotokos.

Questions: Whom do we glorify in this prayer? How do we glorify Her? What do these words mean: "ever-blessed, most-blameless, Mother of our God?" What do these words mean: "More honorable than the Cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim," "...without corruption gavest birth to God the Word," "...very Theotokos,..."?

A Short Prayer to the Mother of God.

Most Holy Theotokos, Save Us!

In this prayer we ask the Mother of God to save us sinners by Her holy prayers before Her Son and our God.

Prayer to the Life-giving Cross.

Save, O Lord, Thy People, And Bless Thine Inheritance, Grant Thou Victory To Orthodox Christians Over Enemies, And By The Power Of Thy Cross, Do Thou Preserve Thy Commonwealth.

Bless — make happy, send mercy; **Thine inheritance** — what belongs to Thee; **Thy commonwealth** — Thy home, that is, the society of the truly faithful, among whom God invisibly dwells; **by the power of Thy Cross, do Thou preserve** — protect by the power of Thy Cross.

In this prayer we ask God to save us, His people, and to bless us with great mercies; that He give victories to Orthodox Christians over their enemies and in general that He protect us by the power of His Cross.

Questions: What is the prayer to the Cross? What do the words mean: "Save, O Lord, Thy people?" "And bless Thine inheritance?" "Grant Thou victory to Orthodox Christians over enemies?" "And by the power of Thy Cross do Thou preserve Thy commonwealth?"

Prayer to the Guardian Angel.

O Angel Of God, My Holy Guardian, Given By God From Heaven To Preserve Me, I Fervently Pray Thee: Do Thou Enlighten Me Today, And Preserve Me From Every Evil, Direct Me In Doing Good, And Guide Me On The Path Of Salvation. Amen.

God grants to every Christian at his Baptism a Guardian Angel who invisibly guards a person from every evil. Therefore, we must pray every day to the Guardian Angel to preserve and have mercy on us.

Prayer to our Saint.

Pray Unto God For Me, St. (Name), For I Fervently Flee Unto Thee, The Speedy Helper And Intercessor For My Soul.

Apart from prayer to the Guardian Angel, we must also pray to the saint whose name we bear because he prays to God for us.

Every Christian, as soon as he is born into God's light at Holy Baptism, receives a **saint** as his patron and protector in the Church.

The patron saint cares for the newly-born Christian like a most loving mother and preserves him from all misfortune and woe which meet a person on earth.

We should know when the yearly **feast day** of our patron saint (our "name's day") is and know the story of the life of this saint. On our name day we should dedicate the day to prayer in church and receive Holy Communion. If we cannot be in church on that day for some reason, we should pray very fervently at home.

Prayer for the Living.

We must think not only of ourselves but of others, love them and pray to God for them, because we are all children of the same Heavenly Father. Such prayers are beneficial not only to those whom we pray for, but also for ourselves, because we show **love** for them in this way. The Lord told us that without love, no one can be a child of God.

We must pray for our homeland, for the land in which we live, for our spiritual father, parents, benefactors, Orthodox Christians, and for all people, both **for the living** and also **for the reposed**, *because all men are alive before God* (Luke 20:38).

Save, O Lord, And Have Mercy On My Spiritual Father (Name), My Parents (Names), My Relatives, Teachers, Benefactors And All Orthodox Christians.

Spiritual father — the priest to whom we go for confession; **benefactors** — those who do good to us, who help us.

Prayer for the Reposed.

Give Rest, O Lord, To The Souls Of Thy Servants Who Have Fallen Asleep (Names) And All My Relatives And Benefactors Who Have Fallen Asleep, And Forgive Them All Their Sins, Both Voluntary And Involuntary, And Grant Them The Heavenly Kingdom.

Give rest — in a quiet place, that is, together with the saints in the eternal, blessed dwelling; **reposed** — fallen asleep. We refer to the dead in this way, because people are not destroyed after death, but their souls are separated from the body and pass from this life into another heavenly life. There they abide in the spiritual world until the time of the general resurrection, which will occur at the second coming of the Son of God, when, according to His word, the souls of the dead will again unite with the bodies; people will come to life, will arise. Then each will receive according to what he deserves: the righteous — the Kingdom of Heaven, blessed, eternal life; but the

sinners — eternal punishment.

voluntary sins — sins that were committed through one's own will; **involuntary** — committed unintentionally; **heavenly kingdom** — eternal, blessed life with God.

Prayer Before Lessons.

O Most Good Lord! Send Down Upon Us The Grace Of Thy Holy Spirit, Granting Us Understanding And The Strengthening Of Our Mental Powers, That Attending To The Teaching Given Us, We May Grow To The Glory Of Thee, Our Creator, To The Comfort Of Our Parents, And To The Benefit Of The Church And Our Homeland.

Most good — most compassionate, gracious; **Grace of the Holy Spirit** — the invisible power of the Holy Spirit; our mental powers — **our mental abilities** (mind, heart, will); **the church** — the society of all Orthodox Christians; **homeland** — the nation, the land where we live.

This prayer is directed to God the Father, Whom we call the Creator. In it we call upon Him to send down the Holy Spirit, so that by His Grace He might strengthen the powers of our soul (mind, heart, will) and so that we, listening with attention to the teaching that is being put before us, might grow up to be devoted sons and daughters of the Church and faithful servants of our homeland and a consolation for our parents.

Instead of this prayer we can also use the prayer to the Holy Spirit, "O Heavenly King," before lessons.

Questions: What kind of prayer is this? To Whom is it directed? What do we ask for in this prayer? What is the Church and our homeland?

Prayer After Lessons.

We Thank Thee, O Creator, That Thou Hast Vouchsafed Us Thy Grace To Attend Instruction. Bless Those In Authority Over Us, Our Parents And Instructors, Who Are Leading Us To An Awareness Of Good, And Grant Us Power And Strength To Continue This Study.

That thou has vouchsafed us — that Thou hast found us worthy; **of thy Grace** — of Thy invisible help; **to attend** — to listen and understand with attention; **bless** — send mercy; **strength** — health, eagerness, energy.

This prayer is to God the Father. In it we first give thanks to God that He sent His help so that we might understand the teaching set before us. Then we ask Him for His mercy towards those in authority over us, our parents and teachers, who give us the possibility of learning everything good and useful and, in conclusion, we ask that He grant us health and inclination so that we might continue our studies successfully.

Instead of this prayer we can also say the prayer to the Mother of God, "It is truly meet," after lessons.

Questions: To Whom is this prayer directed? What do we thank God for at the beginning? What do we ask for in this prayer?

Prayer Before Eating.

The Eyes Of All Look To Thee With Hope And Thou Gavest Them Their Food In Due Season Thou Openest Thy Hand And Fillest Every Living Thing With Thy Favour (Ps. 144:16-17).

In this prayer we express trust that God will send us food at the proper time, as He grants not only to people but to all living creatures all that is necessary for life.

Instead of this prayer we can use the prayer of our Lord "Our Father" before eating.

Questions: To whom do we pray before eating? What do we express in this prayer? How does God relate to living creatures?

Prayer After Eating.

We Thank Thee, O Christ Our God, That Thou Hast Satisfied Us With Thine Earthly Gifts; Deprive Us Not Of Thy Heavenly Kingdom, But As Thou Camest Among Thy Disciples, O Saviour, And Gavest Them Peace, Come To Us And Save Us.

Satisfied — filled, nourished; **earthly gifts** — earthly good things, that is, what we ate and drank at the table; **Thy Heavenly Kingdom** — eternal blessedness, which the righteous are granted after death.

In this prayer we give thanks to God that He has nourished us with food. We ask Him not to deprive us after our death of eternal blessedness; we should always remember this when we receive good things from the earth.

Questions: What prayer is used after eating? What do we thank God

for in this prayer? What do we mean by good things of the earth? What is called the Kingdom of Heaven?

Morning Prayer.

Having Risen From Sleep, I Hasten To Thee, O Master, Lover Of Mankind, And By Thy Loving-Kindness, I Strive To Do Thy Work, And I Pray To Thee: Help Me At All Times, In Everything, And Deliver Me From Every Worldly, Evil Thing, And Every Impulse Of The Devil, And Save Me, And Lead Me Into Thine Eternal Kingdom. For Thou Art My Creator, And The Giver And Provider Of Everything Good, And In Thee Is All My Hope, And Unto Thee Do I Send Up Glory, Now And Ever, And Unto The Ages Of Ages. Amen.

Lover of mankind — lover of people; **strive to do** — hurry, try to do; **in everything** — in every deed; **worldly, evil thing** — evil of the world (deeds that are not good); **impulse of the Devil** — the temptation of the devil (evil spirit), temptation to do wrong; **provider** — the one who looks ahead, who provides, takes care.

Evening Prayer.

O Lord Our God, As Thou Art Good And The Lover Of Mankind, Forgive Me Wherein I Have Sinned Today In Word, Deed, Or Thought. Grant Me Peaceful And Undisturbed Sleep; Send Thy Guardian Angel To Protect And Keep Me From All Evil. For Thou Art The Guardian Of Our Souls And Bodies, And Unto Thee Do We Send Up Glory: To The Father, And To The Son, And To The Holy Spirit, Now And Ever, And Unto The Ages Of Ages. Amen.

Thought — imagination; **good** — merciful; **undisturbed** — restful; **protect and keep** — cover and keep safe.

The Sacred History of the Old Testament.

*In the beginning God created
the heavens and the earth
(Gen 1:1).*

**Introduction to the Sacred History of the Old and
New Testaments.**

God always abides in love. As God the Father loves God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, so God the Son loves God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, and so God the Holy Spirit loves God the Father and God the Son.

God is love (I John 4:8).

Living in love is a great joy, the highest blessing, and God wished that all other living beings should receive this joy. For this, He created the world. God first created the angels and then our earthly world.

To us men, God gave intellect and an immortal soul and gave us a special purpose: to know God and to become ever better and more virtuous, that is, to be perfected in love for God and for one another and to receive from this ever greater joy in life.

But people violated the will of God — they sinned. By their sin they darkened their mind and will, and introduced sickness and death into the body. They began to suffer and die. By their own efforts people were not able to conquer sin and its result in themselves, to set aright their mind, will, and heart, and to destroy death. Only Almighty God could do this. The all-knowing Lord knew all things before the creation of the world.

When the first people sinned, He said to them that He would come into the world as Saviour — the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who would conquer sin, save people from eternal death, and return them to love, to eternal life — to blessedness.

The period from the creation of the world to the coming of the Saviour to earth is called the **Old Testament**, that is, the covenant or agreement of God with men, according to which God prepared men for the reception of the promised Saviour. Men were to remember the promise of God, to believe, and await the coming of Christ.

The fulfillment of this promise, the coming to earth of the Saviour, the Only-begotten Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, is called the **New Testament**, since Jesus Christ, having appeared on earth and vanquished sin and death, made a new covenant with men. According to this agreement, everyone may again receive the blessedness that was lost: eternal life with God, through the Holy Church which He founded on earth.

1. Creation of Heaven, the Invisible World.

In the beginning, before the creation of any of the visible world and of man, God created **Heaven**, that is, the **spiritual, invisible world** of the **angels**, out of nothing.

Angels are bodiless and immortal spirits, gifted with a mind, will and strength. God created an innumerable multitude of them. They differ among themselves according to degrees of perfection and types of service and are divided into a number of orders. The highest of these are called the seraphim, cherubim, and archangels.

All the angels were created good, so that they would love God and one another and might have from this life of love continual and great joy. God did not will to make them love Him by force, and, therefore He allowed the angels to decide for themselves whether or not they wished to love Him and live in God.

One, the highest and mightiest angel whose name was Lucifer, became proud of his might and power and did not wish to love God and fulfill the will of God, but desired to become like God. He began to whisper against God, to oppose Him, and he became a **dark, evil spirit — the Devil, Satan**. The word "Devil" means "slanderer," and the word "Satan" means the "opposer" of God and all that is good. This evil spirit tempted and took with him many other angels who also became **evil spirits** and are called **demons**.

Then one of the highest archangels, Archangel Michael, came forth against Satan and said: "Who is equal to God? There is none like God!" There was a war in Heaven: Michael and his angels made war against Satan, and Satan and his demons made war against them.

However, evil power could not endure the angels of God, and Satan, together with his demons, fell like lightning down into the **nether regions, Hades**. "Hades," and "the nether regions," are names for the place of separation far from God, where the evil spirits now dwell. There they are tormented in their malice, beholding their powerlessness against God. All of them, because of their refusal to repent, have become so confirmed in evil that they can no longer be good. They strive by deceit and cunning to tempt every man, whispering false ideas and evil desires in order to bring him to damnation.

In this way **evil** appeared in God's creation. By evil we mean all that is done contrary to the will of God, all that violates the will of God.

All the angels that remained faithful to God, dwelling from that time in unceasing love and joy, live with God, fulfilling the will of God.

They have been so confirmed in good and love of God that they can no longer in any way wish to do evil. Therefore are called **holy angels**. The word "angel" means "messenger." God sends them to make His will known to men; for this, the angels take on a visible human form.

God grants to every Christian a **Guardian Angel** at Baptism, an angel that invisibly guards a person during his entire earthly life and does not leave his soul even after death.

Note: This brief account of the creation of the heavenly-angelic world is based on the accounts in Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Holy Fathers and Teachers of the Orthodox Church.

A detailed account of the life of the angelic world was set forth by **St. Dionysius the Areopagite**, a disciple of St. Paul and first bishop of Athens, in his book, *The Heavenly Hierarchy*, which was written on the basis of all the places in the Holy Scriptures that speak of the angels.

2. Creation of the Earth, the Visible World.

After the creation of Heaven, the invisible, angelic world, God created out of nothing, by His word alone, **earth**, that is, the material from which He gradually made our visible, physical world, the visible sky, earth and all that is in them.

God could have created the world in a single instant, but since He wished from the very beginning that this world should live and develop step by step, He created it not in an instant, but over several periods of time, which in the Bible are called "days."

These "days" of creation were not the usual days that we know, consisting of twenty-four hours. Our days depend on the sun. However, during the first three "days" of creation there was no sun yet in existence, which means that the days described in Genesis could not have been the kind of days as we understand them. The Bible was written by the Prophet Moses in the ancient Hebrew language, and in this language both "day" and a period of time are called by the same word **Yom**. It is impossible for us to know exactly

what kind of days these were, even more so since we know that "*one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*" (II Peter 3:8; Ps. 89:5).

The Holy Fathers of the Church consider the seventh "day" of the world to be continuing even at the present time, and that after the resurrection of the dead there will begin the **eighth eternal day**, that is, eternal future life. Thus **St. John of Damascus** (VIII century) writes concerning this: "The seven ages of this world are reckoned from the creation of Heaven and earth to the general conclusion and resurrection of men. For even though there is a personal ending, there is also a general, complete ending when there will be the general resurrection of men. The eighth age is the age to come."

St. Basil the Great in the fourth century wrote in his book *Hexaemeron*: "Therefore whether you call it a day or an age, you express one and the same idea."

Therefore, in the beginning, the matter created by God did not have any definite shape or form; it was formless and undeveloped (like fog or water) and covered with darkness, and the Spirit of God was borne upon it, imparting to it life-bearing power.

Note: The Holy Bible begins with the words: "*In the beginning God created Heaven and the earth*" (Gen. 1:1).

In the beginning in Hebrew is *bereshit* and means "first of all" or "at the beginning of time," that is, before bereshit there was only eternity.

Created here is expressed by the Hebrew word *bara*, which means "**created out of nothing**." It is distinguished from the Hebrew word *assa*, which means "to make, to form, to shape out of matter." The word *bara* (created out of nothing) is used three times in the account of the creation of the world: 1) in the beginning — the first act of creation, 2) at the creation of "living souls" — the first animals, and 3) at the creation of man.

Strictly speaking, nothing more is said concerning Heaven, that is, it was finished in its formation. This is, as was said above, the spiritual, angelic world. Later in the Bible the Holy Scriptures speak of the heavenly **firmament**, called "heaven" by God, as a reminder of the higher, spiritual Heaven.

"The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters"

(Gen. 1:2). "Earth" here is understood to mean the original matter, still not put into form, from which the Lord God during the six "days" formed and made the visible world — the universe. This unformed matter or chaos is called the deep, as being unfathomable and unlimited space and water, as a water-like or mist-like matter.

Darkness was **upon the face of the deep**, that is, the entire chaotic mass was submerged in darkness, due to the complete absence of light.

And the Spirit of God was borne above the water: here began the creative work of God. By this expression "was borne" (the Hebrew word used here has the following meaning: "to embrace everything with oneself as a bird with its wings spread out embraces and warms its fledglings"), the action of the Spirit of God upon the first-created matter should be understood as the imparting to it of the living power which was necessary for its formation and development.

All three Persons of the Most-holy Trinity participated in the creation of the world equally, as the Triune God, One in essence and Indivisible. The word "God" in this place is written in the plural **Elohim**, that is **Gods** (the singular is **Eloah** or **El**— God), and the word "**created**" (**bara**) — is in the singular. In this way the original Hebrew text of the Bible, from its very first lines, points to the singular essence of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, saying as it were, "In the beginning Gods (the three Persons of the Holy Trinity) created Heaven and earth."

The Psalms also clearly speak of this: "*By the Word of the Lord the Heavens were established, and all the might of them by the Spirit of His mouth*" (Ps. 32:6). Here "Word" means the **Son of God**, "Lord" means **God the Father** and "the Spirit (breath) of His mouth" means God the Holy Spirit.

The Son of God, Jesus Christ, is plainly called "Word" in the Gospel: "*In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was God...all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made*" (John 1:1-3).

It is especially important for us to know this, because the creation of the world would have been impossible if there had not first been the voluntary will of the Son of God to endure the sacrifice of the Cross for the salvation of the world. "*All things were created by Him*" (the Son of God) "*and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist: And He is the head of the body, the Church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father, that in Him*

should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, whether they be things in earth or things in Heaven" (Col. 1:16-20).

The First Day of Creation.

And God said, let there be light: and there was light... And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. This was the **first "day" of the world**. The first act of the **formative** creation of God was the creation of light.

"And God said, let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness... "(Gen. 1:3-5).

It may seem strange that light could appear and that day and night could follow one another from the first day of creation when the sun and other heavenly luminaries did not yet exist. This gave an excuse for the atheists of the eighteenth century (Voltaire, the encyclopedists and others) to mock the Holy Bible. These poor men did not suspect that their ignorant mockery would turn back against them.

Light, by its nature, is entirely independent of the sun (fire, electricity). Light, but not all of it, was concentrated in the heavenly luminaries only later, at the will of God.

Light is the result of the action of light waves, which is now produced primarily by the sun, but which can also be produced by other sources. If the primeval light could appear before the sun and could have been like, for example, the light of the northern lights, the result of the union of two opposing electric currents, then it is obvious that it (the northern light type of light) could have times when it began, then came to its greatest brilliance and then again began to lessen and then almost completely cease. In this manner, according to the Biblical expression, there could be days and nights before the sun appeared, and there could be evening and morning, which would serve specifically as a measure for the determining of these parts of time.

Some commentators point out that the ancient Hebrew words **erev** and **boker** — evening and morning — also mean "mixture" (confusion) and "order." St. John Chrysostom says, "(Moses) clearly called the end of the day and end of the night one day, in order to set forth a certain order and sequence in the visible (world), and so there would be no confusion."

One should always bear in mind that science has no limit to its knowledge. The more science learns, the more areas that are unknown open up before it. Therefore, science can never give its "final word." This has been proven many times already and is being proven even more so at the present time.

Until the beginning of this century, scientists in general and astronomers in particular believed in infiniteness of the universe in time and space. They admitted that some parts of the universe could change (e.g. development of stellar systems), but considered the elementary particles, which constitute matter, and the laws of physics as eternal.

This naive conception about the steady-state 'eternity' of the universe was rejected in the first half of the 20th century. In 1913 astronomer V.I. Slipher, in performing spectral observation of galaxies through a powerful telescope, found that all galaxies, irrespective of the direction of observation, moved away from our solar system at high speed. He also noted that this speed was proportional to the distance. In a word, Slipher found that our universe expands, or inflates as a giant balloon. We need to mention here, that galaxies are defined as multi-billion-star systems, revolving around galaxy centers by the effect of the binding gravitational field. For example, our solar system is located at the edge of a medium-size galaxy called the Milky Way. Closest to us is a galaxy called Andromeda at a distance of more than 2 million light years. The entire universe consists of billions of galaxies of various sizes and shapes.

Slipher's discovery of expanding universe shook the world of scientists. The staggering consequences of this discovery for the traditional science became obvious to everyone. If the world is expanding, then at some moment in the past it was condensed in one point, and therefore it is not eternal and not infinite. What force set this point to motion that transformed it into this colossal universe? Many observatories around the world immediately repeated spectral observations of distant galaxies. Slipher's conclusion was confirmed: the universe is expanding at an incredible speed. The furthest spots of the universe fly away from us at about the speed of light. Finally, it was calculated that our universe came into existence approximately 15 billion years ago, when a microscopic point blew out forcefully, emitting radiation in all directions. The opinion of modern scientists is that neither matter, nor time, nor space existed before this explosion. While cooling down, the primary radiation began to concentrate into atoms; the powers of nature, which subsequently became the laws of physics, appeared at the same

time. Later atoms started to cluster into gas clouds; the gas clouds condensed into stars and stellar systems. This is the origin of the universe in a couple of words. The term for it is 'the Big Bang.' Is not this 'bang' described in the Bible when it tells us: "*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light*" (Genesis 1:3).

Now it would be interesting to mention the sharp scientific disputes ignited by Slipher's discovery. Many scientists tried to save the former theory of stability of the universe so earnestly as if they were defending an unchangeable dogma. This dispute exposed the inherent human prejudice and non-objectivity, which scientists have not less than religious fanatics. There were attempts to refute the arguments of Slipher and his adherents. But it was hard to cope with facts, because facts are stubborn. Even Einstein, a prominent scientist and founder of contemporary physics, who openly admitted the existence of God, disagreed with this new discovery about the origin of the universe for 17 years. Once he even said, "It (the expansion of the universe) irritates me... It seems senseless to accept this possibility." Note the emotionalism of these words, so unsuitable for a scientific discussion! Later, mathematician A. Friedman and scientist G. Lemetres proved it to him that the solution concerning the expansion of the universe was contained in his own formulae of the general theory of relativity. Einstein finally agreed with the fact of the expanding universe in 1930 when he personally visited the best-of-its-time observatory on Mount Wilson in California.

Scientist E. Hubble (1889-1953) later worked much in the area of measurement of galactic motion. His efforts helped to confirm and clarify the previous conclusions. Today no one disputes the fact that the universe is expanding.

Now we will discuss the method of measurement of distant luminaries. Measurement of the speed of motion is based on the principle of spectral comparison. It is known that many elements in incandescent state emit light of a certain spectral type (specific alternations of color and black lines). From an analysis of light, emitted by stars, it is possible to determine the chemical composition of these stars. When stars move toward us, then the spectral property of their emitted light shifts to the ultra-violet color, while the shift of spectral emission toward the infrared color (red shift) occurs when light bodies move away. A similar change of sound frequency can be noticed when we hear a vehicle which comes nearer and then pulls away from us: first we hear a higher, and then a lower frequency of sound. Through spectral measurements of typical stellar light emissions (e.g. sodium and hydrogen), scientists determine their speed in relation to us. It turns

up that the light that comes to us from distant light systems is always characterized by red-shifted spectrum.

The theory of sudden origination of the universe out of an immensely powerful superhigh-temperature bang also found its confirmation in the following fact. In 1948 Russian scientist and US resident G. Gamov calculated that if the universe had started to exist due to an explosion, then cooled traces of this bang had to be traceable until this time as weak electromagnetic radiation, corresponding to the temperature of 3 degrees above the absolute zero. He predicted that this radiation had to be reaching us in perfectly uniform amounts from every direction. Indeed, in 1965 scientists A. Penzias and R. Wilson found the existence of background radiation, fully in concord with Gamov's assumption. This radiation is emitted by interstellar space irrespectively of luminous celestial bodies. It is an ancient footprint of that powerful bang.

For us the believers these scientific discoveries have a great religious and philosophic meaning. First, they confirm our faith that the universe was created in time and out of nothing. They strengthen our belief that only God is omnipotent, eternal and infinite. Anything else around us is limited both in time and in space. Everything started to be due to the Creator's Will, and the same Will may cause everything to return to non-existence where it originated from.

Second, we see that science in its long and windy way does slowly but steadily come nearer to the truth. Therefore, a believer should not keep away from science as from a hostile enemy. Its positive achievements may enrich the religious understanding. For example, materialists at the beginning of the 20th century wanted to crush religion with the help of science. But new scientific discoveries broke the very platform that the materialists rested on. It was found that matter does not exist as an independent solid substance. It is only a temporary condensed state of energy, of this mysterious force, originated somewhere beyond the boundaries of the physical universe. Bearing the former errors in mind, modern science should become more modest in its fundamental statements. May the minor human mind bow to the incomprehensible wisdom of the Maker!

The discovery by science of the composition of the atom becomes a discovery of the perfection in the creation of the world of a **wise Creator**. In addition, it completely changes our concept of matter. Such **matter** as the materialists understand it **does not exist**.

Contemporary science has determined that the **prime basis of matter is energy**, and the prime basis of energy is **the energy of**

light. Now it becomes clear why at the beginning of the formation of matter, God created light.

In this way, the first lines of the Bible, for our generation, become the best testimony of the **divine inspiration of the Holy Bible.** How else could Moses have known that the creation of the world had to begin with light, **when this has become the attainment of science only in modern times?**

Thus the author of Genesis, Moses, by divine inspiration, **discovered the mystery of the composition of matter** which was unknown to anyone in those distant times. The discovery of atomic energy, "the life of the atom," in our days is merely a new proof of divine truth!

"Wondrous are Thy works O Lord, in wisdom hast Thou made them all."

The Second Day of Creation.

On the **second "day" of the world** God created the **firmament** — that unfathomable space which stretches above us and surrounds the earth, that is, the heaven visible to us. The second creative command formed the **firmament.**

"And God said: let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day" (Gen. 1:6-8).

The firmament is the atmosphere, or the visible heaven (sky). The origin of the firmament, or of the visible heaven, can be imagined in this way. The immeasurably vast mass of primeval liquid matter separated, at the command of God, into millions of separate spheres which revolved on their axes and were carried about, each on its own orbit. **The space that appeared between these spheres became the firmament;** for in this space the movement of the newly created worlds was made firm by the Lord on definite and irrefutable laws of attraction, so that they neither collide nor interfere with each other in their movements. The water above the firmament is the liquid spheres which later hardened and, from the fourth day of creation, began to shine and twinkle over our heads; and the water under the firmament is our planet earth, which is stretched out beneath our feet. All this still bore the name of water, because on the second day of creation it had not yet received a firm constitution and solid form.

It is worthwhile to note the point of one of the greatest teachers of the Church, St. John of Damascus, who lived in the VIII century. In the Irmos of the third ode of the fifth tone he says, "...Who by Thy command hast fixed the earth upon **the void**, and hast **suspended** its weight by Thine irresistible might." Thus, St. John of Damascus discovered a scientific truth many centuries before the time when it became understood by science.

The Third Day of Creation.

On the **third "day" of the world** God gathered the water which was under the heaven into one plane, and the **dry land** appeared; and God called the dry land **earth** and the collection of waters **seas**; and he commanded the earth to bring forth **green plants, grass and trees**. The earth was covered with grass and every possible kind of plant and tree. Further, the earth receives a form such that life can appear on it, even though this was still lower life, plant life, to be specific.

"And God said: let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so...And God said, let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so...and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day" (Gen: 1:9-13).

The separation of water from the dry land on the third day should not be understood to be as simple as the dividing of already prepared water, as it were, from the firmer parts of the earth. Water did not yet exist in the form and chemical composition that we know now. **First**, by the creative word of the Lord the formless and unordered matter of our planet was, on the third day of the world, in two forms. Water and dry land were created, and the latter immediately produced on its surface various bodies of water: rivers, lakes and seas. **Second**, our planet was clothed in a thin and transparent cover of atmospheric air, and **gases** appeared with their many combinations. **Third**, on the dry land itself, the subject of creative word was not only the surface of the earth with its mountains, valleys, and so forth, but also in its inner parts — various layers of earth, metals, minerals and so on. **Fourth**, by a special command of the Creator every possible kind of plant appeared on the earth. **Finally**, one must assume that on the third day of the world, the other dark and chaotic masses of heavenly bodies received their final form, in correspondence with their purpose, even though the author of Genesis speaks only about the earth. One

should assume this on the basis that, on the second and fourth days, the Lord acted in the entire cosmos, and thus it could not be that the entire third day was devoted only to the earth, which is an insignificant speck in the entire make-up of the universe. One can imagine the creative work of the third day more clearly in this way. The earth was still a vast sea. Then God said, "*Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.*" The condensing and gradual cooling matter in some places was lifted up, in other places, it sank down. The higher places stuck up out of the water, became the dry land, and the depressions and hollows were filled with the water that poured into them and became **the sea**. "*And God called the dry land earth; and the gathering together of the waters he called seas: and God saw that it was good.*" The earth still did not have that which was the purpose of its creation: there was still no life upon it, only barren, dead cliffs stared darkly upon the bodies of water. When the command for the water and dry land was fulfilled, and the necessary conditions for life were present, then, at the word of God, there was no delay in the appearance of its beginnings, in the form of plants. "*And God said, let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so...and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.*"

Certain scientists have found the remains of this plant life and have been stunned by its enormous size. What today would be a blade of our fern for example, in primal times was a huge tree. The threads of contemporary moss in primal times were several feet in perimeter. How could such a mighty plant life appear without the influence of the rays of the sun, which shone on the earth only after the fourth day? Scientific research here, as in many other instances, confirms the writings of Genesis as being completely undeniable, undistorted truth. Experiments were conducted with electric light for the development of plant life. One scientist (Famintsin) attained important results in this regard with the aid of strong light from a simple kerosene lantern. Thus, the given question, in light of scientific evidence, loses its force. A much more important objection in this matter should be considered, namely: in the same layers of earth in which only the first indications of organic life appeared, in which, according to Genesis, the earth brought forth only herbs and plant life, there are to be found, together with the plants, animal organisms: coral, soft-bodied and freshwater animals of the simplest forms. Even this objection is not insurmountable: the layers of the earth are not separated from each other by some kind of impenetrable wall. On the contrary, in the course of the millennia during which the earth has existed, every kind of movement and change has occurred in the positions of the layers, and for this

reason they are mixed up and often one is found combined with another.

Although plant life could have developed with the primal light, still its development could not have taken place under such conditions with the direct purposefulness that is observed nowadays. While tremendous in size, it was poor in form and color. Evidently, it was in need of the correct, measured light of the present sun and stars.

The Fourth Day of Creation.

On the **fourth "day" of the world**, at the command of God, there shone forth above the earth the heavenly luminaries, **the sun, moon and stars**. From that time forth they have defined the passing of time in our present days, months and years. After the formation of the earth there follows the arrangement of the heavenly luminaries.

"And God said, let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also...and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day" (Gen. 1:14-19).

The creative command: **let there be lights** is obviously different from the command of the Creator: **let there be light**, because in one place, the original creation is understood, while in the other, the creative formation of things already created. Here we must understand that this is not a new creation but rather the complete formation of the heavenly bodies.

How is one to imagine the origin of the heavenly bodies? In their internal and basic matter, the heavenly luminaries existed already before the fourth day; they were already the water above the firmament, from which innumerable spheric bodies were formed on the second day of creation. Now, on the fourth day, a number of these bodies were formed in such a way that the primal light was concentrated in them to an extreme degree and began to act powerfully. This brought about the bodies that shine, or the luminaries in the strict sense of the word, such as the sun and the stars. Some of the dark, spherical bodies remained dark, but had been made by the Creator in such a way that they reflect the light that shines on them from other bodies, these are planets which shine with borrowed or reflected light, such as the moon, Jupiter, Saturn, and the other planets.

Primordial giant vegetation (and water-borne micro-organisms) began cleaning the atmosphere from carbonic gases and producing oxygen. If anyone had looked at the sky from the ground till then, he would not have seen the contours of the Sun, Moon or stars, because the Earth was all wrapped in opaque gasses. In the same way, until today sky is not visible from the surface of Venus, because thick gasses surround this planet. That is why Moses wrote that the Sun, Moon and stars appeared on the next day after plants, i.e. on the fourth day. Godless materialists in the beginning of the 20th century did not know this and mocked at the Bible's story, which described the creation of the Sun after that of plants. In accordance with the Bible, dispersed solar light reached the surface of the Earth since the first day of the Creation; the shape of the Sun was not perceivable, though.

Due to the presence of clean oxygen in the atmosphere, more complex forms of life started to exist: fishes and birds (the fifth "day"), and, finally, beasts and humans (the sixth "day"). The modern science agrees with this sequence of origination of creatures.

Moses omitted from the Biblical story many details of the Creation of life, which would be interesting for science. We should remember that it was not the objective of his narrative to list the details, but to demonstrate the First-Source of the Universe, its Wise Maker. Moses concluded his description of the Creation by saying, "*And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.*" In other words, the Creator had a definite purpose in the Creation of the world: make everything serve the good, and lead to that which is good. Until today, the Nature has retained the stamp of goodness in itself, being the evidence of the Creator's wisdom and kindness.

The Fifth Day of Creation.

On the **fifth "day" of the world** according to the Word of God, the water brought forth living creatures, that is, there appeared in the water **shellfish, insects, reptiles and fish**, and over the earth, in the firmament, birds began to fly. On the fifth day animals were created that live in the water and fly in the air.

"And God said, let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and the fowl that might fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven...and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let the fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day" (Gen. 1:20-23).

The creative command of God, of course, formed these creatures from the elements of the earth; but everywhere else, though even more so here, the formative power belongs to Him, and not to the natural elements. In the formation of animals, something new was introduced — a higher principle of life — animated, freely moving, and feeling creatures made their appearance.

In giving His blessing to multiply to the newly-created creatures, God, as it were, gave them the creative power by which they received their being, that is, He granted them the ability to reproduce from themselves new beings, each according to its kind.

A more detailed creative action of the fifth day could be imagined in the following way. The heavens were adorned with stars. On the earth gigantic plants were spread about, but still, upon the earth there were no living creatures which could enjoy the gifts of God. The necessary conditions did not yet exist as the atmosphere was full of harmful gases which could only aid the plant kingdom. The atmosphere contained so many extra additives, and especially carbon dioxide, that animal life was still impossible. The atmosphere had to be cleared of these harmful additives. The gigantic plants achieved this under the influence of the sun that shone forth on the fourth day. Carbon dioxide is one of the most necessary elements for plant life, and as the atmosphere was permeated with it, the newly-created plant life began to develop in a luxuriant and rapid manner, consuming the carbon dioxide and clearing the atmosphere of it. Enormous coal deposits are nothing other than atmospheric carbon dioxide that has been transformed by plant processes into a solid body. Thus the cleaning of the atmosphere was accomplished, and the conditions were suitable for the appearance of animal life. It did not take long for it to appear as the result of a new creative act.

"And God said, let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and the fowl that might fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." As a result of this divine command, a new creative act took place, not just a formative one, as on the previous days, but a creative act in the full sense of the word, just like the first act of creating primal matter out of nothing.

Here there was created **"a moving creature"** (**"living soul"** Septuagint); something new was introduced, which had not yet existed in the primal matter. Indeed, the writer of Genesis for the second time, uses the verb **bara** — *"to create out of nothing."* And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the water brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after its kind.

The most recent geological research explains and supplements this brief account by the writer of Genesis.

Digging into the depths of the layers of the earth, geologists reached a layer in which there first appeared the "living soul." This layer, consequently, is the cradle of animal life, and in it are found the simplest of the animal organisms.

The most ancient "living soul" known to geologists is the so-called Eo-zoon of Canada, which is found in the very lowest levels of the so-called Laurentian period. Afterwards, coral, infusoria and shellfish of various species appear. Higher in the earth's levels there appear the gigantic, monstrous reptiles and lizards. Of these, the best known are the ichthyosaurs, hileosaurs, plesiosaurs and pterodactyls. They are all astounding because of their enormous size.

The ichthyosaurus was up to forty feet long, in the form of a lizard, with the head of a dolphin, the teeth of a crocodile and a tail equipped with a leathery, fish-like fin. The hileosaurus was up to nine feet high and was a fearsome type of lizard. The plesiosaurus had the form of a gigantic turtle with a long neck of twenty feet, a tiny snakelike head and a stinger six feet long. The pterodactyl was a sort of flying dragon, with wings like a bat, long head, crocodile teeth and claws in general like a bat, but of enormous size. Some of these monsters are still to be found nowadays, but the present ones are tiny midgets in comparison with their ancestors. Perhaps this is a sign of the decline in the productive powers of the earth.

"And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let the fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day." (Gen. 1:22-23).

The Sixth Day of Creation.

On the **sixth "day" of creation**, according to the Word of God, the earth brought forth a living soul, and there appeared on the earth **animals**, that is, cattle, reptiles and beasts. In conclusion, God created **man — man and woman** — according to His image and likeness, that is, spiritually similar to Him.

When He had finished the creation of the entire visible world with the creation of man, God saw that all He had made was very good.

On the sixth and final day of creation, the animals that live on the earth and man were created. Just as the Lord addressed the water to

bring forth fish and reptiles, so now for the bringing forth of the four-legged creatures He addressed the earth, in the same way as he addressed it for the bringing forth of plant life. One must understand it in this way: the Lord granted the earth life-producing power, and not, as certain naturalists think, that the earth, warmed by the rays of the sun brought forth the animals on its own. In all the vast realm of nature there is not the slightest hint that any one kind of animal could have come from another, for example that grass-eating animals turned into animals of prey. It is even more contrary to nature that the origin of animal life could have come from inorganic beginnings, from gases, minerals and the like. "When God said, 'let the earth bring forth,'" says St. Basil the Great, "this does not mean that the earth brings out what was already within her; but He Who gave the command gave the earth the power to bring it forth" (*Hexaemeron*).

In accordance with contemporary scientific research, one can conceive of the history of the sixth day of creation in the following account. The water and air were filled with life, but a third part of the earth still remained empty — the dry land, that part which was most convenient for the life of living creatures. Now the time came for populating it.

"And God said: let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beasts of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:24-25).

Scientific research, rising higher through the various layers of the earth (after the layer containing the monsters described above, along with fish and birds), comes across a new layer in which new organisms appear — the four-legged creatures. First there appeared on the earth species of enormous four-legged creatures that are no longer to be found: dinotherees, mastodons and mammoths (a kind of elephant with a huge, awkward form); then, the more developed animals, and finally, their present forms: lions, tigers, bears, horned cattle, etc.

On seeing this gradual appearance of various kinds, science involuntarily poses the question: how did all these species come to be? Are they unchanging forms that received their beginning in the creative-formative act or did they slowly appear, one from another, and all from one primal form?

As is well-known, in the last century Darwin's theory of evolution gained wide popularity. How does Darwin's theory apply to the Biblical history of creation?

The writer of Genesis says that the plants and animals were created "according to their kind," that is, not one plant or animal form, but many plants and animals. This does not mean that all the forms or variations within a species that exist now had to have their beginning in the original creative act. The Hebrew word *min*, which is translated with the meaning "kind," has a very wide meaning that is not contained in the scientific meaning of the word "species." It is broader than this in every way, not including all the present species and variants of animals and plants; at the same time it does not deny the possibility of a gradual development of these forms.

That changes can truly occur within a species is proved by indisputable facts. Many variations of plants, such as roses, carnations, and dahlias, as well as certain animals, such as some variations of chickens and pigeons which can be seen in zoos, developed not many centuries ago. Changes can also occur under the influence of climatic conditions, different soil, food, and the like. On this basis one can assume that the number of plant and animal forms in the primal world was not as great and diversified as at present.

The writer of Genesis, describing the creation in the strict sense (*bara*) of the first origins of animal-organic life, does not categorically deny the possibility of the development of other forms within a species. However, this does not give any basis for the acceptance of the theory of development in all its completeness: it clearly and definitely affirms that the animal and plant organisms were directly created "according to their kinds," that is, in various definite forms.

This theory does not have any firm basis in science either, and at the present time has suffered many serious objections. We will not cite all the scientific reasoning, but will point out at least one. The well-known American scientist Cressy Morrison (former president of the New York Academy of Sciences) says:

"The miracle of genes, a phenomenon which we know testifies to the creation of everything living.

Genes are so infinitesimally small that if all the genes of all the people alive in the world today could be collected together, there would be less than a thimbleful. A thimble would not even be full! Nonetheless, these ultramicroscopic genes, and the chromosomes that accompany them, in every living cell of everything alive, are the absolute keys to all human, animal and vegetable characteristics. A thimble is a small place in which to put all the individual characteristics of five billion human

beings. However, the facts are beyond question. Do these genes and cytoplasm, which may be collected in such a tiny space, contain the key to the psychology of every living creature?

This is where evolution begins! It begins in the cell which holds and carries the genes. This fact, that several million atoms contained in the ultramicroscopic gene could be the absolute key that governs life on earth, proves that there was an intention to create everything that is alive, that someone foresaw them ahead of time, and that this foresight comes from a Creative Intelligence. No other hypothesis here can help solve the riddle of existence."

On the sixth day of creation the earth was already populated in all its parts. The world of living creatures was like a magnificent tree, whose roots consisted of the most simple organisms, and whose highest branches were the highest animals. But this tree was not complete, there was not yet a blossom which could complete and adorn; there was not yet man, the king of nature. Now men too appeared.

"And God said: Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them" (Gen 1:26-27).

Here for the third time a **creative act (bara)** occurred in the full sense, for man has in his nature something which had not been created in nature before, namely spirit, which distinguished him from all other beings. Thus the history of the creation and formation of the world was finished.

"And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day... And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it."

In the period that follows after this, that is, in the **seventh "day" of the world**, which, as the Holy Fathers teach, is continuing even at the present time, God ceased to create. He blessed and hallowed this "day," and called it the **Sabbath**, that is, "rest;" and He commanded that men also rest on the seventh day from their regular work and dedicate it to the service of God and neighbor, that is,

make this day free from worldly affairs — a holy day.

Upon completing creation, God left the world to live and develop according to the plan and laws established by Him, or, as it is generally said, according to the "laws of nature." At the same time, He never ceases to care for all creation, granting each creature what is necessary for life. God's care for the world is called "**Divine Providence**."

Note: The account of the creation of the world is to be found in Genesis, chaps. 1:1-31; 2:1-3.

3. How God Created the First People.

God created man in a different way from the other creatures. Before His creation, God, in the Most-holy Trinity, confirmed His wish. He said: "*Let Us make man in Our own image, after Our own likeness*" (Gen 1:26).

God created man out of the dust of the earth, that is, from matter, from which all material things were created in the earthly world, and He breathed into his face **the spirit of life**; that is, He gave him a spirit, free, intelligent, alive, and immortal, according to His image and likeness, and man came into being with an immortal soul. By this "breath of God," or immortal soul, man is separated from all the other living creatures.

So we belong to two worlds: in body to the visible, material, earthly world, but in soul to the invisible, spiritual, heavenly world.

God gave the first man the name **Adam**, which means "taken from the earth." He then caused Paradise, a beautiful garden, to grow on the earth, and placed Adam to dwell there so that he would cultivate and keep it.

In Paradise all kinds of trees with the most beautiful fruit grew; among them there were two special trees: one was called the **tree of life**, the other the **tree of knowledge of good and evil**. Tasting of the fruits of the tree of life had the power to preserve man from illness and death. Concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God commanded man: "*of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*" (Gen 2:16-17). Then, at the command of God, Adam gave

names to all the beasts and birds of the air, but he did not find among them a companion and helper for himself. God then brought a deep sleep upon Adam; when he went to sleep, He took one of his ribs and closed the place with flesh. And from the rib taken from man, God created woman. Adam called her Eve, that is, the mother of men.

God blessed the first people in Paradise, and said to them: "*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it*" (Gen. 1:28).

By having created woman from the rib of the first man, God showed us that all people come from one body and soul, that they should be one, and should love and care for one another.

Note: See Genesis, chaps. 1:27-29; 2:7-9; 2:15-25; 5:1-2.

4. The Life of the First People in Paradise.

The earthly Paradise, the splendid garden in which God settled the first people, Adam and Eve, was in the East between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. The life of people in Paradise was full of joy and bliss. Their consciences were calm, their hearts pure, their minds brilliant. They did not fear illness or death and had no need of clothing. They were completely satisfied and without need of anything. Their food was the fruit of the trees of Paradise.

Among the animals there was no enmity; the powerful ones did not touch the weak ones, they lived together and fed on grass and plants. None of them feared man; they all loved and obeyed him.

But the highest blessedness of Adam and Eve was **in prayer**, a deeply spiritual prayer, in pure conversation with God. God appeared to them in Paradise. He was as a father to his children and granted them all that was necessary.

God created men, just as He created the angels, so that they would love God and one another and delight in the great joy of life, in the love of God. Therefore, as for the angels, He granted them complete freedom to love Him or not to love Him. Without freedom there can be no love. Love appears in the joyful fulfillment of the wishes of the one that you love.

But since men were less perfect than the angels, the Lord did not grant them to make a choice immediately and forever: to accept or

reject this love, as He did with the angels.

God began to teach people love. For this purpose He gave men one small, easy commandment: **not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**. By fulfilling this commandment or wish of God, they could also express their love for Him. In time, passing from the simple to the more complex, they could be confirmed in love and be perfected in it. Adam and Eve obeyed God with love and joy, and in Paradise the will of God and the order of God was in everything.

Note: See Genesis, chaps. 2:10-14; 2:25.

Discussion About Man.

When we say that man is made of soul and body, we express the fact that man does not consist of just dead material, matter, but also of a higher essence which gives life to this matter, or animates it. In actuality, man is made up of **three parts** consisting of **body, soul and spirit**. Apostle Paul says, "*For the Word of God is quick (alive), and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of **soul** and **spirit**, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*" (Heb. 4:12).

1. BODY. The body of man was created by "God of the dust of the around" (Gen. 2:7), and therefore belongs to the earth. "*For dust thou art, and unto dust shall thou return*" (Gen. 3:19), it was said to the first man after his fall into sin. In his physical, bodily life, man is not different from any of the other living creatures or animals in satisfying the needs of the body. The needs of the body are various, but in general they all come down to the satisfaction of two basic instincts: 1) **the instinct of self-preservation** and 2) **the instinct of continuing the race**.

Both of these instincts were placed by the Creator in the bodily nature of every living creature with a completely understandable and reasonable goal: that they not perish and be destroyed without a trace.

For dealing with the external world, the body of man is equipped with five senses: **sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch**, without which man would be completely helpless in the world. This whole apparatus of the human body is extraordinarily complex and most wisely put together, but by itself would be merely a dead machine without motion if the soul did not bring it to life.

2. SOUL. The soul was given by God as the life-giving principle in

order to govern the body. In other words, the soul is the life force of man and of every living being; the scientists call it just this: vital life strength.

The animals also have a soul, but it was brought forth from the earth together with the body. *"And God said: let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life...great whales, and every living creature that moveth...cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth...after his kind: and it was so"* (Gen. 1:20-24).

Only of man is it said that, after the creation of his body from the dust of the earth, the Lord *"breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"* (Gen. 2:7). This "breath of life" is the highest function in man, his spirit, by which he is immeasurably higher than all other living beings. Therefore, although the soul of man is in many ways similar to that of animals, still, in its higher part, it incomparably surpasses the souls of animals, thanks to its being joined with the spirit which is from God. The soul of man is the link between the body and spirit, being, as it were, a bridge from the body to the spirit.

All the actions, or more precisely, "movements" of the soul, are so varied and complex, so interconnected, so changeable, and often so difficult to pinpoint, like lightning, that for convenience in distinguishing them, it is acceptable to divide them into three groups: **thoughts**, **feelings** and **desires**. These movements of the soul serve as the subject of the study of the science called psychology.

1. The organ of the body which helps the soul perform mental activity, that is, **thought** and **intellectual work**, is the **brain**.

2. The central organ of feeling is generally considered to be the **heart**. It is the measure of what is pleasing and not pleasing to us. The heart is naturally considered the center of the life of man, a center in which all that enters the soul from outside is contained, and from which proceeds all that is manifested by the soul to the outside.

3. Man's **desires** are controlled by the **will**, which does not have a physical organ in our body, but for its fulfillment the members of our body are set apart, brought into action by the help of muscles and nerves.

The results of the activity of our mind and feeling, given birth by the heart, manifest one or another kind of influence on the will, and our body carries out one or another action or movement.

In this way, the soul and body are closely bound to one another. The body, with the help of the organs of external senses, relates one or another impression to the soul, and the soul, relying on this impression, in one way or another, governs the body and directs its activity. Because of this bond between body and soul this life is often called by a general term: "psychosomatic life," However, it is still necessary to distinguish between bodily life as being for the satisfaction of the needs of the body, and the life of the soul for the satisfaction of the needs of the soul.

What life of the body consists of has already been discussed. It is in satisfying two major instincts: the instinct of self-preservation and the instinct of preserving the species.

The life of the soul consists in satisfying the needs of the mind, feelings, and will; the soul **wishes** to acquire knowledge, and to experience one kind of feeling or another.

By the grace of the Holy Spirit the soul in us acquires the following characteristics: 1) fear of God, 2) conscience and 3) thirst for God.

1. **Fear of God.** This is, of course, not fear in our usual human understanding of the word. This is reverent trembling before the might of God, inextricably tied with unchanging faith in the truth of the existence of God, in the actuality of the existence of God as our Creator, Provider, Saviour, and giver of rewards. All peoples, no matter what level of development they may have had, all had faith in God. Even the ancient writer Cicero, two thousand years before our time, said: "There is not a single people that is so coarse and wild that it has no faith in God, even though it may not know His nature." "From the time," says the scientist Hettinger, "that America and Australia were discovered by Europeans and a multitude of new peoples entered into the history of the world, still his (Cicero's) words remain unshaken, and have become even more indubitable and more obvious than before. Thus, as many centuries as there are that history can count, so many proofs there are of this truth,"

2. **Conscience.** The second way in which the Divinely inspired soul is made known in man is **conscience**. Conscience tells a man what is right and what is not right, what is pleasing to God and what is not pleasing, what he should and what he should not do. It not only tells, but also compels a man to fulfill what it has said, and rewards him with consolation when it is fulfilled or punishes him with pangs of conscience when it is not. Conscience is our internal judge, the guardian of the law of God. It was not in vain that people have called the conscience the "voice of God" in the soul of man.

3. **Thirst for God.** The third manifestation of the Divinely inspired soul in man is very aptly called "**thirst for God**" by Bishop Theophan the Recluse. It is inherent in the nature of our soul to seek God. Our soul cannot be satisfied with anything created and earthly. No matter how many and how varied the earthly goods we might have, still we long for something more. This eternal human dissatisfaction, this constant insatiableness, this truly unquenchable thirst demonstrates that our soul possesses a striving for something higher than all that surrounds it in earthly life, for something ideal, as it is often said. Since nothing earthly can quench this thirst in man, the soul of man is restless, not finding any rest for itself until it finds complete satisfaction in God, with Whom the human soul is always striving consciously or unconsciously, to have living communion.

Such are the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in man, which must be the guiding principles in the life of every man: to live in communion with God and to live according to the will of God; to live according to these principles means to fulfill one's purpose on the earth and to inherit eternal life.

5. The Fall into Sin.

The Devil was jealous of the blessedness in Paradise of the first people and he thought to deprive them of life in Paradise. For this purpose he entered into the serpent and hid in the branches of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When Eve passed by, the Devil whispered to her to eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree. With cunning, he asked Eve, "*Yea, hath God said, 'Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?*"

Eve answered the serpent, "*We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, 'Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.'*"

The Devil lied in order to seduce Eve. He said, "*Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*"

The tempting words of the Devil through the serpent acted upon Eve. She looked at the tree and saw that the tree was pleasant to the eyes, good for food, and gave knowledge; and she wanted to know

good and evil. She took of the fruit from the forbidden tree and ate. Then she gave it to her husband, and he ate.

Man gave in to the temptation of the Devil and violated the commandment or will of God — **he sinned**, fell into sin. This is how man's fall into sin came about.

This first sin of Adam and Eve, or fall of man into sin, is called **ancestral** or **original sin**, for it is specifically this sin which is the beginning of all the other sins in man. The habit, or inclination to sin, passed on to all mankind.

Note: See Genesis, chap. 3:1-6.

6. The Results of the Fall into Sin and the Promise of a Saviour.

When the first people sinned, they became ashamed and afraid, as it happens with all people when they act foolishly. They immediately realized that they were naked. In order to cover their nakedness, they sewed for themselves clothes from the leaves of the fig tree, in the form of wide belts. Instead of receiving the perfection, equal to God's, that they had wanted, the opposite occurred: their minds were darkened, their consciences began to torment them, and they lost peace of mind. All this occurred because they **knew good and evil, contrary to the will of God, that is, by sin.**

Sin changed men so much that when they heard the voice of God in Paradise, in fear and shame they hid among the trees, immediately forgetting that no one can hide from God Who knows everything and is everywhere present. Thus, every sin separates men from God. God, in His compassion, began to call them to **repentance**, that is, for men to realize their sin, admit it before the Lord, and ask for forgiveness.

The Lord asked, "*Adam, where art thou?*"

Adam answered, "*I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.*"

God again asked, "*Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?*"

Adam said, "*The woman that Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*" So Adam began to pass the blame onto Eve and even to God Himself, Who gave him the woman.

And the Lord said to Eve, "*What is this that thou hast done?*"

Eve in place of repentance answered, "*The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.*"

Then the Lord proclaimed the results of the sin committed by them.

To Eve God said, "*I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband*" (that is, you must be in obedience to him).

To Adam He said, [Because thou] "*hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake...thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee...in the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread*" (that is, you will earn your food by heavy labor), "*till thou return unto the ground*" (that is, until you die); "*for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*" (Gen. 3:16-19).

To the Devil, who concealed himself in the serpent, and was most responsible for man's sin, He said, "*Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou...*" and He said that between him and man there would be a struggle, in which men will be the victors, specifically: "***The seed of the woman shall crush thy head, and thou shalt strike at his heel***" (Cf. Gen 3:15), that is, from woman there will come forth an **offspring – the Saviour of the world**, Who will be born of a virgin, will conquer the Devil and save man, but for this, He Himself must suffer.

This promise of God concerning the coming of the Saviour was received by men with faith and joy, because it gave them great consolation. In order that men would not forget this promise of God, God taught them to offer **sacrifices**. For this He commanded them to sacrifice a bull, a lamb or a goat, and to burn them with prayer for the forgiveness of sins and with faith in the future Saviour. Such a sacrifice was a prefiguration of the Saviour, Who had to suffer and pour out His blood for our sins, that is, by His all pure blood to wash our souls from sin and make them clean, holy and once more worthy of Paradise.

Here, in Paradise, the first offering for sin was offered; God made Adam and Eve coats of animal skins and clothed them. However, since people had become sinful, they could no longer live in

Paradise, and the Lord expelled them. The Lord placed at the entrance to Paradise an angel-cherubim with a fiery sword in order to guard the way to the tree of life.

The ancestral sin of Adam and Eve, with all its consequences, was passed on through natural birth to all their offspring, to all mankind, to all of us. This is why we are born already sinful and are under all the consequences of sin: sorrow, illness, and death.

Thus, the consequences of the fall into sin turned out to be enormous and heavy. People were deprived of the blessed life of Paradise. The world, darkened by sin, was changed. The earth from that time began to produce a harvest only with much labor; in the fields, instead of good fruits, weeds began to grow; animals began to fear man, to become wild, and seek prey. Illness, suffering, and death appeared. Most importantly, people, through their sinfulness, lost the very close and direct communion with God. He no longer appeared to them visibly, as in Paradise — man's prayer became imperfect.

Note: See Genesis, chap. 3:7-24.

7. Discussion of the Fall into Sin.

When God created the first man, He saw that **he was very good**, that man was directed towards God in love. There were no conflicts in the first created man. Man was a complete **unity of spirit, soul and body**, one harmonious whole — the spirit of man was directed towards God, the soul was united or freely submitted to the spirit, and the body to the soul. There was unity of purpose, direction, and will. Man was holy, becoming like God.

The will of God is specifically this: that man **freely**, that is, **with love**, strive towards God, the source of eternal life and blessedness, and that in this way he remain continually in communion with God, in the blessedness of eternal life. Such were Adam and Eve. Therefore they had illuminated reason and **Adam knew every creature by name**. This means that for him the physical laws of the formation of the earth and the animal world were made manifest — those laws, which we are now only partially discovering. **By the fall into sin, men destroyed their internal harmony — the unity of spirit, soul and body** — they upset their nature. There was no more unity of purpose, direction, and will.

In vain some people wish to interpret the fall into sin as allegory, that is, that the fall into sin consisted of the physical love between Adam and Eve, forgetting that the Lord Himself commanded them, "be fruitful and multiply..." Moses clearly recounts that, "Eve first sinned alone, and not together with her husband." Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow writes "How could Moses have written that if he were writing only allegorically, which some people like to find here?"

The result of the fall into sin was that our fore-parents, by giving in to the temptation, ceased to regard the forbidden fruit as a matter of the commandment of God and began to see it in relationship to themselves, to their feelings, and heart, and understanding, departing from the unity of God's truth **into a multitude of private thoughts and private wishes, not concentrated in the will of God**, that is, **departing into lust**. Desire, having conceived sin, gives rise to active sin (James 1:14-15). Eve, tempted by the Devil, saw the forbidden tree not for what it was but what **she wanted**, in accordance with obvious forms of desire (I John 2:16; Gen. 3:6). What kinds of desire were found in the soul of Eve before the eating of the forbidden fruit? **And the woman saw that the tree was good for food**, that is, imagined a certain special, extraordinarily pleasant taste in the forbidden fruit — this is **lust of the flesh**. **And that it was pleasing to the eye**, that is, it seemed to the woman to be more beautiful than all the other fruit — this is **lust of the eyes**, or the passion to acquire. **It was desirable because it grants knowledge**. The woman wanted to know the loftier, divine knowledge which the tempter offered her — this is the **pride of life** or the love of glory.

The first sin is born in **sensuality**, with the striving for pleasant feelings, for physical comfort; **in the heart**, with the desire for pleasure without discernment; and **in the mind**, with the fantasy of arrogant, varied knowledge. Thus, **it penetrates all the powers of human nature**.

The disrupting of human nature also includes the fact that sin turned or tore the soul from the spirit, and the soul, as a result, began to be attracted to the body, to the flesh, and to depend on it. The body, losing its former lofty power of the soul and itself a creation from nothingness, began to have attraction to sensuality, to emptiness, to death. Therefore the result of sin is illness, destruction, and death. The mind of man was darkened, the will weakened, the feeling distorted, conflicts arose, and the human soul lost purposeful striving towards God.

In this manner, having stepped over the limits established by the commandment of God, man turned his soul away from God, the true

fullness and universal focal point, and **became self-centered**, enclosed in the darkness of sensuality, in the coarseness of matter. The mind, will and activity of men turned away from God to material creation, from the heavenly to the earthly, from the unseen to the seen (cf. Gen. 3:6). Deceived by the wiles of the tempter, man by his own will "*is compared to the mindless cattle, and is become like unto them*" (Ps. 48:12).

The disruption of human nature by ancestral sin — the disruption of soul and spirit in man, which now has an attraction to the sensual, is clearly expressed in the words of the Apostle Paul, "*For the good that I would do, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me*" (Rom. 7:19-20). Man constantly suffers from "pangs of conscience" when realizing his sinfulness, his criminality. In other words, it is impossible for man, by his own powers, without the interference or help of God, to restore his damaged and disrupted nature. Therefore, it was necessary for God Himself to come down and dwell upon the earth. The incarnation of the Son of God was necessary for the **restoration** of the fallen and corrupted nature of man, to save man from damnation and eternal death.

Why Did the Lord God Permit the First Man to Fall into Sin?

Almighty God, without a doubt, could have prevented the fall of the first people, but He did not wish to stifle their freedom, because it is not in His nature to distort His own image in man. The image and likeness of God is expressed in the **free will of man**.

Prof. Nesmeloff explains this matter very well: "Because it is not clear and is even completely inconceivable for many people to understand why a mechanical salvation is impossible, we should examine this impossibility more closely. To save the first people by preserving the conditions in which they lived before the fall was impossible because their fall was such that they showed themselves to be not only mortal, but also to be criminal. This means that as long as they were aware of their crime, Paradise would in no way be possible for them because of their awareness of their own criminality. If it had happened that they forgot their crime, then by this same act they would only have confirmed their sinfulness, and the result would be that Paradise was impossible for them again because of their moral inability to approach that state in which their first life in Paradise took place. Consequently, the first people could not return themselves to the lost Paradise, **not because God did not wish it, but because their own moral condition did not permit and could not permit this.**

"The children of Adam and Eve were not guilty of their crime, and

could not recognize themselves as criminal merely because their parents were criminals. There is no doubt that God, Who is likewise able to create man and to make an infant grow, could have brought forth the children of Adam from a state of sinlessness and placed them in the normal conditions of moral development. To achieve this, the following would be necessary:

- a) The consent of God to the damnation of the first people;
- b) The agreement of the first people to grant God rights over their children and to give up all hope of salvation forever; and,
- c) The agreement of the children to leave their parents in a state of damnation.

"If we allow that the first two of these conditions would in some way be considered possible, nonetheless in no way would it be possible to realize the third necessary condition. For if the sons of Adam and Eve in fact did sin, then for them to let their father and mother perish for the crime that they committed would obviously only demonstrate that they were completely unworthy of Paradise and that they would have surely lost it themselves."

It would have been possible to destroy the men that sinned and create new ones, but would not the newly-created men, having a free will, have begun to sin? Man would then have been born in vain, and not even through a distant offspring would he have overcome the evil he had permitted to triumph over himself. But God was not willing to allow the man He had created to have been created in vain. For the omniscient God does not do anything in vain. The Lord God embraced the entire plan of the creation in His pre-eternal mind and there was included in His pre-eternal plan the incarnation of His Only-begotten Son for the salvation of fallen mankind.

In order not to violate the will of man, it was necessary that fallen mankind be restored **by compassion and by love**, so that man would wish voluntarily to return to God, and **not by force nor necessity**, for then men would not be worthy children of God. According to the pre-eternal mind of God, men must become like Him Himself, and sharers of eternal, blessed life with Him.

Thus, the all-wise, all-good and almighty Lord God did not count it unworthy of Himself to come down to the sinful earth, to take upon Himself our flesh, injured by sin, and to save us and return us to the paradisiacal blessedness of eternal life.

Concerning the Image and Likeness of God in Man.

The Holy Church teaches that the **image of God** is to be understood as the **powers of the soul: mind, will, feeling**, which God granted to man; and **the likeness of God** is to be understood as the **ability** of man to direct the powers of his soul to becoming like God, **to be perfected in striving for truth and good**.

This can be more fully explained by the following:

The image of God is found in **the qualities and powers of the soul**. God is an invisible Spirit Who penetrates everything in the world, gives life to all, and at the same time He is a Being independent of the world. The **soul** of man, present in the entire body, and giving life to the body, even though it has a certain dependence on the body, still continues to exist after the death of the body. God is eternal; the soul of man is immortal. God is all-wise and all-knowing; the soul of man has the power to learn what is present, to remember the past and even at times to prophesy the future. God is all-good, that is, all-kind, all-merciful, and the soul of man has the power to love others and to sacrifice itself. God is almighty, the creator of all that is; the soul of man has the power and the ability to think, to make, to create, to build, etc. But, of course, there exists an immeasurable difference between God and the powers of the human soul. The powers of God are unlimited, and the powers of the human soul are very limited. God is a being that is absolutely free; the soul of man has only freedom of will. Therefore man can wish, but he can also not wish to be the likeness of God, for this depends on his own free desire, on his free will.

The likeness of God depends on the **direction of spiritual abilities**. This requires that man work on himself spiritually. If a man strives for truth and good, for the righteousness of God, then he becomes like God. However, if a man loves only himself, lies, makes enemies, does evil, cares only for earthly goods, thinks only about his body and does not care for his soul, then such a person ceases to be in the likeness of God and becomes in his life like a beast, and can finally become like an evil spirit, a devil.

8. Cain and Abel.

After the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, they began to bear children, sons and daughters (cf. Gen. 5:4). They called their first son Cain and the second Abel. Cain was a worker of the soil and Abel shepherded flocks. Once, they brought offerings to God: Cain of

the fruits of the earth, but Abel of the best beast of the flock.

Abel had a kind and meek nature; he brought his offering from a pure heart, with love and faith in the promised Saviour, with prayer for mercy and hope in the mercy of God; God accepted the sacrifice of Abel and its smoke rose into Heaven. Cain was cruel and evil. He offered his sacrifice only out of habit, without love and fear of God. The Lord did not accept his sacrifice, for the smoke from his sacrifice only spread along the earth.

After this, Cain became jealous of his brother. He called his brother out into the field and killed him. God spoke to Cain to make him repent, asking him, "Where is Abel, thy brother?"

Cain brazenly answered, "I know not; am I my brother's keeper?"

Then God said to him, "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground. And now thou art cursed from the earth...a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be."

Cain, tormented by his conscience, ran with his wife from his parents into another land.

Human life is the gift of God; therefore, man does not have the right to deprive himself of it or to take another man's life. Taking the life of one's neighbor is called **murder**, and the taking of one's own life is called **suicide** which is the most terrible sin. Only in the case of the insane is the sin of suicide sometimes pardoned.

In place of the murdered Abel, God granted Adam and Eve a third son, the pious **Seth**, and then there were many other children. Adam and Eve lived for a long time on the earth. Adam lived 930 years. They endured many sufferings and anguish, and in their hearts they repented of their sin and firmly believed in the promised Saviour. This faith saved them and now they are numbered among the Holy Forefathers.

Note: See Genesis, chaps. 4:1-16, 25; 5:3-5.

9. The Flood.

The human race began to multiply very rapidly from the children of Adam and Eve. At that time people lived for a very long time, up to nine hundred years or more.

From Seth there came forth pious and good people, "sons of God," but from Cain, wicked and evil people, "sons of men," At first, the offspring of Seth lived separately from the offspring of Cain. They preserved faith in God and the coming Saviour. Later however, they began to take for themselves wives from the daughters of the offspring of Cain, and through them, began to adopt bad habits, to be corrupted, and to forget the true God.

After a considerable time, the wickedness of men was so great that, of all the people on earth, only one of the offspring of Seth remained faithful to God, the righteous **Noah** and his family.

Beholding the great corruption of mankind, the merciful Lord gave them 120 years for repentance and correction. But men not only did not correct themselves, they became even worse.

Then the Lord decided to cleanse the earth of the evil human race with water, but to preserve the righteous Noah and his family on the earth to continue the human race.

God said to Noah, "The end has come for all creatures, for the earth has been filled by them with evil works; and I shall obliterate them from the face of the earth. I shall bring upon the earth a flood of water to destroy all that is upon the earth" (Cf. Gen. 6:13-17). He commanded Noah to build an **ark**, a huge, rectangular vessel like a house, in which there would be room for his family and animals, and He gave him the precise measurements and directions for this. Noah accepted God's commandment with faith and began to build the ark.

When the ark was ready, Noah, at the command of God, entered into it with his wife, his three sons and their wives, and at God's direction, took with him all the animals and birds which could not live in the water: of the clean ones, that is, the ones which could be offered in sacrifice, seven pairs, and of the unclean ones, one pair, in order to preserve their kind upon the earth. He also took a reserve of food for them all for an entire year.

On that day when Noah entered into the ark, the waters of the flood gushed upon the earth, and "*all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened*" (Gen. 7:11). There came about a mighty flood from the seas and oceans and from heaven rain poured down upon the earth for forty days and forty nights. The water rose over the earth higher than the highest mountains; it prevailed for 150 days and drowned all men and animals except the ones that were on the ark.

After 150 days the water began slowly to recede. In the **seventh**

month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat (in present day Turkey). On the first day of the **tenth month** the tops of the mountains appeared. After **one year** came to an end, the water receded into its proper place.

Noah opened a window in the ark and released a raven, in order to learn whether or not the water had receded from the earth, but the raven flew out and returned to the protection of the ark.

Then Noah released a dove which, when it had flown away, could not find a place to live, because the water was still over the heights of the entire earth, and it returned to the ark. After seven days, Noah again released the dove from the ark. This time the dove returned in the evening and brought a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Noah understood that the water had receded from the earth and that plants had appeared upon it. After waiting another seven days, Noah again released the dove, and this time it did not return to him. He opened the roof of the ark and beheld that the earth had dried.

Then, at the command of God, Noah went forth from the ark with all his family, and released all the animals that were with him.

Noah erected an altar, a place for offering sacrifices, and he offered for his salvation a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God from all the clean animals and birds. God mercifully accepted the sacrifice of Noah, blessed him and his sons, and promised that there would never again be such a flood to destroy all life on earth for the sins of men, that is, there would never again be a **world-wide flood**. As a sign of this promise, the Lord showed a **rainbow** in the clouds, which from that time has served as a faithful reminder to men of this promise of God.

Note: See Genesis, chaps. 4:17-24; 5; 6:1-22; 7; 8; 9:1-17.

Discussion of the Flood.

There is an objection to the story of the flood from those who do not believe. Some say that it would be impossible for the entire earth to be under water at the same time, as is recounted in the Bible. The flood may not have covered the entire earth. One must recall the purpose for which God made the flood: *"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.. So the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth"* (Gen. 6:5,7). Consequently, the flood can be imagined as **covering only that part** of the earth populated by sinful people, but how great an area this was at the time of the flood is entirely unknown to us. Moreover, the fact that the Bible speaks in

several places of the flood extending over the entire earth need not disturb us. The Bible, and all religious literature which has as its purpose care for human souls, often calls an area of human habitation, or an isolated area of human habitation, or even just an isolated area of human civilization that has developed under the effect of Holy Scripture, "the earth," and even "the universe." Byzantium, which was nurtured on the Bible, called the Mediterranean basin "the universe;" and that is why she called her emperors "rulers of the universe," and why the Constantinopolitan Patriarch was given the title "ecumenical," or universal.

The widespread tradition of the flood testifies to its being an event that gripped all mankind, and that it was preserved in the memory of many branches of the human race. The same researcher, Arthur Hook, reports that the Chaldees, Phoenicians, Babylonians, Phrygians, Syrians, Persians, Greeks, and even the Armenians, all, to a greater or lesser degree, have mutually compatible accounts of the flood. The account of the Phrygians, for example, mentions Enoch as a prophet of the flood, and recounts that he wept and prayed over the fate of the hardened, unrepentant peoples of the antediluvian world. An ancient Phrygian coin was discovered with a wrought picture of the ark and the letters "N-O" on one side, which, undoubtedly refer to Noah. Further, we find that India and China have accounts of the flood, and that a **certain person with the seven members of his family** was saved from the flood. The Aztecs had a tradition about a man who made a vessel in order to save himself from a catastrophe that was about to occur.

In addition we should mention that on the basis of geological excavations, it is clear that there is in the earth a **thick layer of clay, of alluvial deposits**, which has no remains of organic animal life in it. This layer is **sharply distinguished**, and **sharply divides** the layers of the Paleolithic Age (Stone) from the later layers: **neolithic, bronze and iron ages**. The French scientist Mortillie called this layer Hiatus, that is, a break. It is assumed that this alluvial deposit came about from the depth of the sea with the action of a worldwide cataclysm; the land sank beneath the level of the ocean whose waters flooded the entire earth. Moses says of this, "*and all the fountains of the great abyss were opened*" (Gen. 7:11), and then he also speaks of rain. Furthermore, these alluvial deposits cover, in a thick layer, all Europe, North Africa and Western Asia to the highest peaks. The scientist Couvier called this sediment, this thick alluvial deposit, "Deluge."

10. The Life of Noah and His Children After the

Flood.

The sons of Noah who emerged with him from the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Noah began to work the earth and planted a vineyard. When he had made wine of the juice of the vine and had drunk it, he became intoxicated because he did not know as yet the strength of wine, and taking his clothes off, he lay naked in his tent. His son Ham, the father of Canaan, saw this. He acted without proper respect for his father and told his brothers about this. Shem and Japheth, however, took clothing, and came up to their father in such a way as not to see his nakedness and covered him. When Noah woke up and learned about the action of the youngest son, Ham, he condemned and cursed him in the person of his son Canaan, and said that his offspring would be in slavery to the offspring of his brothers. But Shem and Japheth he blessed and prophesied that the true faith would be preserved in the offspring of Shem, and the offspring of Japheth would spread across the earth and accept the true faith from the offspring of Shem.

Noah lived for 950 years. He was the last to live to such an advanced age. After him, the strength of the human race began to decline, and people could live for only 400 years. But even with this length of life, the population increased.

All that Noah foretold his sons was fulfilled precisely. The offspring of Shem are called the **Semites**, to whom there belong firstly the Hebrew people, with whom faith in the true God was preserved. The offspring of Japheth are called **Japhethites**, to whom there belong the peoples that populated Europe and Asia, who accepted faith in the true God from the Hebrews. The offspring of Ham are called **Hamites**. The Canaanite tribes which originally inhabited Palestine, and were later subjugated by the offspring of Shem and Japheth, belong to them.

Note: See Genesis, chaps. 9:18-39; 10.

11. The Building of the Tower of Babel and the Scattering of Peoples.

For a long time, the increasing offspring of Noah lived together in

one land, not far from the Ararat mountains, and spoke one common language.

When the human race became numerous, evil deeds and conflicts between people began to multiply, and they saw that they would soon have to scatter across the entire earth. Before they separated, however, the offspring of Ham, together with others whom they attracted, decided to build a city and in the city a **tower** in the form of a **pillar**, reaching to Heaven, in order to be glorified, and not be in subjugation to the offspring of Shem and Japheth, as Noah had prophesied. They made bricks and set to work.

This proud project of the people was not pleasing to God. So that evil would not completely destroy them, since evil could be quickly spread due to a common language, the Lord changed the language of the builders so that they began to speak in different languages and could no longer understand one another. Then men were forced to abandon the work they had undertaken and scatter across the earth into various lands. The offspring of Japheth went to the west and settled in Europe. The offspring of Shem remained in Asia. The offspring of Ham went to Africa, but a part of them also remained in Asia.

The unfinished city was called **Babylon**, which means confusion. This whole land where this city was located was later to be called Babylonia, and also Chaldea.

Scattering across the earth, people began to forget their ancestry and began to make up separate, independent peoples and nations with their own customs and language.

The Lord saw that people learned more evil from one another than good, and for this reason He brought about the confusion of the languages and divided people into separate nations and gave each nation a separate goal and purpose in life.

Note: See Genesis, chap. 11.

12. The Appearance of Idolatry.

When people were scattered across the entire earth, they began to forget the invisible true God, the Creator of the world. The principal reason for this was that the sins which separate people from God clouded their reason.

There were fewer and fewer righteous men, and there was no one to teach men true faith in God. There appeared among men false faith, superstition. People saw about them much that was marvelous and unintelligible, and in place of God they began to worship the sun, moon, stars, fire, water and various animals, to make images of them, to worship them, to offer sacrifice and build them temples or shrines. Such images of false gods are called **idols**, and the people who worship them are called **idolaters** or **pagans**. This is how idolatry began to appear on the earth.

Soon almost all men were pagans. Only in Asia, in the offspring of Shem was there a righteous man whose name was Abraham, who remained faithful to God.

13. Abraham.

Abraham lived in the land of Chaldea, not far from Babylon. He was a descendant of Shem and, with all his family, preserved true faith in God. He was wealthy, having an abundance of cattle, silver, gold, and many servants, but he had no children and grieved over this.

God chose the righteous Abraham to preserve the true faith, through his offspring, for all mankind. In order to protect him and his offspring from the pagan people related to him, because the pagans among his relatives could more easily teach them idolatry, God appeared to Abraham and said, "*Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great...and in thee shall all families (peoples) of the earth be blessed*" (Gen 12:1-2). God promised Abraham that, in time, from his offspring there should be born the Saviour of the world, promised to the first men, Who should bless all peoples of the earth.

Abraham was seventy-five years old at that time. He obeyed the Lord, took his wife Sarah, his cousin Lot, all the possessions they had acquired, and all their servants, and moved into the land which the Lord showed him. This land was called **Canaan** and was very fertile. At that time the Canaanites lived there. They were one of the most wicked of all peoples. The Canaanites were the offspring of Canaan, the son of Ham. Here the Lord appeared to Abraham anew and said: "*For all the land that thou seest, to thee will I give it, and*

to thy seed for ever" (Gen. 13:15). Abraham built an altar and offered God a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

After this, the land of Canaan began to be called the **Promised Land**, since God promised to give it to Abraham and his offspring. Now it is called **Palestine**. This land is on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River flows down through its center.

When the flocks of Abraham and Lot began to grow plentiful, there was no longer enough room for them to remain together, and their shepherds began to argue with each other; then they decided to separate on friendly terms.

Abraham said to Lot *"Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee...for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me...if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go the left"* (Gen. 13:8-10).

Lot chose for himself the valley of the Jordan and settled in Sodom. Abraham remained in the land of Canaan and settled near Hebron, at the woods of Mamre. There, near the oak of Mamre, he set up his tent and built an altar to the Lord. This **oak of Mamre** is still alive in Palestine near the city of Hebron.

A short while after Lot had settled in Sodom, the neighboring King of Elam attacked Sodom, looted the city, took the people into captivity and seized their possessions. Among the captives was Lot. Abraham when he learned of this, immediately gathered his servants together (318 men), called his neighbors to help, overtook the enemy, attacked him, and seized his loot.

When Abraham returned, he met solemnly with Melchizedek, who was a priest of the Most-high God and King of Salem. He offered bread and wine as a gift to Abraham and blessed him.

Nothing is known concerning Melchizedek, his background, and his death. The name **Melchizedek** means **king of righteousness**, and the word **Salem** means **peace**. Melchizedek was a prototype of Jesus Christ. Just as Melchizedek was at the same time priest and king, so Jesus Christ is High Priest and King. Just as neither the beginning nor the end of the life of Melchizedek is told, he, as it were, lives forever. So also Christ is eternal God, King and High Priest; we call Jesus Christ the High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. And just as our Lord Jesus Christ gave us, in the form of bread and wine, His Body and Blood, that is, Holy Communion, so also Melchizedek, foreshadowing the Saviour, offered Abraham bread and wine and, since he was older, blessed Abraham. Abraham

accepted the blessing of Melchizedek with reverence and gave him the tenth part of his spoils.

Note: See Genesis, chaps. 12,14,15,16,17.

14. The Appearance of God to Abraham in the Form of Three Strangers.

Once, on a hot day, Abraham sat under the shadow of the oak, at the entrance of his tent, and saw Three Strangers standing before him. Abraham loved to receive strangers. He immediately got up and ran to meet Them, bowed to the earth, and invited Them to rest at his home under the tree and to strengthen Themselves with food.

The strangers came to his abode. According to the custom of that time, Abraham washed Their feet, gave Them bread which had just been prepared by his wife Sarah, set forth oil, milk, and the best fatted calf, and called Them to eat.

And They said to him, "Where is Sarah, thy wife?"

He answered, "Behold, in the tent."

One of Them said, "I will certainly return to thee in a year; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son."

Sarah, who was standing out of sight in the entrance to the tent, heard these words. She laughed to herself and thought, "How can I have such a consolation, when I am already old?"

But the Stranger said, "Wherefore did Sarah laugh?...Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee,... and Sarah shall bear a son."

Then Sarah was frightened and said, "I laughed not."

But He said to her, "Nay, but thou didst laugh."

Abraham then realized that before him were not simple strangers, but that God Himself was speaking with him.

At that time Abraham was ninety-nine years old and Sarah eighty-nine.

Note: See Genesis, chap. 18:1-16.

15. The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

When He departed from Abraham, God revealed to him that He was going to destroy the neighboring cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because they were the most wicked cities on the earth. The cousin of Abraham, the righteous Lot, was living in Sodom.

Abraham began to plead with the Lord that He be merciful to these cities if there were fifty righteous men in them.

The Lord said, "If I find fifty righteous men in Sodom, then I shall spare the whole city for their sake."

Abraham again asked, "Perhaps of the fifty righteous men five shall be lacking?"

The Lord said, "If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it."

Then Abraham continued to speak with the Lord and beseech Him, continually lowering the number of righteous men, until he came to the number ten. He said, "Do not be angry, Master, but I will say once more: Perhaps ten (righteous men) shall be found there."

God said, "I shall not destroy it for ten's sake."

In these wretched cities the inhabitants were so evil and corrupt that there were not even ten righteous men to be found. These evil men even wanted to abuse the two angels that came to save the righteous Lot. They were prepared to break down the door, but the angels struck them with blindness and led Lot and his family, with his wife and two daughters, out of the city. They commanded them to run and not to look back, so as not to perish.

Then the Lord poured upon Sodom and Gomorrah a rain, of sulphur and fire and destroyed these cities and all the people in them. The place was entirely laid waste, so that in the valley where they stood a salt lake was formed, which is now known by the name **Dead Sea**, in which no creature can live.

The wife of Lot, when she ran from the city, looked back at Sodom, and immediately was turned into a pillar of salt.

By looking back at Sodom, the wife of Lot showed that she regretted leaving the sinful city that was left behind. She looked back,

hesitated, and immediately was turned into a pillar of salt. This is a strict lesson for us. When the Lord saves us from a sin, we must flee from it, not looking back at it, not hesitate nor regret giving it up.

Note: See Genesis, chaps. 18:16-33; 19:20.

16. The Offering of Isaac as a Sacrifice.

A year after the appearance of God to Abraham in the form of three strangers, the prophecy of God was fulfilled. Abraham and Sarah gave birth to a son whom they called Isaac. Abraham was then one hundred years old and Sarah ninety. They loved their only son very much.

When Isaac grew up, God wished to elevate the faith of Abraham and thus teach all men through him to love God and obey His will.

God appeared to Abraham and said, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Abraham obeyed. He was very sorry for his only son, whom he loved more than his own self. He loved God more than everything, he had perfect faith in Him and knew that God never desires anything evil. He rose early in the morning, saddled a donkey and took his son Isaac and two servants with him. He also took wood and fire for the sacrifice and set out on his way.

On the third day of the journey they came to the mountain which the Lord showed him. Abraham left the servants and the donkey at the foot of the mountain, took the fire and knife, loaded the wood on Isaac, and went with him to the mountain.

When they both were climbing the mountain, Isaac asked Abraham, "My father, we have fire and wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide a lamb for Himself."

They both went further and came to the top of the mountain to the place indicated by the Lord. There Abraham built an altar, laid out the wood, bound his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. He lifted the knife in order to slay his son, but then the angel of the Lord called to him from Heaven and said, "Abraham,

Abraham ... lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him, for I know that thou fearest God, and for that reason thou hast not begrudged thine only son for Me." Not far away, Abraham saw a ram caught in a bush, and he offered it in place of Isaac.

For such faith, love, and obedience God blessed Abraham and promised him that he would have as many offspring as the stars in the heavens and the sand on the shore of the sea, and that in his offspring all the peoples of the earth would receive a blessing, that is, the Saviour of the world would come forth from his descendants.

The offering of Isaac in sacrifice was a prefiguration to men of the Saviour, Who, being the Son of God, would be offered by His Father as a sacrifice for the sins of all men by death on the Cross.

Isaac, appearing as a prefiguration of the Saviour over two thousand years before the Birth of Christ, foreshadowed, according to God's will, Jesus Christ. He, like Jesus Christ, went without complaint to the place of sacrifice. As Jesus Christ bore the Cross Himself, so Isaac himself carried the wood for the sacrifice.

The mountain on which Abraham offered Isaac in sacrifice received the name of Mount Moriah. Later, at God's command, King Solomon built the Temple of Jerusalem on this mountain.

Note: See Genesis, chaps. 21, 22.

17. The Marriage of Isaac.

Sarah, the wife of Abraham, died when she was 127. Abraham himself began to grow weak and decided to find a wife for his son Isaac, not a Canaanite, but a maiden of his own kindred. Isaac was then forty years old.

Abraham called his oldest servant, Eleazar, and said to him, "Swear by the Lord, the God of Heaven and earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son from among the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell, but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac."

Eleazar gave the oath and immediately set out on his way. There was then the custom that the bridegroom gave the parents gifts for the bride; the more wealthy the bride, the more precious the gifts or dowry.

Eleazar took with him, as gifts, many expensive items and ten camels, and set out for Mesopotamia, to the city of Haran, where Nachor, Abraham's brother, was living.

Approaching the city, Eleazar stopped at a well. It was approaching evening, the time when the women usually came to draw water. Eleazar began to pray to God. He said, "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray Thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water. And let it come to pass, that the maiden to whom I shall say, 'Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee that I may drink' and she shall say, 'Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also:' let the same be she that thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that Thou hast showed kindness unto my master."

Eleazar had just finished the prayer when a beautiful maiden with a pitcher on her shoulders came to the well, drew water, and started back. Eleazar ran to her and said, "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher."

The maiden said, "Drink, my lord." And right away she lowered the pitcher from her shoulder, and gave him to drink. When Eleazar had drunk, the maiden said, "I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking." She straightway poured the water from her pitcher into the trough and ran again to the well to draw water, and drew water for all his camels. Eleazar watched her in silence and amazement.

When the camels stopped drinking, Eleazar took a golden ring and two bracelets for her arms, and gave them to her and asked her, "Whose daughter art thou? Tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?"

This maiden was named **Rebecca**. She answered, "I am the daughter of Bathuel, the son of Nahor. We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in." Eleazar knelt down and gave thanks to God that He had heard his prayer.

Rebecca ran to the house and told all of this to her mother and all in the house. Rebecca had a brother, Laban. He immediately ran to the well and said to Eleazar, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord: wherefore standest thou without? For I have prepared the house and room for the camels."

Eleazar entered the house. Laban unsaddled the camels, gave them straw and fodder. Right away they brought water to wash the feet of

Eleazar and the men who were with him and offered them food.

Eleazar said, "I will not eat until I explain my business...I am Abraham's servant." Eleazar told in detail why he had come and how, at his prayer, the Lord granted a sign concerning Rebecca. When he had told everything, he asked, "Now, if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me."

Laban and Bathuel answered, "This is a doing of the Lord. We cannot contradict thee. Behold, Rebecca is before thee. Take her and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken."

When Eleazar heard such words, he bowed down to the earth before the Lord with thanksgiving. Then he took the gold and silver items and clothing, and gave them to the bride, her brother, and mother.

On the next day, Eleazar asked that they let them go home. But the brother and mother of Rebecca began to persuade him to remain at least ten days. But Eleazar answered, "Hinder me not, for the Lord hath prospered my way."

Then the parents called Rebecca and asked her, "Wilt thou go with this man?"

Rebecca said, "I will go."

Then her parents blessed her and let her go. When Eleazar, with Rebecca and his men, approached the tents of Abraham on their camels, Isaac met them. Rebecca became the wife of Isaac. Love for Rebecca consoled Isaac in his mourning for the death of his mother, Sarah.

Note: See Genesis, chaps. 23, 24.

The marriage of Isaac is an example for all generations. How often young people go astray in this very important question in their life, upon entering into marriage. Some look for wealth, others for physical beauty, others for a good family, and so on.

Only rarely do they look for wisdom and a **meek and good heart**, that is, internal, spiritual beauty. The former qualities are temporary and pass away, but the latter, internal qualities are constant and do not depend on external circumstances.

An improper attitude towards marriage comes from the fact that people want to make their own happiness, without God, according to their own egotistical fancies.

Christian men and women who wish to enter into marriage must

fervently pray that the Lord, the Seer of hearts, will Himself, according to His will, arrange their marriage and bless them with His Grace. Without God's blessing no one can find happiness, good order in married life, and a truly Christian family.

A good Christian family is a bulwark for good morals, the soil for the planting of good in mankind, the tool and means for the furthering of the holy Church of Christ and confirming it upon the earth.

The family is also the foundation of the nation, as Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow, wrote, "In the family lie the seeds of everything that later sprouts and grows into the greater family which is called the nation."

18. Esau and Jacob.

Isaac had two sons; Esau and Jacob. Esau was a skilled hunter and often lived in the field. Jacob was meek and quiet, and lived in the tents together with his father and mother.

Isaac had greater love for Esau, who treated him with food from his hunt, but Rebecca had a greater love for Jacob. Esau, as the elder son, had the **birthright**, that is, seniority over Jacob in the blessing from his father.

Once Esau returned from the field tired and hungry. Jacob at that time was cooking himself lentil stew (proverbially called a mess of pottage). Esau said to him, "Feed me."

Jacob said, "Sell me this day thy birthright" since he wanted very much for the blessing that God gave to Abraham to refer to him and in this way to serve God zealously.

Esau answered, "Behold, I am dying of hunger; what do I care about this birthright?" By such an answer Esau showed his careless disregard for God's blessing.

Jacob said, "Swear to me."

Esau swore to it and sold his birthright to Jacob for a stew of lentils.

When Isaac grew old and blind, sensing that his life was approaching its end, he wished to bless Esau as his elder son. But thanks to the cleverness of Rebecca, he blessed Jacob instead of

Esau. Isaac soon learned his mistake, but still confirmed his blessing on Jacob.

Esau hated his brother for this, and even wanted to murder him, so Jacob had to leave his own family.

At the suggestion of his parents, he set out for the homeland of his mother in Mesopotamia, to the land of Babylon, to her brother Laban, in order to live with him until the anger of Esau passed away. While there he married one of the daughters of Laban.

Note: See Genesis, chaps. 23; 24; 25; 27:1-9.

19. Jacob's Vision of the Mystical Ladder.

While on his way, Jacob stopped in a field to pass the night. He placed a stone under his head and went to sleep. He beheld in his sleep a ladder standing on the earth, with its top touching the heavens. The angels of God were ascending and descending on it, and at the top of the ladder stood the Lord Himself.

The Lord said to Jacob, "I am the Lord God of Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give the land whereon thou liest to thee, and to thy seed. Thy seed shall be as numerous as the dust of the earth, and in thy **seed** shall all the peoples of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and bring thee again into this land."

Here, by the term "seed" or "offspring," through which all peoples shall be blessed and granted happiness, is meant the **Saviour**. The **ladder**, then, which joins Heaven and earth, prefigured the **Mother of God**, through Whom the Son of God, being born of Her, came to earth for the salvation of man. The Mother of God, like that ladder, joined Heaven to earth.

On awakening Jacob said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven." The stone on which he had slept, he set up as a monument and poured oil upon it as a sacrifice to God. He called this place, **Bethel**, which means "**house of God**." After this, with hope in God's help, he calmly continued his journey into Mesopotamia.

Jacob came into Haran to Laban, his uncle. Jacob told Laban about everything and remained to live and work for Laban. Laban asked

Jacob what pay he wanted for his work. Jacob agreed to work for Laban seven years for his daughter, **Rachel**, in order to marry her, as he had fallen in love with her. But Laban cunningly gave Jacob not Rachel for a wife but his elder daughter, Leah, justifying himself by the local tradition that the younger daughter could not be married before the elder.

Then the deceived Jacob agreed to work another seven years for Rachel. After twenty years Jacob safely returned to his father in the land of Canaan with a large family and many possessions. Esau, who had not seen his brother for a long time, joyfully met Jacob on the way. The Lord, in special, mystical circumstances, tested the strength of Jacob and gave him a new name, **Israel**, which means "contender with God." Thus, Jacob became the founder of the people of Israel, that is, the **Hebrews**.

Note: See Genesis, chap. 28:10-22; chaps. 29-35.

20. Joseph.

Jacob had twelve sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulon, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph and Benjamin. From them there later grew up the twelve tribes of the Hebrew people.

Of all his sons, Jacob loved Joseph most of all, for his meekness and obedience, and he sewed him a coat of many colors. But his brothers began to be jealous of Joseph and to hate him.

Once Joseph saw in a dream that he was with his brothers in the field and they were gathering sheaves. His sheaf stood up right in the middle, and the sheaves of his brothers surrounded his sheaf and bowed down to it. Another time, Joseph saw in a dream that the sun, the moon and eleven stars bowed down to him. When he related his dreams, his father said to him, "What is this dream which thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" For this his brothers hated him even more.

Soon after this, his brothers were herding flocks far from home, and their father sent Joseph to visit them, and to learn whether or not his brothers were well and the cattle safe. As he approached them, his brothers recognized Joseph from a long way off and began to say, "Behold, the dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him ... and we shall see what will become of his dreams." Reuben,

the oldest of the brothers, said, "Shed no blood; but cast him into this pit." He himself thought how he might be able to save Joseph and return him to his father. The brothers obeyed. They took Joseph's coat of many colors off him and threw him into a deep pit, in which there was no water. At that time a merchant passed by them with merchandise for the land of Egypt. One of the brothers, Judah, advised to sell Joseph, and they sold him for twenty silver pieces. Then they took Joseph's coat, drenched it with the blood of a goat, took it to their father and said, "We found this coat. Is it not Joseph's?" Jacob recognized the coat. "An evil beast hath devoured him!" he cried with grief. Afterwards he mourned for his beloved son for a long time and could not find consolation.

Joseph was sold by his brothers on Judah's advice for twenty pieces of silver. He was a prefiguration of Christ, Who was sold by Judas for thirty pieces of silver.

Note: See Genesis, chap. 37; Exodus, chap. 1:1-4.

21. Joseph in Egypt.

The merchants brought Joseph to Egypt and sold him to a certain nobleman named Potiphar, or Pentrephorios. Living in Egypt among pagans, Joseph firmly kept his faith in the true God and feared in any way to sin before Him. He served his master faithfully. Potiphar loved him and made him the manager of his household, but the evil and conniving wife of Potiphar denounced Joseph before her husband. Potiphar believed his wife and put Joseph in prison.

God saw the innocence of Joseph and helped him. In the same prison were the cup-bearer and the baker of Pharaoh, the Egyptian ruler. Once they saw dreams. The cup-bearer saw that he gathered grapes from three vineyards, pressed the juice out of them into a cup and gave it to Pharaoh. The baker saw that he was carrying three baskets of bread on his head and that birds came and ate them. Joseph explained these dreams. He said to the cup-bearer that in three days Pharaoh would forgive him and that he would again be the cup-bearer, but to the baker he said that in three days Pharaoh would order him to be hanged and that the birds would eat his body. All this was fulfilled as Joseph said.

Two years later Pharaoh had two dreams in the same night. He dreamed that he was standing on the bank of a river, and out of the river there first came seven fat and beautiful cows, and after them

came seven thin cows. The thin cows ate the fat ones, but they did not get fatter. The other dream was that on a single stalk seven full ears were growing, but then seven dry and empty ears grew, and the empty ears swallowed the seven full ones. In the morning Pharaoh called in all the wise men of Egypt, but none of them could explain the dreams to him.

Then the cup-bearer remembered Joseph and told the King about him. They brought Joseph to Pharaoh, and he explained the dreams. "Both dreams," he said, "signify the same thing. In the land of Egypt there will be seven years of great plenty; after this there will come seven years of famine." At the same time, Joseph advised Pharaoh to prepare during the plentiful years enough grain to supply for the entire time of the famine.

Pharaoh understood that God Himself had revealed the meaning of the dreams to Joseph and made him his chief minister in the land of Egypt, first after himself, and entrusted to him the preparation of the grain.

Note: See Genesis, chap. 39-40; 41:1-46.

22. Joseph's Meeting with His Brothers and the Moving of Jacob into Egypt.

During the seven years of plenty, Joseph gathered in Egypt so much grain that it was sufficient not only for the years of hunger but also for sale to other lands. People began to come to Egypt from everywhere for grain because the famine was over the entire earth.

The sons of Jacob, from the land of Canaan, also came to Egypt for grain. They came to Joseph, bowed down to him to the earth, but did not recognize him. But Joseph recognized his brothers and involuntarily recollected his dreams from childhood. In order to learn whether or not his brothers had improved, he treated them severely and said to them, "Ye are spies. To see the nakedness of the land ye are come "

"Nay," his brothers answered, "but to buy food are thy servants come. We are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. We used to be twelve, but the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not."

"If ye speak the truth," said Joseph, "Then let one of you remain

here, and the others take bread and bring the younger brother."

The brothers spoke among themselves, thinking that Joseph did not understand them, as they spoke through interpreters. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw his anguish of soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear. Therefore is this distress come upon us."

When Joseph heard what they were saying, he went out of the room and wept. Afterwards, he kept Simeon and let the rest of the brothers go.

After a year the brothers again came to Egypt for grain and brought with them their youngest brother Benjamin. Joseph, when he saw Benjamin with them, commanded to bring them to his house and to prepare a dinner for them. When he looked at Benjamin he was moved to tears of joy. So that his brothers would not notice his tears, he went into the next room and washed his face. After dinner, Joseph ordered the grain put into their sacks, but he ordered the silver cup from which he drank himself to be put into the sack of Benjamin. The next day he let them all go home.

The brothers had barely departed, when Joseph ordered his steward to overtake them and search them to see if they had not stolen his cup. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack. The brothers all returned to Joseph, fell down before him to the ground and said, "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants. Behold, we are thy servants."

"No," answered Joseph, "let the one who stole the cup remain as a slave, but you can return to your father."

Then Judah came forward and said to Joseph, "My lord! Our father is old and loveth this son more than all. I gave a pledge to bring him back safely. It is better that I should remain a slave with thee in place of him, but do thou let him go with his brethren to their father, for if he doth not return, our father shall die of grief."

Now Joseph saw that his brothers had learned their lesson, and no longer hid himself from them. He sent all his servants out of the room, began to weep and said to them, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." The brothers were so astounded that they could not speak.

But Joseph continued, "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve your lives. For these two years hath the famine been in the land, and yet there are five years more...Haste ye, and go up to my

father, and say unto him..., come down unto me, and tarry not." After this he embraced and kissed Benjamin and all his brothers, and he wept as he embraced them.

When Jacob learned with tremendous joy that his son Joseph was alive, he moved with all his family to Egypt.

For seventeen years the aged Jacob-Israel lived in Egypt. When he began to approach death, he first blessed Joseph and his children, Manasses and Ephraim. Joseph brought his children to his father, so that the elder Manasses stood at Jacob's right hand and the younger Ephraim stood at his left. But Jacob **crossed** his hands so that his right hand was on the head of Ephraim and the left on the hand of Manasses. And he blessed them, Ephraim as the elder and Manasses as the younger.

This crossing of Jacob's hands for blessing was **a foreshadowing of the Cross of Christ**, and that people would receive the Lord's blessing not by seniority but according to their good works and worthiness.

Afterwards, when he had gathered all his sons about his bed, he gave each of them his blessing and prophesied of Judah that of his offspring there would come forth kings over the Hebrew people until the time when the Peacemaker, that is, Christ the Saviour, should come.

After this, he commanded his sons to bury him in the land of Canaan where his fathers were buried. Jacob-Israel died at the age of one hundred and forty years and was taken by his sons into the land of Canaan and buried there.

Fifty years after Jacob's death, Joseph also died. Before his death he said that God would lead the Hebrew people out of Egypt and return them to the land of Canaan. He commanded that his bones be taken to his native land. In Egypt the family of Jacob-Israel began to multiply rapidly and became the people which came to be known as the Israelites or the Hebrews. It was divided into twelve tribes according to the number of the twelve sons of Jacob.

The story of **Joseph**, who suffered from his brothers but who was later glorified and saved their lives, **was a foreshadowing of Christ the Saviour**. The Saviour also suffered at the hands of His own people, died on the Cross, then arose and was glorified and saved men from sin and eternal death.

Note: See Genesis, chaps. 41:47-57; 42-50.

Discussion: The Story of Joseph Written in the Language of Trees.

Rationalists, men who recognize as the source of knowledge only reason, denying every experience and Divine Revelation, who do not believe in the historicity of the Biblical accounts, regard the story of Joseph as a legend. However, this account is not a legend but an actual happening which took place in the history of ancient Egypt. The author of these lines boldly confirms the historicity of this happening, as it turns out to have been recorded by nature itself and is written down in a most unexpected way. In the 1920's, in connection with work on this subject by many researchers in Russia, America, and Sweden, the author was occupied with research into the relation of the growth of trees and various natural influences, from rainfall, deposits, climate, fire, and pests. At that time the remains of trees that had been preserved in various paleontological and archeological collections were under investigation. Special attention was given to a collection of objects preserved from the times of ancient Egypt. Such items, in the Egyptian section of the Petersburg Hermitage, were in large quantity. They were all in excellent condition, which permitted the precise determination of what kind of wood was used for different items.

In this way it was determined that some of the items were made from trees which are still growing in Abyssinia and in the area of the upper lakes from which the Blue and White Nile find their source. These species were, of course, transported into Egypt. But there was a considerable number of items in the collection which had been made from different kinds of trees which still grow in the Nile valley. Of all these, the carpenters of ancient Egypt most frequently used two kinds: niletic acacia and sycamore. By studying the structure of the wood in these items, we were able to determine that there is a direct relationship between the width of the rings of the trees and the floods of the Nile.

Now, it is well known that the entire economy of Egypt depends on the size of these floods. When there is a generous flood, the entire population prospers, as the vegetation of the Nile valley in such years grows lushly and the fields give an abundant harvest. It turned out that in such years the trees, which grow along the banks of the Nile, have wide rings. An the years of small floods there are small harvests and hunger in the land, and the rings of the trees are narrow, as all growth suffers from the lack of moisture. When the relation between the harvests and the wide tree rings was determined, I came to the following conclusion: if the Biblical account relates an occurrence that actually took place in Egypt, then the seven years of exceptional plenty and the seven years of poor

harvests should have been recorded in the rings of the trees which grew at that time along the banks of the Nile.

I then asked the assistant of the curator of the Egyptian Section of the Hermitage (in those years, the curator was academician V. V. Struve), Mme. N. D. Flitner to show me which wooden items of the collection could belong to the times of the XIII-XVIII dynasties. Researchers of Biblical archeology place the history of the dwelling of the Hebrews in Egypt during this epoch. Mme. Flitner pointed out to me a group of such items. Among them there were a box for the preservation of perfumes, made of Niletic acacia; a sarcophagus of the queens, made of sycamore; and a number of other items. I made a diligent study of these items, beginning with the box for perfumes. It is a little box, about twelve cm. by seven cm. by eight cm. (I had precise measurements and photographs but they were lost when I fled from the USSR), and was made of one and the same piece of Niletic acacia. The piece was cut up by the craftsmen into thin boards, from which, with tar, the box was glued together. The form of the layers of wood was visible on all the walls of the box, and this form was unique. On all the little boards there was clearly a difference between wide and very narrow bands. This series went: first a group of six exceptionally wide bands, and then immediately there followed a group of seven very narrow bands. The order of the bands of time can be determined without any difficulty by anyone who is familiar with the make-up of the so-called spring and fall wood patterns. As noted above, the width of the rings of trees on the banks of the Nile corresponds to its floods and, connected with this, to the harvest or lack of harvest. In this way, nature itself wrote down that at the time which corresponds to the epoch of the life of Joseph in Egypt, in that land there were several years in a row which had abundant harvests. In those years the trees formed extraordinarily thick rings. There turned out to be six such annual rings on the box that we examined. Before this the rings were not thin, so there was no noted difference with the Biblical account of the seven years of plenty. Regarding the following seven years of famine, the structure of the wood that we investigated testifies with undeniable precision.

Apart from this box, I also investigated the sarcophagus. Its state of preservation was somewhat worse than that of the box for perfumes, but still in the wood of the sycamore from whose trunk the sarcophagus was made, there could be seen the same kind of grouping of bands. This confirms with irrefutable clarity that at the basis of the Biblical account there lies an indubitable fact that is written in the pages of the great book of nature.

Concerning the discovery, I gave an account in a public lecture at a

meeting in memory of D. N. Kaigorodov in February, 1928, and tried to publish it with the appendix of all the materials that had been attained by research. It was not possible to do this, as the censors in the USSR did not permit the printing of anything that could assist the strengthening of the authority of the books of Holy Scripture.

I wish to add another bit of information which refers to the history of ancient Egypt. In agreement with Biblical chronology, the sale of Joseph by his brothers into Egypt, and the consequent migration there of patriarch Jacob, took place eighteen centuries before the Birth of Christ. Certain historians set this date of the moving of Jacob precisely, namely 1825 B. C. It is worthy of note that under the pharaohs of the XII dynasty, particularly during Amenemhet III, who ruled in those years, the network of irrigation was considerably widened and perfected. The level of the water in the Nile under the pharaohs of the XII dynasty was marked on the cliffs near Semne at the second cataract. In the inscription found here, and which dates to the fourteenth year of the rule of Amenemhet (i.e., 1835 B. C.) there is marked the maximum level, which was seven meters above the level of the water now.

Clearly, special officers kept record of the height of the rising of the water in the Nile, since the government was fully aware of what a great significance the irrigation system had for the cultivation of the land, and this system depended on the amount of water in the Nile.

There was an especially great amount of work in the Fayum oasis during that period. Here were located the huge reservoirs which the Greeks called the Lake of Merides. The lake was joined by a canal with the irrigation ditches and this system made it possible to regulate the moisture of a very large area of the Fayuum oasis.

The following should also be added. If it were possible to investigate the rich Egyptian collection of the British and Cairo museums, we, undoubtedly, would find a whole series of items witnessing to the veracity of the events which are narrated in the final chapters of the Book of Genesis. **Archpriest N. Smirnov** (from the newspaper *Nasha Strana*, Buenos Aires, 1960),

23. The Story of Job the Long-suffering.

In ancient times, east of Palestine, there lived a righteous man by the name of Job. He was a just and good man, who always strove to please God throughout his life. The Lord rewarded him for his piety

with great wealth. He had many hundreds of large and thousands of small cattle. His large and close family of seven sons and three daughters comforted him.

But the Devil was jealous of Job. He began to vilify him before God, "Doth Job fear God for nothing?... But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." Then God, in order to reveal to all how faithful Job was to Him and in order to teach people patience in their sufferings, permitted the Devil to take away all of Job's possessions. One day robbers came and drove away all his cattle, slew his servants, and a terrible tornado from the desert destroyed the house in which Job's children had gathered together, killing them all. Job not only did not complain against God, but he said, "God gave, and God hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

The Devil, put to shame, was not satisfied with this. Again he began to slander Job, "All a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh (that is, strike him down with disease), and he will curse Thee to Thy face." God permitted the Devil to deprive Job even of his health, and Job was stricken with the most terrible disease — leprosy. Then even his wife began to persuade him to complain against God. His friends, instead of consolation, only further grieved the innocent sufferer with their unjust suspicions. But Job remained firm, did not lose hope in the mercy of God and only begged the Lord to testify that he was suffering in innocence.

In his discourse with his friends, **Job prophesied about the Redeemer and of the future resurrection: I know that my Redeemer liveth and on the last day He shall raise from the dust this my corrupted skin, and in my flesh I shall see God. I shall see Him myself; mine eyes, and not the eyes of another, shall behold Him** (Job 19:25-27, Septuagint).

After this, God, having shown to all the example of devotion and long-suffering in His servant Job, appeared Himself and commanded his friends, who had regarded Job as a great sinner, to ask for prayers from him for themselves. God rewarded His faithful servant. Job regained his health. He had seven more sons and three daughters, gained back twice as much cattle as he had before, and lived another one hundred and forty years in honor, quietly, piously and happily.

The story of long-suffering Job teaches us that God sends misfortunes not just for sins, but that sometimes God sends misfortunes even to the righteous for an even greater confirmation in goodness, for the shaming of the Devil, and for the glorification of

the righteousness of God. The history of the life of Job also reveals to us that earthly welfare does not always accompany a virtuous life for men and teaches us also to be sympathetic to those in misfortune. Job, by his innocent sufferings and patience, foreshadowed the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, in the days of the commemoration of the sufferings of Jesus Christ during Passion Week, this story in the Book of Job is read in church.

Note: See the Book of Job.

Bondage in Egypt.

At first the Hebrews lived well in Egypt. But new pharaohs, as they mounted the throne of Egypt, began to forget Joseph and his services. They began to fear the increase of the Hebrew people and were afraid that the Hebrews would become more powerful than the Egyptians and rebel against them. The pharaohs began to burden them with forced labor. But the more they burdened them, the more they increased. Then one of the pharaohs gave the order to kill all the male infants that were born to the Hebrews.

At the time when the Hebrews still lived well, they had begun to forget God and to adopt pagan customs from the Egyptians. Now, when misfortunes came upon them, they remembered God and turned to Him with prayer for their salvation. The compassionate Lord heard them and sent them deliverance through the Prophet and leader **Moses**.

Note: See Exodus, chap. 1.

24. Moses.

Moses was born of a Hebrew who came from the tribe of Levi. His mother hid her son for three months from the Egyptians. When it was no longer possible to hide him, she took a reed basket, smeared it with tar, put the infant in it and placed the basket in the reeds at the bank of the river. The infant's sister, Miriam, watched over it from afar, to see what would happen.

The daughter of Pharaoh came to bathe with her servants at this place. Noticing the basket, she commanded that it be brought to her. When she saw the baby crying inside, she felt sorry for it. She said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

Miriam came up to her and asked, "Shall I go and call thee a nurse

of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?"

The princess said, "Go."

Miriam went and brought her mother. The princess said to her, "Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." She agreed joyfully.

When the infant grew up, his mother brought him to the princess. The princess took him with her, and he became like a son to her. She gave him the name Moses, which means "taken up from the water."

Moses grew up in the royal palace and was taught all the wisdom of Egypt, but he knew that he was a Hebrew and loved his own people. Once Moses saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. He defended the Hebrew and killed the Egyptian. On another occasion Moses saw one Hebrew beating another Hebrew. Moses wanted to stop him, but he brazenly replied, "Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" Moses was frightened when he saw that people knew about what he had done. Then Moses fled from Egypt and Pharaoh into a different country, Arabia, the land of Midian. He settled in the home of the priest Jethro, married his daughter Zephora, and shepherded his flock.

Once Moses went far away with the flocks, and climbed the mountain of Horeb. There he saw a bush which was burning but was not consumed; that is, it was enveloped in flames but did not burn up.

Moses decided to come closer and see why the bush did not burn up. Here he heard a voice from the midst of the bush, "Moses, Moses ... Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

The Lord said to him, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry...and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land...unto the place of the Canaanites...I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mightest bring forth My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." At the same time, God granted Moses the power to work miracles. Since Moses was afflicted with a speech impediment, the Lord gave him his brother Aaron as a helper, who could speak publicly in his place.

The **bush** that did not burn up, that Moses saw through God's revelation to him, received the name "**burning bush**." It depicted

the state of the chosen Hebrew people, which was persecuted but did not perish. It was also a foreshadowing of the **Mother of God**, Who was not burned by the fire of the divinity of the Son of God, when He came down through Her from Heaven to earth, and was born of Her.

Note: See Exodus, chaps. 2, 3, 4:1-28.

25. Pascha (Passover) and the Exodus from Egypt.

Moses returned to Egypt. At that time another pharaoh was ruling. After speaking with the elders of the Hebrew people, Moses and Aaron went to the Egyptian King and in God's name demanded of him that he let the Hebrews leave Egypt.

Pharaoh replied, "I do not know your God and will not let the Hebrew people go." He then commanded that the Hebrews be more severely burdened.

Then Moses, at God's command, brought down upon Egypt, one after another, ten plagues, so that Pharaoh would agree to release the Hebrew people from the land of Egypt. At the word of Moses, the water in the rivers, lakes and wells was turned into blood; hail and locusts destroyed all the plants; a three-day darkness covered the whole of Egypt. In spite of such misfortunes, Pharaoh still did not let the Hebrews go. Beginning with the second plague, every time he called Moses, he asked him to pray to the Lord to put an end to the misfortune and promised to let the Hebrews go. However, as soon as the plague passed, Pharaoh again hardened his heart and refused to let them go. Then the final, tenth and most frightful plague came down.

Before the tenth plague, the Lord commanded the Hebrews to choose for each family a **lamb** that was one year old, slaughter it, cook it and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, without breaking any of its bones. They were then to smear the blood of the lamb onto the lintel and doorposts of their houses. The Hebrews did as God commanded them.

On that night the angel of the Lord struck down all the first born (the first male offspring) in Egypt, from men to the cattle. He **passed over** only those houses on whose doors the mark with the blood had been made. Lamentation went up from every part of Egypt. Pharaoh

summoned Moses and commanded him to leave Egypt with the Hebrew people as soon as possible.

Six hundred thousand men left with Moses, not counting women and children. Moses took with him the bones of Joseph, as Joseph himself had instructed in his last will. As soon as the Hebrews left Egypt, a pillar appeared before them in the form of a cloud in the daytime and fire at night. It guided them in their journey.

The day of the Hebrews' deliverance from bondage in Egypt forever remained in their memory. On this day the Lord established the main feast of the Old Testament, which He called **Pascha**. The word **Pascha** means "passing by," "passover," or "deliverance from misfortune" — the angel of death passed over the Hebrew dwellings. Every year on the evening of this day the Hebrews slaughtered and prepared the Paschal lamb and ate it with unleavened bread. This feast lasted for seven days.

The Paschal lamb, by whose blood the first born of the Hebrews were delivered from death, foreshadowed the Saviour Himself, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, Who took upon Himself the sins of the world, Whose blood delivers all the faithful from eternal death.

The Old Testament Hebrew Pascha prefigured our New Testament Christian Pascha. In the Old Testament Pascha, death passed over the dwellings of the Hebrews. They were liberated from bondage in Egypt and given the Promised Land. Thus also in the Christian Pascha, **the Resurrection of Christ**, eternal death has **passed over** us. The Risen Christ, having freed us from the slavery of the Devil, has given us eternal life.

Christ died on the Cross on the day when the Paschal lambs were slain, and He rose immediately after the Hebrew Pascha. This is why the Church always celebrates the Resurrection of Christ after the Jewish Passover and calls the feast Pascha.

Note: See Exodus, chap. 4:29-31; chaps. 5-13.

26. The Hebrews Pass Through the Red Sea.

The Hebrews, after their departure from Egypt, set out for the Red Sea. The Egyptians however, after burying their dead firstborn, began to regret having let the Hebrews go. Pharaoh, gathering all his army with chariots and mounted men, set out to pursue the

Hebrews. He overtook them at the edge of the sea.

Upon seeing the terrible hosts of Pharaoh behind them, the Hebrews were terrified. Instead of supplicating God for help, they began to complain to Moses for bringing them out of Egypt. While offering them encouragement, Moses prayed in his heart to God and the Lord heard his prayer. The pillar of cloud stood behind the Hebrews and hid them from the Egyptians. The Lord said to Moses, "Take thy staff and stretch thy hand over the sea and divide it." Moses stretched his hand and staff over the sea. Then the Lord sent a strong east wind which blew all night, and the water drew back. The Hebrews went along the dry bottom as the water became like a wall on their right and left sides. When they heard movement in the Hebrew camp, the Egyptians chased the Hebrews into the depth of the sea and came as far across as the middle of the sea. At that time the Hebrews came out on the other side. Moses, again at God's command, stretched out his hand with his staff over the water. The water of the sea fell back into place and covered the entire army of Pharaoh and drowned the Egyptians.

Then the people of Israel, the Hebrews, with great joy sang a hymn of thanksgiving to the Lord God, their helper and protector.

Miriam the Prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hands, and all the women went out with their tambourines rejoicing. Miriam sang before them, "Sing unto the Lord, for He hath been greatly exalted; horse and rider hath He cast into the sea."

The Hebrews' passing through the Red Sea, whose waters separated and delivered the Hebrews from iniquity and bondage in Egypt, foreshadowed Baptism by which we are freed from the power of the Devil and slavery to sin.

At the time of the Hebrews' journey out of Egypt into the Promised Land, the Lord worked many other miracles as well. Once the Hebrews came to a place where the water was bitter. They could not drink it and complained against Moses. The Lord showed Moses a tree. As soon as they had placed the tree in the water, the water became sweet.

This tree which took the bitterness from the water was a foreshadowing of the **tree of the Cross of Christ**, which took away the bitterness of life — sin.

When the Hebrews had used up all the bread they had taken from Egypt, the Lord sent them bread from Heaven — **manna**. It looked like little white crumbs or pieces of hail and had the taste of bread with honey. This bread was called manna, because when the

Hebrews saw it for the first time, they asked each other, "**man-na**" or "What is this?" Moses answered, "This is the bread which the Lord has given you for food." Manna covered the earth in the morning around the camp of the Hebrews, for the entire time of their journeying, on every day except the Sabbath.

When the Hebrews came to the place in the desert called Rephidim, where there was no water at all, they again began to complain against Moses. At God's command Moses struck a stone cliff with his staff and water flowed from it.

Manna in the desert and **water** from the stone cliff, which saved the Israelites from death, foreshadowed the true **food and drink** for us, which is the **Body and Blood of Christ**, which the Lord gives to us in Holy Communion, saving us from eternal death.

In Rephidim, desert dwellers, the Amalekites, attacked them. Moses sent out Joshua, the son of Nun, with an army. Moses then went up to the nearest mountain with his brother Aaron and with Hur and began to pray, lifting both arms to Heaven, forming a cross.

Aaron noticed that when Moses held his hands up, the Hebrews prevailed over their enemies, but when he let them fall out of weariness, the Amalekites overcame the Hebrews. To ensure victory Aaron and Hur placed Moses on a stone and held his arms stretched out. Thus the Hebrews conquered the Amalekites.

Moses, when he was praying with his hands stretched forth, foreshadowed the victorious Cross of Christ, by whose power faithful Christians now conquer visible and invisible enemies.

In Rephidim Moses visited his father-in-law, Jethro, and brought him his wife and sons.

Note: Exodus, chaps. 14-18.

27. God Gives the Law on Mt. Sinai.

From the Red Sea the Hebrews continued to travel through the desert. They stopped at Mt. Sinai (Sinai and Horeb are the two peaks of one and the same mountain). Here Moses went up the mountain, where the Lord said to him, "Tell this to the sons of Israel, 'If you will hear My voice, you will be My people.'"

When Moses came down from the mountain he told the people of

God's will. The Hebrews replied, "We will be obedient and do everything the Lord said."

The Lord commanded Moses to prepare the people for the third day when God's Law would be made known. The Hebrews prepared themselves for the day by prayer and fasting.

On the third day, which was the fiftieth day from the Jewish Passover, that is, from the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt, a thick cloud covered the top of Mt. Sinai. Lightning flashed, thunder resounded, and a loud blaring sound rang out. Smoke rose from the mountain, and the whole mountain violently shook. Amidst these awesome signs of His presence, the Lord delivered His laws in the form of Ten Commandments.

At God's command, Moses went up the mountain and stayed there forty days and forty nights without any food. God gave him two tablets or stone slabs, on which were written the Ten Commandments. In addition, the Lord gave Moses other church and civil laws. He also commanded him to build a tabernacle, a transportable temple of God.

After coming down from the mountain, Moses wrote down in books all these laws and everything that the Lord had revealed to him on Mt. Sinai. In this way we acquired the Sacred Scripture, or the Law of God.

The Ten Commandments, or precepts, which God gave His people, point out exactly what a man must do and what he must avoid if he wants to love God and his neighbor.

These are the commandments:

I. I am the Lord, thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

This commandment enjoins the love of God before everything else; apart from Him (God), worship will be rendered to no other divinity. Saints of God should also be honored, not as God is, but as people in whom God rejoices more than others, as our prayerful intercessors before Him.

II. Thou shalt not carve images, or fashion the likeness of anything in heaven above, or on earth below, or in the waters under the earth, to bow down and worship it.

Since everything on earth was created by God, then we should bow down to Him only and worship Him only. We must not make idols and bow down to them. When we venerate a holy icon, we must call to

mind who is represented on it, and bow down to that person and not consider the icon itself as an object of worship.

III. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

You must not utter the holy and great name of God idly, in empty chatter. Therefore, this commandment forbids swearing and uttering idle oaths.

IV. Remember to keep the Sabbath Day holy. There are six days for labor, for doing all the work you have to do. When the seventh day comes, it is a day of rest, consecrated to the Lord thy God.

Six days of the week a man must toil, labor and take care of everything he requires for his earthly life. The seventh day must be dedicated to God. That is, it must be kept separate for the Lord, to pray to Him, to read useful books for the glory of God, to help the poor and to do as many good things as possible for the Lord's sake. We must not be idle and by no means commit excesses. In the Old Testament, Saturday (the Sabbath) was thus celebrated. With us in the New Testament, in memory of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, Sunday is celebrated.

V. Honor thy father and thy mother. That it may be well with Thee, and that Thy days may be long upon the earth.

We must love and respect our parents, listen to their good advice, take care of them when they are ill, support them in their old age and when they need us. We must also be considerate of other relatives, old people, benefactors, teachers, spiritual fathers and superiors. In return for this God promises to prolong our earthly life and bless us.

VI. Thou shalt not kill.

Killing is understood to be not only the taking of one's own life or that of someone else, but also ordering or conspiring with others to commit murder. This commandment also forbids unrestrained anger and insulting one's neighbor by any abusive word. This commandment calls for a life of peace and harmony with one another, and also commands the gentle treatment of animals.

VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

By this commandment the Lord forbids a husband or wife to break mutual trust and love. God commands the single person to preserve purity of thoughts and desires. Gluttony, drunkenness and generally any excess or intemperance are also forbidden by this

commandment.

VIII. Thou shalt not steal.

You should not take anything belonging to anyone else, openly or secretly, without asking. Do not cheat in business. In any transaction, calculate honestly. Do not conceal what you have found. Finish every task by the time you have promised and do it conscientiously.

IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

This commandment forbids lying, slandering, speaking badly of people, judging them and also believing slanderers. This commandment enjoins that you keep your word honestly.

X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, or set thy heart upon thy neighbor's wife, or servant or handmaid or ox or donkey or anything else that is his.

This commandment forbids the envy of another's property and enjoins that one be content with what one has. Unkind desires result from envy, and every unkind, wicked, evil thing results from unkind wishes.

Every person must know and fulfill the Law of God. He who keeps the commandments ensures for himself eternal salvation, as well as temporal well-being.

The feast of **Pentecost** (Old Testament) was observed in commemoration of the giving of the laws to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Note: Exodus, chaps. 19,20,24,32-34; and Deuteronomy, chap. 5.

28. The Tabernacle.

The Hebrew people made camp on Mt. Sinai for a whole year. At this time Moses, at God's command, constructed a tabernacle, or a transportable sanctuary, in the form of a tent. The tabernacle was constructed from expensive fabric and hung from poles. It had three sections: the **courtyard**, the **sanctuary** and the **Holy of Holies**.

The people came into the **courtyard** to pray. Here were placed the **altar**, on which sacrifices were made, and a copper **water basin**.

The priests came into the **sanctuary**, which had a table on which were **twenty loaves of bread**, a golden **seven-branch candlestick**, or lampstand, with seven lamps, and the altar of incense, that is, an altar on which the priests burned incense.

Into the **Holy of Holies**, which was separated from the sanctuary by a **curtain**, only the high priest could enter, and then only once a year. The **Ark of the Covenant** was placed in the Holy of Holies. The Ark of the Covenant was the name of a chest, made of wood and covered inside and out with gold, with a gold lid and with two golden images of the cherubim on it. The tablets with the Ten Commandments were kept in the Ark of the Covenant, as well as a chalice with manna, Aaron's rod, and later, the holy books. Along the two sides of the ark were two pairs of golden rings, into which gilded poles were inserted for carrying it.

When the tabernacle was ready, Moses consecrated it, together with all its fittings, with holy myrrh. While this was taking place, the glory of the Lord covered the tabernacle in the form of the cloud which accompanied the Hebrews on their journey. From this time on, the cloud was always over it.

For serving in the tabernacle, Moses, at God's command, appointed the tribe of Levi and ordained a high priest, priests, and Levites, assistants for the tabernacle.

Aaron, the brother of Moses, was made high priest. The priests were the four sons of Aaron; the other descendants of Levi were Levites. The high priest corresponded to our bishop, the priests to our priests and the Levites to our deacons and servers. God ordained that in the future the eldest of the line of Aaron would be high priest and the others of his descendants, priests.

The tabernacle represented the Church of Christ and also the **Mother of God**, Who, having contained God within Herself, was like the House of God.

Note: See Exodus, chaps. 25-34; Deuteronomy, chaps. 10,13,16; Leviticus, chaps. 1-7,16, 23.

29. The Forty-year Wandering of the Hebrew People, the Bronze Serpent.

From Mt. Sinai the Israelites set out for the Promised Land, the land of Canaan. Along the way, time and again, they murmured in dissatisfaction and resentment against their journey. The Lord punished them for this, but on account of the prayers of Moses, pardoned them.

Even his own sister, Miriam, and Aaron reproached Moses for having married an Ethiopian and thus abusing his dignity as an envoy of God. Moses was the meekest of all the people and patiently bore their reproaches. The Lord punished Miriam with leprosy. Aaron, seeing that his sister had leprosy, said to Moses, "Because we have acted foolishly and sinned, do not deliver us into harm."

Then Moses ardently besought God to cure his sister, and the Lord healed her, but only after she had spent seven days in confinement outside the camp.

When the Israelites reached the border of the Promised Land, in the Paran desert, at God's command, Moses sent observers to survey the Promised Land. Twelve men were chosen, one from each tribe. Among those chosen were **Caleb**, from the tribe of Judah, and **Joshua**, from the tribe of Ephraim.

When the observers had traversed the whole country and surveyed it, they returned in forty days. They brought with them a branch of a grapevine they had cut off there with a bunch of grapes. The branch was so big that two men had to carry it on a pole. They also brought pomegranates and figs. All of them praised the fruitful earth. But ten of the twelve men who had been sent, all except Caleb and Joshua, stirred up the people, saying, "The nation that dwells upon it is powerful. They have very great and strong-walled towns. We will not go, for we shall not by any means be able to stand up against the nation, for it is much stronger than us. There we saw such giants before whom we were like grasshoppers."

Then the Israelites started to wail and murmur against Aaron and Moses, saying, "Why does the Lord bring us into this land, to perish by the sword? Our wives and our children shall be plunder for the enemy. Now then, it is better to return to Egypt."

Joshua, son of Nun, and Caleb persuaded the people not to go against the Lord's will, for the Lord Himself would help them to conquer the land which God had promised to their fathers. But the Israelites conspired to stone Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb, appoint a new leader and turn back.

Then the glory of the Lord in the form of a cloud appeared in the tabernacle in front of all the people, and the Lord said unto Moses, "How long does this people provoke Me, and how long do they refuse to believe Me for all the signs which I have wrought among them? Say to them, 'As I live saith the Lord, 'surely as ye spoke into My ears so will I do to you. Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness and all that murmured against Me shall not enter into the land for which I stretched out My hand to establish you upon it, except for Caleb and Joshua, the son of Nun. Tomorrow turn and get you into the wilderness by way of the Red Sea. And your little ones, whom ye said would become a prey shall inherit the land which you rejected. According to the number of the days during which you spied the land, forty days, you shall bear your sins for every day a year, unto forty years, that ye may know what it is to be abandoned by Me.'"

The ten spies, who by their unfavorable reports concerning the land had stirred up the people, were immediately stricken to death in front of the tabernacle. Having heard this condemnation of their sin, the Israelites did not wish to submit to the Lord's command and to go where they had been bidden. They said, "Behold, we that are here will go up to the place of which the Lord has spoken. We have sinned." This was as if to say, "We will now go and take the land. We repent of our sin. Why should we be punished for forty years?" Moses said to them, "Why do you transgress the word of the Lord? You shall not prosper." And he remained with the Ark of the Lord's Covenant in the encampment.

Against God's will, the Israelites dared to ascend the mountain, to the top where the Amalekites and the Canaanites were living. They were defeated and fled. So for forty years they wandered in the deserts of Sinai. Even during this time, however, the merciful Lord did not abandon them but visited them with many miracles.

Soon after being condemned to wander for forty years, a new revolt arose among the Israelites. Certain of them, whose leader was Korah, an elder of one of the tribes, were unhappy that the priesthood was a privilege only of the house of Aaron. Therefore the Lord punished them: the earth opened up and swallowed the rebels.

In order to end the arguments among the Israelites as to whom the priesthood belonged, Moses, at God's command, ordered that all the elders bring their staffs and place them for the night in the tabernacle. The next day everyone saw that the rod of Aaron had blossomed, shooting buds, flowering, and bearing almonds. Everyone then recognized Aaron as the high priest. At God's command, the rod of Aaron was placed in front of the Ark of the

Covenant.

On another occasion, because of their murmuring against God, the Israelites were punished by a plague of poisonous snakes which bit the people and caused many to die. The Israelites repented and asked Moses to intercede for them before God. The Lord commanded Moses to make a bronze serpent and to place it on a pole. Whoever had been bitten, and with faith looked on the bronze serpent, remained alive.

This bronze serpent served as a prefiguration of Christ the Saviour. Christ was crucified on the Cross for all our sins. Now we, looking upon Him with faith, are healed of our sins and saved from eternal death.

During the forty-year wandering, all the adult Israelites who had come out of Egypt died, except for Joshua and Caleb. A new generation grew up which was destined to enter the Promised Land. Moses died in the last year of their wandering. Before his death, he appointed Joshua, son of Nun, as leader to replace him.

Note: See Numbers, chaps. 11-14, 16-17, 21:4-9 and Deuteronomy chap. 1:19-46.

30. The Entry of the Israelites into the Promised Land.

The Lord helped Joshua lead the Hebrew people into the Promised Land. When they entered this land, the Israelites had to cross the Jordan River. At God's command, Joshua told the priests to take the Ark of the Covenant into the river.

No sooner had they wet their feet in the water than the river parted. The water that flowed from the upper reaches of the river came to a stop like a wall, and the lower part of the river flowed down to the sea and all the people crossed over the dry river bed.

After crossing the Jordan River, it was necessary to capture the city of Jericho, which had very high and strong walls. Joshua, by God's command, ordered the people, with the priests in front with the Ark of the covenant, to walk around the city for seven days: once a day for six days, and on the seventh day, the ark was to be carried around seven times. After this, the walls of Jericho crumbled to their foundations at the sound of the priests' trumpets and the loud cries

of all the people. In this way the Israelites took the city.

A great battle with the people of the land of Canaan took place by the city of Gabaon. The Israelites defeated their enemies and put them to flight while God rained stones from heaven on those who were fleeing, so that more perished from the stones than from the swords of the Israelites. The day was coming to an end, but the Israelites had not yet routed their enemies. Joshua then prayed to God and cried out aloud before the people, "Sun, stand still, and moon, do not move..." And the sun did stand still, and night did not come until the Israelites had defeated their enemies.

With God's help, in six years Joshua conquered the entire Promised Land and divided it by lot among the twelve tribes of Israel. The two sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, received the portions of Levi and Joseph. The tribe of Levi served at the tabernacle and was supported by the tithes (ten percent of the income) collected from the people.

Before his death, Joshua commanded in his last testimony that the Israelites firmly preserve the faith in the true God and serve Him in purity and sincerity.

Note: See the Book of Joshua and Deuteronomy, chap. 27.

31. Judges.

After the death of Joshua, the Israelites, surrounded by pagans, often forgot God and began to worship idols and indulge in vices. For this, God more than once deprived them of His help and turned them over to the power of the neighboring pagan people. This misfortune brought the Israelites to their senses and forced them to bring their minds back to God again. When they repented, the Lord sent them deliverers who liberated them from the enemy and ruled over them. These chosen ones of God were called judges. In all, the Israelites had fourteen judges.

Gideon.

Amongst the judges Gideon is famous because, with few troops, but with God's help, he delivered the Israelites from the enemy Midianites, who oppressed the Israelites for seven years. The Israelites had to hide from them in gorges and fortifications. Such a misfortune forced the Israelites to convert and turn to God. Then the

merciful Lord sent them a deliverer in the person of Gideon.

One day Gideon prepared to flee from the enemy and threshed the wheat in order to have bread for the road. At that time an angel of the Lord appeared to him and commanded him to gather his troops against the enemy. Gideon, fulfilling the command of God, began to gather his forces and collected thirty-two thousand soldiers. After this Gideon turned to the Lord with a request to give him a sign that the Lord would in fact use him to serve the Hebrew people. Gideon prayed thus, *"If there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that Thou wilt deliver Israel by my hand"* (Judges 6:37).

Gideon's prayer was heard. On the next day, having got up early, Gideon began to press the fleece and pressed out of it a whole cup of water, as it was covered with dew.

Then again Gideon turned to the Lord with a prayer: *"Lord, let not Thine anger be hot against me, let me speak but this once: ...let it be dry only on the fleece and upon all the ground let there be dew"* (Judges 6:37-40).

The Lord heard Gideon's second prayer and did so that night. Only the fleece was dry, and there was dew on all the ground.

Then the Lord said to Gideon, *"The warriors that are with thee are too many. I will not give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves before Me, saying, 'My own hand hath saved me'"* (Judges 7:2). Then the Lord commanded Gideon to let all those go home who were fearful. Twenty-two thousand returned, and ten thousand remained with Gideon.

The Lord again said to Gideon, *"The people are yet too many,"* and He commanded Gideon to bring them to the water. At God's direction, Gideon separated those who drank the water by drawing it up with a cupped hand, from those who drank straight with the mouth as they bowed down to the water. There were 300 men who drank with a cupped hand. The Lord then said to Gideon, *"By the 300 men that drank from the hand will I save you."*

Gideon took with him the 300 soldiers, provisions, and trumpets and those that remained were sent home.

That night God led Gideon on a visit to the Midianite camp. The Midianites and the Amalekites had settled in the valley in numbers like grasshoppers; their camels were innumerable. There were as many as the sand by the seaside. Gideon, with his servant Phurah, made his way to the Midianite camp and heard one man tell another

his dream, that a cake of barley bread tumbled into the Midianite camp, rolled up to a tent and hit it so that the tent fell, toppled over and crumbled.

To this the other soldier answered, "This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon; for into his hand hath God delivered Midian and all the host." And Gideon took heart.

Having returned to his camp, Gideon woke up his troops and gave each man a lamp within a pitcher and a trumpet. He divided them all into three companies and told them to surround the enemy camp and to do whatever his company did and to shout, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

When everyone had taken his place, Gideon ordered his company to break the pitchers and with their lamps shining, to blow on their trumpets and cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Both the other companies did this as well.

Such fear and terror came over the Midianites that in their great confusion and in the darkness they began to kill each other, and finally they turned in flight. Gideon completely routed them, and with a huge plunder returned home victorious.

After this victory the Israelites offered Gideon and his descendants royal power over them, but he refused it and said, "*I will not rule over you neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you*" (Judges 8:23).

Samson.

The judge **Samson** was famous for his unusual and supernatural strength. Even from his birth, at the instruction of an angel of God, he was consecrated by his parents to God, and as a sign of this he could not cut his hair. One day in a field a young lion attacked him. Samson grabbed the lion by the jaws and tore it to pieces, as if it were a baby goat. Many times, the Philistines, the enemies of the Israelites, attempted to seize him, but always unsuccessfully. Once he tore off new strong ropes with which he was bound. Another time, with an ass's jaw bone he massacred a thousand Philistines. A third time he carried away on his shoulders the gates of the Philistine city, Gaza, in which they wanted to hold him captive. Finally, a Philistine woman named Delilah, with whom he fell in love, having found out that his strength and power were contained in the long hair on his head, cut off his hair while he was asleep and handed him over to the Philistines. They took him, put out his eyes and imprisoned him in a dungeon. Having fettered him with two bronze chains, they forced him to work for them. In the meantime, the hair on Samson's

head began to grow back, and at the same time his strength began to return, since his soul was cleansed by repentance for his delusions. One day the Philistines brought Samson out during a festival for general reviling in their pagan temple, and they made sport of him. Samson asked the boy who was leading him by the hand, to take him to the two columns on which the whole building rested, so that he could lean against them. Having prayed to God, he pushed against the columns with his hands and dislodged them from their place. The building collapsed. All the Philistines who were there were buried under the ruins of the building, and Samson himself with them.

Samuel.

The Prophet **Samuel**, from the tribe of Levi, was the last judge of the Hebrew people.

For a long time Samuel's parents did not have any children. One day, Samuel's mother, Anna, during ardent prayer before the tabernacle, made a vow to God that if she were to bear a son she would consecrate him to the Lord. Anna's prayer was heard, and in a year she bore a son. Anna called him **Samuel**, which means "**obtained from God.**"

When Samuel was a youth, his mother took him to the tabernacle and gave him over to the high priest Eli for the service of God. The high priest Eli was also at that time a judge of the Israelite people.

The high priest Eli had two sons, Hophri and Phineas, who were priests of the tabernacle, but they were depraved people. They celebrated the service to God without reverence and corrupted the people with their misbehavior. Eli saw Samuel's piety and appointed him to serve in the tabernacle.

Samuel always slept inside the tabernacle, not far from the place where Eli slept. Once Samuel heard a voice in a dream, which called to him, "Samuel, Samuel!"

Samuel immediately ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Eli replied, "I did not call you. Go back to sleep."

Samuel went and lay down, and again the voice called him, "Samuel, Samuel!" A second time Samuel went to Eli, but Eli again replied that he had not called him.

When this was repeated a third time, Eli understood that the Lord was calling the boy and said to him, "Go back to sleep. If the voice again calls you, say, 'Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'"

Samuel went to sleep and again heard the voice calling him. Samuel replied as Eli had taught him. Then the Lord revealed to Samuel that the whole house of Eli would perish because Eli knew how impiously his sons acted, and he did not control them.

The next day Samuel passed on to Eli what the Lord had said to him. Eli obediently accepted the prediction. Soon Samuel's prediction was fulfilled.

The Philistines attacked the Israelite troops and killed them. Then Eli, at the request of the Israelite elders, sent the Ark of the Covenant to the camp with his sons, the priests Hophri and Phineas. But the ark did not help the Israelites. They again were massacred by the Philistines. Hophri and Phineas were killed, and the ark was captured. Thus the Lord showed the people that holy things do not help those who do not respect the holy commandments of God. When Eli found out that the ark was seized by the Philistines, he fell over backward from his seat and died.

The Ark of the Covenant, being greatly sacred to the Lord, did not long remain with the Philistines. God Himself convinced them by first mashing their idol Dagon, then sending the inhabitants of that town inful growths on the body. Finally, their fields were destroyed by mice. The frightened Philistines put the Ark of the Covenant in a new chariot, harnessed to it two young cows and let it go out of their land. The cows, without being driven, went by themselves to the Israelite land. The Israelites met the Ark of the Covenant with great joy.

After the high priest Eli, the Prophet **Samuel** was appointed judge of the Israelite people. Samuel governed the people not only as a judge but also as a prophet of God. He persuaded the Hebrew people to destroy all pagan idols, such as they had, to pray to God for forgiveness, and to fast. All the people repented and said, "We have sinned before the Lord." By Samuel's prayers the Lord saved the Hebrews from the Philistines. Samuel was strict and just and enjoyed great respect and love from everyone. He governed the people for forty years. In his old age he transferred his authority to his two sons, who accepted presents and judged unfairly. The impatient Hebrews began to ask Samuel to put a king over them, such as other nations had. Samuel tried to persuade the people to remain with their former form of government, but he was unsuccessful. Then Samuel prayed to the Lord, and the Lord said to him, "Listen to the voice of the people in everything that they say to you, for they did not reject you, but they rejected Me as a ruler over them." Then the Lord said that He warned the Israelites that a king would force all the people to serve him, would take the best land for

himself, and they would have to give up everything to the king. The people did not heed Samuel's warning and said, "No, let a king rule over us, and we will be like other nations."

At God's command, Samuel anointed **Saul** as king, having poured on his head the consecrated oil, and then the Holy Spirit came down on Saul, and Saul received from above the power to rule the people.

NOTES: See the Book of Judges and I Samuel, chaps. 1-10:1-16.

32. The Story of Ruth.

In the time of the judges, the neighboring pagan peoples were constant enemies of the Israelites. There were occasions though when several pagans from these people accepted faith in the true God, and then the Israelites considered them as their fellow-tribesmen. Such a person was the Moabite Ruth. This is her story.

In Bethlehem, Judah, lived a man, whose name was Elimelech, with his wife Naomi. They had two sons, Mahlon and Chilian. During the famine Elimelech was obliged to move with his family to the land of Moab. There Elimelech soon died. His sons married the Moabites Orpah and Ruth, and after living with them not more than ten years, they both died. The widow Naomi remained with her daughters-in-law.

When Naomi heard that the Lord had sent a rich harvest to the Israelite land, she decided to return to her homeland. She and both her daughters-in-law went.

On the way Naomi began to urge them to return home, saying to them, "Go, return each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord grant you mercy for the way you dealt with the dead and with me," and she kissed them. The daughters-in-law sobbed and cried and did not want to leave her, but one of them, Orpah, with tears, obeyed Naomi and returned home.

But Ruth said, "*Whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die and there will I be buried.*"

Naomi and Ruth, coming to the land of the Israelites, settled in the town of Bethlehem and lived on the wheat which Ruth picked up from the harvested fields. This was enough for sustenance, since it is

written in the Law of God, *"And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest; thou shalt leave them for the poor and the stranger"* (Lev. 19:9-10).

The Lord God rewarded Ruth for her attachment and respectfulness towards her mother-in-law. The Israelites had a law: if one of them died, not leaving children, then the nearest relative had to marry the widow of the person who died, and the children from this marriage were considered the dead man's children. This law was called the Levinite Law.

At this time in Bethlehem there lived a rich man, Boaz, a relative of Ruth's dead husband. According to Levinite Law, Boaz married the poor Moabite Ruth. When a son was born to them, Obed, women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, Who hath not left thee this day without a kinsmen, that his name may be famous in Israel." Naomi rejoiced and was Obed's nurse.

In fact Obed's name was glorified in Israel, for he was the father of Jesse, the father of King David.

Note: See the Book of Ruth.

33. Saul, First King of the Israelites.

Saul was the son of a distinguished Jew by the name of Kish, from the tribe of Benjamin. He was tall, among the people he was a whole head higher, and no one of the Israelites was more handsome than he.

Soon after Saul was anointed, Samuel called the people together to elect a king. Lots were cast. The lot fell on Saul, and he was declared king. The people, admiring his height and beauty, cried out, "Long live the King!"

When Saul was made king, Samuel said to all the people: *"If ye fear the Lord and serve Him and hearken to His voice and do not resist the mouth of the Lord, and ye and your king that reigns over you follow the Lord, it will be well with you. But if ye do not hearken to the voice of the Lord, and ye resist the mouth of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be upon you and upon your king"* (I Samuel 12:14-15).

Saul, in the first years of his reign, acted according to God's will, showing himself worthy of having been chosen. He gained for himself the people's love by many victories over the enemy. But when he stopped carrying out God's commands, having become presumptuous, the Spirit of God left him and Saul became gloomy and cruel.

Samuel grieved over Saul. The Lord said to him, "How long dost thou mourn for Saul? Go to Bethlehem, to Jesse, for I have seen among his sons a king for me." Samuel went to Bethlehem and at God's direction anointed David, the son of Jesse, from the tribe of Judah, to be king. The Spirit of God descended on David. David was the younger son of Jesse, blond, with beautiful eyes and a pleasant face. He was agile and brave, had a gentle and kind heart and was famed for his fine playing on the harp.

Saul was sick at heart and depressed from the action of an evil spirit. He was advised to divert himself with music, and he was told that in the town of Bethlehem at the house of Jesse was Jesse's son, David, who could play the harp well. David was summoned to the palace. When he came and played on the harp, Saul became better and more cheerful. Then the evil spirit left him.

Note: See I Samuel, chaps. 10:17-27, 11-16.

David's Victory Over Goliath.

Once, during the reign of Saul, a battle took place between the Israelites and the Philistines. When the forces attacked each other a giant by the name of Goliath appeared from the Philistine camp. He shouted to the Israelites, "*Why are ye come forth to set yourselves in battle array against us? Choose for yourselves a man, and let him come down to me. And if he will be able to fight against me and shall smite me, then we will be your servants, but if I should prevail and smite him, ye shall be our servants, and serve us*" (I Sam. 17:8-9). For forty days, in the morning and the evening, this giant appeared and laughed at the Israelites, reviling the army of the living God. King Saul promised a huge reward to anyone who could defeat Goliath, but no one of the Israelites was of a mind to set himself against the giant.

At this time David came to the Israelites' camp to visit his older brothers and brought them food from their father. Having heard what Goliath said, David volunteered to fight with this giant and asked the King to give him permission.

But Saul said to him, "Thou art a mere youth, and he a man of war

from his youth."

David replied, "Thy servant was tending the flock for his father, and when a lion came and a she-bear and took a sheep out of the flock, then I went forth after him and smote him and drew the spoil out of his mouth. And as he rose up against me, then I caught hold of his throat, and smote him and slew him. The Lord Who delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this uncircumcised Philistine."

Saul agreed and said, "Go, and the Lord be with thee."

David placed five smooth stones in his shepherd's bag, took a sling, and went out against Goliath. Goliath looked at David, who was very young, with contempt, and mockingly said, "*Am I as a dog, that thou comest against me with a stick and stones?*"

David replied, "*Thou comest to me with sword and with spear and with shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord God of hosts, of the army of Israel which thou hast defied this day. And the Lord shall deliver thee this day into my hand... and all the earth shall know that there is a God in Israel*" (I Sam. 17:45).

When Goliath began to approach, David ran to meet him, laid a stone in the sling and hurled it at the giant. The stone hit him right on the forehead, and Goliath fell senseless to the ground. David ran up to Goliath, took Goliath's own sword and with his own weapon cut off his head. When they saw this, the Philistines, terror-stricken, took to their heels and the Israelites chased them to the very gates of their cities and killed many. Saul made David the military leader. Then he gave his daughter to him in marriage.

When Saul and David returned victorious, the Israelite women came out to meet them singing and dancing, and they cried, "Saul has smitten his thousands, and David his ten thousands." This was unpleasant for King Saul. He began to envy David's glory and pondered on killing him. David withdrew to the desert and hid from Saul until his death.

Note: See I Samuel, chaps. 16-31.

34. King David.

After the death of King Saul, David became the King of the Hebrew

people. David, who was meek and pious, steadfastly believed in the true God and tried to do His will. He had endured much persecution from Saul and other enemies but did not become embittered, did not lift his hand against Saul, as he was the Lord's anointed, but placed all his hope in God, and the Lord delivered him from all his enemies.

But it came about that David fell into great sins. Then he repented to the depth of his soul for them. At night he washed his couch with tears, and afterwards improved himself and loved God more and more.

Thus once towards evening, King David went for a walk on the roof of his house and saw a very beautiful young lady. David wanted to have her as his wife. He found out that this lady was called Bathsheba and that she was the wife of Urias the Hittite (cf. II Sam. 11:2). At that time Urias was at war (the war then was with the Ammonites). David very much desired the death of Urias. The King could not get rid of this evil, sinful desire and ordered the military commander to place Urias in the front during the battle so that he would be killed. David's wish was fulfilled. Bathsheba, discovering that her husband was dead, wept for him.

When the time of mourning came to an end, King David sent for Bathsheba and took her into his house, and she became his wife. Thus King David accomplished a great evil, a two-fold sin, before the eyes of God. Soon Bathsheba bore a son, but David did not notice that he had committed a great sin in the eyes of God.

Then, at God's command, the Prophet Nathan went to King David and said, "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds, but the poor man had only one little ewe lamb, which he had purchased, and preserved and reared. It grew up with him and his children together, ate of his bread and drank of his cup, slept in his bosom and was to him as a daughter. Once a traveler came to the rich man, and he took not a lamb from his own flocks to slaughter for the traveler, but he took the poor man's lamb and slaughtered it for the guest."

King David became very angry with this person and said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives the man that did this thing shall surely die. And he shall restore the lamb seven-fold because he had no compassion."

Then Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man that has done this. Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'I anointed thee to be king over Israel, and I rescued thee out of the hand of Saul. Why hast thou set at nought the word of the Lord? Thou hast taken the wife of Urias to be thy wife, and thou hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall not depart from thy house

for ever. I will raise up against thee evil out of thine own house.

Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."

Nathan replied, "The Lord has taken away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Thy son that is born to thee shall surely die." With this the Prophet Nathan departed to his house.

David understood how evilly he had acted and deeply repented. With tears he prayed to God, and fasted and lay on the ground. On the seventh day the child died.

Great was David's sin, but his repentance was sincere and deep, and God forgave him. During the time of his repentance, King David wrote the **Psalm of repentance**, the 50th Psalm, which is a model of repentance and begins with these words, "*Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of Thy compassions blot out my transgression. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin...*"

For the great faith, meekness, and obedience of King David, the Lord blessed his reign and helped him in everything. He successfully waged wars with neighboring peoples.

David captured the city of Jerusalem and made it the capital of the Israelite kingdom. Instead of the dilapidated tabernacle of Moses, he placed in Jerusalem a new tabernacle and brought the Ark of the Covenant to it with solemnity. David wanted to build a permanent temple but the Lord said, "*Thou shalt not build a house to my name because thou hast carried on great wars and hast shed blood abundantly. Thy son will build a house to My name, who will be king after thee*" (I Chron. 22:6).

But at that time the Lord announced to David, "***Thy kingdom will stand forever***" (I Chron. 28:7). This meant that from his descendants would come the Saviour of the world, Christ, Who would reign forever. We know that Jesus Christ was often called the Son of David.

David wrote many sacred songs, or psalms, which he sang in prayer to God, playing on the harp or other musical instruments. In these hymns, David appealed to God, repented for his sins before God, celebrated the greatness of God, and foretold the coming of Christ and the suffering which Christ would undergo for us. Therefore, the holy Church calls King David a **psalmist** and **prophet**.

The Psalms of David are often read and sung in church at Divine Services. The sacred book in which all these psalms or songs are

found is called the **Psalter**. The Psalter is the most frequently used book of the Old Testament. Many Christian prayers are composed with words from the psalms in this book.

David reigned for forty years and died a very old man. While still alive he appointed his son Solomon as his heir. The high priest Zadok and the Prophet Nathan anointed him King. Before his death David bequeathed to Solomon his wish that the Temple of God be built without fail.

Note: See II Samuel and I Chronicles.

35. King Solomon.

When Solomon ascended the throne, he brought a thousand offerings to God. One night after this God appeared to him in a dream and said, "Ask what you wish, and I shall give thee."

"Lord," replied Solomon, "thou hast made me King, and I am but a little child. Now give me wisdom and understanding, that I may govern this people."

Solomon's reply was pleasing to the Lord. And the Lord said: "*Because you have not asked of Me long life, nor riches, nor victory over enemies, but have asked wisdom, in order to rule the people, I will give you wisdom so that there was none like you before, neither will be. And because you did not ask for it, I will give you riches and glory. And if you will keep My commandments, I will also give you life*" (I Kings 3:5-9; II Chron. 1:7).

Solomon showed his wisdom above all in passing judgments. Soon after his accession, two women appeared before him for judgment. They lived in one house and each had a child. One night one of them crushed her child and laid it beside the other woman and took that woman's living child for herself. In the morning the women began to argue. "The living one is my son, and the dead one is thy son," each said. Thus they disputed before the King. Having heard them, Solomon decreed, "Fetch a sword."

A sword was brought to the King. Solomon said, "Divide the live child in two and give half of it to one, and half of it to the other."

At these words one of the women cried, "I pray thee, my Lord, give her the child, and in no wise slay it."

But the other said, "Let it be neither mine nor hers; divide it."

Then Solomon said, "Give the child to her that said, 'Give it to her, by no means slay it'; she is its mother."

The people heard about this and began to fear the King because everyone saw what wisdom God had given him.

Solomon expressed his wisdom both in ruling the people and in all other matters that concerned the king. His glory spread beyond the borders of the Israelite land to other neighboring peoples.

Fulfilling the wish of his father David, Solomon set about building the Temple of God in Jerusalem. A site for it was chosen on Mt. Moriah, which had been indicated to David and on which Abraham had brought Isaac to sacrifice. About 185,000 workers constructed the Temple in seven and a half years. It was built according to the model of Moses' tabernacle, and divided into the Holy of Holies, sanctuary and courtyard, but it was more spacious and more magnificent. The walls of the Temple were made of stone, on the outside they were covered with white marble and on the inside with gold. All the appurtenances of the Temple for religious services were made of gold.

When the Temple was ready, Solomon summoned all the elders and many of the people for its consecration. To the sound of trumpets and the singing of spiritual songs the Ark of the Covenant was brought in. The glory of the Lord, in the form of a cloud, filled the Temple so much that the priests could not continue the service. Then Solomon went up to his royal place, fell on his knees, and with uplifted hands prayed to God that in this place He would accept the prayers not only of the Israelites, but also of Gentiles. When he finished this prayer, fire came down from Heaven and consumed the sacrifices which had been prepared in the Temple.

Solomon's reign was peaceful and happy. People came from faraway lands to Jerusalem to see the King and hear his wisdom. The Queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's glory and came to put him to the test with riddles. After being convinced of his wisdom, she said "*Blessed be thy God, Who has taken pleasure in thee, to set thee upon the throne of Israel*" (I Kings 10:9).

Before the end of his life, Solomon began to sin before God. He had many wives; there were pagans among them. For them, he built pagan temples and himself went there.

Then the Lord took away His blessing from Solomon, and riots and

rebellions began against him among the Hebrew people. Solomon understood that this was God's punishment for his sins and began to repent. But his repentance was not so full from his heart as David's had been. Therefore, although the Lord forgave him and preserved his kingdom during his life, still He announced through a prophet that after the death of Solomon the Israelite kingdom would be split in two, and Solomon's son would inherit the smaller part.

Note: See I Kings, chaps. 3-11; I Chron., chaps. 22, 28, 29; II Chron., chaps. 1-9.

36. The Division of the Kingdom into Two: Judah and Israel.

After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam ruled. He spoke severely to the people. "My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions," (scorpions — whips at the end of which were clusters of threaded metallic nuts).

A large part of the Israelite kingdom then rose up against Rehoboam. Ten of the Israelite tribes separated from Rehoboam, chose for themselves Jeroboam, from the tribe of Ephraim, as King and made up a special kingdom which began to be called Israel. Two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, remained with Rehoboam and formed the Judean kingdom. The Israelites from this kingdom began to be called Jews.

In this way the Kingdom of Israel was divided into two: Judah and Israel. The city of Jerusalem remained the capital of the Judean kingdom, and the city of Samaria became the capital of Israel.

On great feasts the inhabitants of the Israelite kingdom went to worship God in the Temple in Jerusalem which did not please King Jeroboam. He was afraid that his subjects would become close friends with the Jews and would join the Judean kingdom. So that they would no longer go to Jerusalem, Jeroboam placed in two cities of his kingdom two golden calves and announced to the people, "There is no need for you to go to Jerusalem. Here are your gods which brought you out of Egypt." All the Israelite people began to worship these idols, instead of the true God, and after Jeroboam all the kings of the Israelite kingdom were godless, profane idolaters. They made the whole Israelite people impious.

In the Judean kingdom all the kings came from the line of David, but few of them were kind or pious. The people, imitating the impious kings, sinned much before God. To make the Hebrew people, both the Judeans and the Israelites, come to their senses, the Lord sent many **prophets**.

Note: See I Kings, chaps. 12-15; II Chron., chaps. 10-13.

37. The Prophets.

The prophets were people who, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, prophesied, that is, foretold what would be in the future, especially about the coming Saviour of the world. They announced the will of God, taught the people true faith and piety, and performed various signs and miracles.

They exposed the idolatry of the Hebrews and called them to repent. Some of them preached only orally, and others, in addition, left behind sacred books, written by them under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The most famous of the prophets living in the Israelite kingdom were, Elijah, Elisha and Jonah, and of the prophets living in the Judean kingdom, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

The Prophet Elijah.

The Prophet Elijah lived during the reign of the impious Israelite King Ahab, who worshipped the idol Baal and also forced the people to do so. Elijah came to Ahab and in the name of God announced to him, "Because of your godlessness, there will be neither dew nor rain during these years except by the word of my mouth."

So it came to pass. A terrible drought began. Even the grass died and there was a famine. Elijah, by God's will, settled in the desert by a stream where ravens brought him bread and meat, and he drank the water from the stream. When the stream dried up, God ordered the Prophet to go to the pagan town of Zarephath in Sidon to a poor widow and live with her. This widow, who lived with her son, had only one handful of flour and a little oil. Going to Zarephath, Elijah told her to bake bread for him and promised that the flour and oil would not diminish as long as the Lord did not send rain to the earth. The woman trusted the Prophet of God and did as he told her, her flour and oil did not diminish. Soon this widow's son fell ill and

died. The Prophet Elijah for three days prayed to God for him and the boy came back to life.

The drought lasted for three and a half years. Elijah, at God's command, again came to Ahab and suggested to him that he gather the Israelite people on Mt. Carmel. When Ahab had assembled the people, Elijah said, "You are satisfied with being godless. Become acquainted with the true God. Come, let us offer sacrifice. You, to Baal, and I, to the Lord God, but let there be no fire put under it. Whoever sends down fire from Heaven to light the sacrifice, that will be the true God." All agreed.

The priests of Baal were the first to bring sacrifice. They prepared an altar, put a calf on it and for a whole day hopped around and cried out around it, "Baal, Baal, hear us!" But there was no answer. Evening came. Then Elijah prepared an altar, dug a ditch around it, put firewood and the calf on the altar and told them to pour water on the sacrifice, so much so that the ditch was filled. Then Elijah turned to the Lord with prayer, immediately fire from the Lord came down from Heaven, and burned not only the firewood and the sacrifice, but also obliterated the water which filled the ditch and the stones of which the altar was built. All the people fell on the ground in fear and cried out, "The Lord is the true God; the Lord is the true God!"

After this Elijah went up to the summit of the mountain and began to pray for rain. A wind blew from the mountain, revealing in the skies great clouds, and heavy rain began to fall.

Despite the miracles, Queen Jezebel, wife of Ahab, continued to persecute Elijah for putting all the priests of Baal to death. Elijah hid in the desert since they sought to kill him. It seemed to him that he was the only believer in God and he lost heart. But the Lord reassured him, and appeared to him when Elijah spent the night in a cave on Mt. Horeb.

The voice of God said to him, "Elijah! Come and stand on the mountain in the sight of God." There blew a strong wind, which tore up the mountains and shattered the rocks, but the Lord was not in this wind. Then, there was an earthquake, but the Lord was also not in the earthquake. Then fire appeared, but the Lord was not in the fire. After all this there was the blowing of a calm wind, and in this was the Lord.

The Lord consoled Elijah and said that among the Israelites there were still 7,000 men who did not worship idols, and that after him He would raise up among them the Prophet Elisha, whom He commanded Elijah to anoint.

This appearance of the Lord showed Elijah that the Lord not only is punishing and stern Judge, but a merciful Father. It also prefigured the coming to earth of Jesus Christ, Who would come not to judge and punish, but to forgive and save people.

Elijah, in accordance with God's direction, anointed Elisha as a prophet, who then became his disciple. Once when they were together, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee before I am taken away from thee,"

Elisha replied, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."

Elijah said, "Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, then shall it be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." They went on further. Suddenly there appeared a chariot of fire with horses of fire, and Elijah was taken up into Heaven in a whirlwind.

Elisha, seeing this, cried, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!"

These words of the Prophet Elisha meant that the holy Prophet Elijah, by his prayers, protected the kingdom of Israel from its enemies better than all the Israelite forces, the chariots and horses. At this time the mantle, that is, the outer garment of Elijah, fell at Elisha's feet. Elisha lifted this up and with it received the double gift of prophecy.

Note: See I Kings, chaps. 16-19; II Kings, chaps. 1, 2:1-15.

The Prophet Elisha.

The holy Prophet Elisha was the son of a farmer named Shaphat (I Kings 19:19). God made the Prophet famous by many miracles.

After Elijah was taken up into Heaven Elisha had to cross the river Jordan. He struck the water with the mantle of Elijah. The water parted, and he crossed on the dry river bed.

When Elisha came to the city of Jericho, the inhabitants of the city said to him, "Our water is bad, and because of this the ground is barren." Elisha threw salt into the spring of water and the water became tasty and healthful.

Near the city of Bethel, Elisha saw children coming from the town who began to laugh at him and cry out, "Go away, thou baldhead, go away." He told them that for this disrespect to an elder they would

be punished by God. At that moment two bears came out of the forest and tore to pieces forty-two of the children.

Once a poor widow came to Elisha. She was crying and said to him, 'My husband is dead and left many debts. The creditor came to take my two sons to be servants.'

"Tell me what hast thou in the house?" asked Elisha.

The woman replied, "Nothing, save a pot of oil."

Elisha said to her, "Go, borrow vessels for thyself from all thy neighbors, as many empty vessels as you can. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and thou shalt pour the oil into all those vessels."

The woman did this. The oil was poured until all the vessels were filled. She sold the oil, paid all the debts and there still remained enough money for her sons and her to live.

In the city of Shunem, a certain rich woman had a son. It came to pass that her son suddenly fell ill and died the same day. She went to Elisha and in despair fell at his feet. The Prophet came into the house where the child lay and for a long time prayed to God. The child came back to life.

The commander of the armies of the King of Syria, Naaman, was sick with leprosy. No one could cure him of this illness. Naaman's wife had a captive Jewish girl as a servant. Seeing the sufferings of her master she said, "O that my lord were before the Prophet of God in Samaria; then he would recover him from his leprosy."

Naaman went to the Prophet Elisha in the Israelite land. Elisha sent a servant to tell Naaman that he should wash seven times in the Jordan River. Naaman did as the Prophet ordered him and immediately became well. With rich gifts he returned to Elisha, but the Prophet took nothing from him.

When Naaman went home, Elisha's servant Gehazi caught up with him and took from him, in the name of the Prophet, silver and some clothes. Having hidden what he had received, Gehazi came to Elisha. "Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" Elisha asked him.

"Thy servant went no where," replied Gehazi.

Then the Prophet exposed his lie and said to him, "The leprosy of Naaman, besides his silver, shall cleave to thee." And Gehazi went out from Elisha, covered with leprosy.

Even after his death the Prophet Elisha performed a miracle. In the year after his death, a man was being carried past the cave in which Elisha was buried. But seeing their enemies, the men who were burying him hurriedly threw the dead man into the Prophet's cave. On falling, as soon as he touched Elisha's bones, he came to life and arose.

Note: See II Kings, chaps. 2-10; 13:1-21.

The Prophet Jonah.

The Prophet Jonah lived after the Prophet Elisha. Once the Lord ordered him to go to the pagan city of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, and to proclaim to the inhabitants of this city that the Lord would destroy them if they did not repent. But Jonah did not want to go and preach to the enemy of the Israelite people and did not obey the voice of God. He went on a ship which was heading for another country. But suddenly at sea a fierce storm arose. The ship was threatened with destruction, and everyone on it became frightened. The crew decided to cast lots to find out what had brought them such a calamity. The lots fell on Jonah. Jonah confessed his sin and said, "Yes, I have sinned in the face of the Lord! Cast me into the sea, and the sea shall be calm." When they threw him into the sea, the sea became quiet. By the will of God, a huge fish swallowed the Prophet, which in the Bible is called a huge whale. Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights, praying to God for forgiveness. Here God revealed his wondrous power in a special way. He preserved him unharmed in the belly of the whale and forgave him.

In three days the whale threw up the Prophet, alive, onto the shore. After this Jonah went to Nineveh to fulfill God's will. A whole day he walked through the city and preached to everyone, saying, "In forty days, Nineveh shall be overthrown!" The inhabitants believed his words. They, together with the King, imposed a fast on themselves, began to pray and repent of their sins, and the Lord forgave them.

But Jonah murmured against such mercy of God and asked that God take his life. He probably thought that now he would be considered a false prophet.

This time the Lord brought Jonah to his senses. One night, in front of the tent that Jonah set up for himself near Nineveh, a big plant grew up and shaded him from the sun's intense heat. The next day though, a worm gnawed at this plant, and it dried up. Jonah very much grieved and felt sorry for the withered plant.

Then the Lord said to him, "Thou hadst pity on the plant, for which thou hast not suffered, neither didst thou cause it to grow. And shall not I spare Nineveh, the great city, in which dwell more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

The three-day stay of the Prophet Jonah in the belly of the whale and his miraculous salvation was a prefiguration of the three-day death and resurrection of Christ the Saviour.

Note: See Book of Jonah.

Discussion about Jonah's Three-day Stay in the Whale's Belly.

"Superficial and unbelieving critics," says scholar Arthur Hook, "believe there are many obstacles to accepting that Jonah was in fact swallowed by a whale and that the Prophet spent three days and three nights in its belly and then was vomited out onto dry land.

"In the first place, not one person who believes in Christ can doubt what took place with the Prophet Jonah, for Christ Himself put the seal on this disputed subject when He said, For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40). Here Christ eliminates, at least as far as it concerned His disciples, the idea that the Book of the Prophet Jonah is an allegory, as critics like to assume. If it is said only in an allegorical sense that Jonah was in the whale's belly, then the conclusion follows that Christ's being in the heart of the earth in the course of three days and three nights also has only an allegorical significance. Here we have again an example of how the denial of the Old Testament paves the way for a denial of Christ Himself and His word"

To deny historicity to the Prophet Jonah is equivalent to a denial of all Scripture and this means repudiation of the faith. How can a person, after the innumerable failures of so-called 'scientific objections' be against the Bible? How many times have the refutations and sneers at the Bible by 'the wise men of this age' been turned back against them themselves. In fact, a simple acquaintance with the text of the original and some scientific knowledge give us the answer in many cases.

Everyone well knows that the text of the Bible was written in Hebrew. In Hebrew a whale is called **tannin**. In the Bible, however, the sea animal which swallowed Jonah is not called **tannin**, but **dag**, which means "big fish" or "monster of the deep."

For more than 1500 years the holy Church has testified to this by calling this creature which swallowed Jonah a "sea beast." For example, in the Irmos of the sixth ode of Friday's Canon of Matins, eighth tone, it is said, "Jonah, in the womb of a sea beast, stretches out his hands in the form of a Cross, thus clearly foreshadowing the saving Passion." In the sixth ode of the Canon of Matins for Tuesday, fifth tone, it is written, "As Thou hast saved the Prophet from the beast, O Lord, so, I pray, lead me up from the depths of the unconquered passions."

Science has pointed out to us that there exists a wide variety of types of whales. Thus, for example, there is a species of whales which have forty-four teeth in the lower jaw and reach 60-65 feet in length. However, they have a very small gullet, which may have given a basis for contending that Jonah could not be swallowed by a whale.

There is another form of whale, the "bottle-nosed" whale, which has a beak. Although it is a small whale, reaching up to thirty feet long, it has a rather large gullet and is fully capable of swallowing a man; but the Prophet could not have been swallowed by such a whale because it chews food and has teeth.

There are whales which do not have teeth, but are provided with "whalebones." Among such a type of whale there are whales which are called "fin-backs." These whales can be up to 88 feet long. The stomach of such a whale has from four to six chambers or compartments, each of which could easily contain a small group of people. This type of whale breathes air and has on its head a reserve air chamber which appears with the dilation of the nasal cavities. Before swallowing a very large object, the finback whale pushes it through to this chamber. If it happens that something too large is found in the head of this whale, then it will swim to the nearest land, lie in the shallow water and disgorge its burden.

The scholar Dr. Ranson Garvey testifies that his friend, in weight two-hundred pounds, crawled from the mouth of a dead whale into this air chamber. This scholar points out that a dog that fell from the side of a whale boat, after six days was found in the head of a whale, alive. From this account, it is evident that Jonah could remain in the 'womb,' that is, in the air chamber of such a whale, for three days and three nights and stay alive. The space in this chamber is equal to 686 cubic feet. Thus, from scientific data we can see that Jonah could have been swallowed by a whale.

Frank Bullen, the famous author of the work, *The Swimming of the Sperm Whale*, established that the sperm whale often, when it is

dying, disgorges the contents of its stomach.

But the Biblical word **dag** refers to a "big fish." From this we can conclude that Jonah really was swallowed by a marine creature, by a huge fish. In that case we must consider the fish called "whale shark" or "bone shark."

This name, "whale shark," comes from the fact that it does not have teeth. The whale shark reaches seventy feet in length, and filters its food through huge plates in its mouth. This shark has a stomach large enough for a man to fit inside.

Concerning the fact that Jonah spent three days and three nights in the stomach of a big marine creature and stayed alive, we can first of all say, "With God everything is possible." It is interesting to recall the story in Reader's Digest about a sailor swallowed by a whale-shark. In 48 hours the shark was killed. When the whale-shark was opened up, imagine the surprise of all those who had gathered when they found a sailor alive, though in an unconscious state, after having been swallowed by this creature. In addition, the sailor had no after-effects of his stay in the stomach of the whale-shark except a loss of hair and a few blisters on his skin. He related that only fear gave him no peace while living in the whale's stomach. When he had come to consciousness and understood where he was, he again immediately lost consciousness.

"Recently," writes Fr. I.S., "in the Hawaiian islands Japanese fishermen killed a big white shark. In its stomach they found a full skeleton of a man. It turned out that this was a soldier, entered in the list of deserters, in the clothes of the style of the North American army."

Thus we see that Jonah could have been swallowed by a big fish even without violating the natural laws of nature. All nonsense and contradiction disappear. Surely and invariably the Word of God can never be found to be in contradiction with scientific truth. This was also established by the father of Russian science, **Lomonosov**.

It is necessary for us believers to say that it is quite obvious that the events which happened to the Prophet Jonah were undoubtedly the work of the power of God, Who, as Creator of the very laws of nature, has a free will to control them, when He finds it necessary, according to His all-powerful providential action.

The scholar and genius **Pascal** said, "The last step of reason consists in admitting the existence of many things which are outside the limits of our knowledge, and if reason does not accept this knowledge, it is absolutely weak." **Robert Mayer** said, "If superficial

minds show off by denying the existence of something higher in the super-material and supersensually perceived world, this pitiful denial by a few minds cannot be blamed on science."

(Compiled from the book *The Truth Of Biblical Miracles*, A. Hook and *Prophet Jonah And the Small Gullet Of the Whale* by Archpriest Paul Kalinovitch.).

38. The Downfall of the Israelite Kingdom.

God patiently, with long suffering, called on the Israelite people through many of His prophets, to turn from evil and come to believe in Him. But neither the kings nor the people listened to them.

Finally, when the people's evil deeds had reached the ultimate limits, the Lord withdrew from the Israelite kingdom and it perished. The Assyrian King Shalmaneser conquered and destroyed the Israelite kingdom. He sent a large part of the Israelite people to his own country. In their place he settled pagans from his own kingdom. These pagans assimilated with the Israelites who remained and formed a people who came to be called Samaritans, from the name Samaria, which was the main city of the destroyed Israelite kingdom.

The Samaritans spoke an impure Hebrew language. They accepted faith in the true God, but not completely, because they did not abandon their former pagan customs and they honored only one of the prophets, Moses. The Jews despised the Samaritans and would not sit with them at the table and even tried not to speak to them. The Israelite kingdom existed for 257 years.

Note: See II Kings, chap. 17.

The Judean Kingdom.

After the collapse of the Israelite kingdom, the Judean kingdom existed for still another 100 years, since among the Judean kings there were a few pious ones. In addition, the people remembered God more than in the Israelite kingdom. The prophets sent by God to the Judean kingdom exposed the evil deeds of the Jews and foretold much about the coming of the Saviour to earth. The Prophet Micah foretold that the Saviour would be born in the city of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). The Prophet Joel foretold the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles and all those who believed in the Saviour.

The Prophet Isaiah.

Especially famous among the Jewish prophets was the Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah was a descendant of King David and a relative of the kings of the Jews. The Lord made him a prophet through an extraordinary vision. Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on a high throne. Around Him stood six-winged Seraphim, and they called out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts! The whole earth is full of His glory!" One of the Seraphim took with tongs a burning coal from the heavenly altar, touched Isaiah's lips and said, "Behold, thy sins are purged." After this the Lord ordered him to go and expose the unbelief and vices of the Jews.

The Prophet Isaiah foretold that the Judean kingdom would be destroyed by enemies, the Jews would be taken into captivity and then again would return to their homeland.

With particular clarity Isaiah foretold that the Saviour, Christ, would come from the house of David, that the Saviour would be born from a virgin and would not be a simple man, but also God. "*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel*" (Is. 7:14) which means, "*God is with us.*"

He foretold that the Saviour would suffer and die for our sins. "*But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed...He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth*" (Is. 53:5-7).

Isaiah also prophesied that the Saviour would be crucified with **evildoers**, and would be buried not with them, but in the tomb of a rich man. Through faith in Christ the Saviour, people would save themselves from eternal damnation. For the clarity of his predictions about Christ the Saviour, the Prophet Isaiah is called "**the Old Testament Evangelist.**"

At that time Isaiah was ardently exposing the wrongdoing of the Jewish King, Manasseh. The impious King placed altars to pagan idols in Solomon's Temple. However, at the end of Manasseh's life, after being taken captive and put in prison, he repented and asked God's forgiveness. Under the influence of their impious King, the Jewish people began to completely forget the true God. The Jews even stopped celebrating the Passover and other feasts established by Moses.

The holy Prophet Isaiah endured a martyr's death. For exposing the wrongdoing of King Manasseh, he was sawed in two.

Note: See II Kings, chaps. 16 and 18-23; II Chronicles, chaps. 28-35; Book of Isaiah and other prophets.

The Fall of the Judean Kingdom. The Prophet Jeremiah.

For a long time the Lord endured the sins of the Jewish people and awaited their repentance, but the people did not reform themselves. Through the Prophet Jeremiah God clearly foretold that for their evil deeds, the Jewish people would be subjugated and led into captivity by the Babylonians and that the Jews would be in captivity for **seventy years**.

At first, the Babylonian King **Nebuchadnezzar** (Jer. 37:1) subjugated the Jewish King, but he preserved Jerusalem and did not destroy all the Jewish kingdom.

The Prophet Jeremiah persuaded the Jews to submit to Babylon. He pointed out that the Babylonians had been sent against the Jews by God as a punishment for the sins of the kings and the people, and for their apostasy from the faith. He told them that the only way to rid themselves of the disaster was to repent, reform, and pray to God.

But neither the King nor the people listened to the Prophet and instead they started a revolt. Then the Babylonian King **Nebuchadnezzar** took Jerusalem, plundered it, set it on fire, and destroyed Solomon's Temple to the foundation. At that time the Ark of the Covenant was hidden in a cave by the Prophet Jeremiah.

All the Jewish people were taken into captivity (in 589 B.C.). Only the poorest Jews were left on their land to cultivate the vineyards and fields. The Prophet Jeremiah remained in Jerusalem. He grieved over the ungodliness of his people amidst the ruins of the city and continued to teach virtue to those inhabitants who stayed.

Note: See II Kings, chaps. 24-25; Book of the Prophet Jeremiah; II Chronicles, chap. 36:5-21.

The Babylonian Captivity.

The Jews had a hard life in the Babylonian captivity, but the Lord did not abandon His chosen people in exile. So as to arouse repentance in the Jews and comfort them, the Lord sent to them His prophets during the captivity. The Prophet Ezekiel and the Prophet Daniel were particularly remarkable during this period.

The Prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel was a contemporary of the Prophet Jeremiah. While in the Babylonian captivity, even before the final destruction of the Judean kingdom, he was called by God to be a prophet.

The Prophet Ezekiel was made famous by his prophecies about the resurrection of the dead, which simultaneously symbolically represented the restoration to freedom of the Jewish people.

The Prophet had a vision from the Lord. He saw a field strewn with men's bones.

God asked him, "Son of man, will these bones live?"

Ezekiel replied, "O Lord God, Thou knowest this."

The Lord said, "Prophecy upon these bones, and thou shalt say to them, 'Ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.'"

The Word of the Lord was as follows: "*Thus saith the Lord to these bones; Behold I will bring upon you the breath of life and I will lay sinews upon you, and bring up flesh upon you, and will spread skin upon you, and will put My Spirit into you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord*" (Ezek. 37:3-6).

When Ezekiel prophesied, at God's command there was a noise and movement and the bones began to come together, each bone to its appointed bone. Ezekiel saw there were sinews on them, and flesh appeared, and skin covered them on top, but there was no spirit in them.

And the Lord said: "*Prophecy to the wind; prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, 'Thus saith the Lord: Come from the four winds, and breathe upon these dead men, and let them live*" (Ezek. 37:9).

The words, "from the four winds," mean that from four ends of the world (north, south, east and west) dead souls, wherever they might be, must gather in the field covered with spiritless bodies and come to life.

Ezekiel uttered the prophecy as the Lord commanded him, and the Spirit entered them and they came to life and stood on their feet.

The Lord said, "*These bones are the whole house of Israel....Therefore prophecy and say, 'Thus saith the Lord: Behold I will open your tombs, and will bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves,*

that I may bring up My people from their graves. And I will put My Spirit within you, and ye shall live, and I will place you upon your own land; and ye shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezek. 37:11-14).

This **great prophecy**, besides pointing to the restoration of the Israelite people, was given to us by God as a **graphic portrayal of the general resurrection of the dead** at the second coming of the Saviour, when, according to the all-powerful Word of God, all the bodies of dead people will unite with their spirits and come to life.

Note: See II Kings, chap. 25:27-30; II Chron., chap. 36:10-23; Ezekiel, chap. 37:1-14.

The Prophet Daniel.

The Prophet Daniel was descended from the royal family. While still a young boy, he was taken prisoner to a Babylonian prison. In prison, by the will of King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel was chosen with several other imprisoned youths of the children of Israel to serve in the King's palace. The King ordered that they be brought up in the palace, taught in various fields of knowledge and in the language of the Chaldeans. The King appointed them a daily provision of food from his own table. Among those chosen besides Daniel were **Ananias, Azarias, and Misael.**

Daniel and his three friends firmly kept faith in the true God. They did not wish to eat the King's meat in order to avoid being defiled by anything forbidden by the Law of Moses. They begged the prince of eunuchs to give them only bread and vegetables. The prince would not agree for fear they would lose weight, and the King would decapitate him. But Daniel asked him to do as they asked for ten days. When ten days had passed, Daniel and his friends not only did not lose weight, but they appeared fatter, more healthy and fairer than all the other children. After this they were not required to eat the King's food. For such strict observance of the Law, for their fasting and piety, God rewarded these young boys with great ability and success in their studies. In tests, they proved to be more intelligent and better than the others, and they were given positions in the King's palace. To Daniel, God gave the gift of interpreting dreams, as He had once to Joseph.

The rise of the Hebrew youths benefited the Jews in captivity. The piety of the youths served to defend the Jews from oppression and to better their life in captivity. Furthermore, through them the pagans were able to come to a knowledge of the true God and to glorify Him.

One day Nebuchadnezzar had an unusual dream, but when he awoke

in the morning, he could not remember it. This dream greatly distressed the King. He convened all his wise men and magicians and ordered them to recall this dream and explain it. But they were not able to do it and said, "*There is not a man upon the earth that can recall the dream for the king*" (Dan. 2:10). Nebuchadnezzar was infuriated and wanted to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

Then Daniel asked the King to give him some time, and he would explain the dream. Going home, Daniel fervently implored God to reveal to him this mystery. In a vision at night, God revealed to him the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its meaning.

Daniel went to the King and said, "*O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter ...Thou, O king, sawest and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay*" (Dan. 2:29, 31-33). Then from a mountain, by itself, a stone was cut out without hands, and it smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces, then the whole image fell apart and turned into dust, and the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. This, O King, is thy dream!

This dream," continued Daniel, "means the following. Thou art a king of kings, for the God of Heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory, and He hath made thee ruler over all. Thou art this head of gold. After thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass which shall bear rule over all the earth. The fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and all these shall it break in pieces and bruise. But at the same time that the kingdom shall be divided, the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken. In the days of these last kings shall the God of Heaven set up an eternal kingdom which shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Thus the great God hath made known to the King what shall come to pass hereafter."

Hearing this, King Nebuchadnezzar stood up and bowed down to the earth before Daniel, and said, "*Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings!*" (Dan. 2:47).

He honored Daniel greatly by giving him great gifts, seating him in the gate of the King, and making him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief of the governors, over all the wise men of Babylon. His three friends Ananias, Azarias, and Misael were set

over the affairs of the province of Babylon.

The prophecy of Daniel was precisely fulfilled. After the **Babylonian kingdom**, there followed three great kingdoms: the **Median-Persian**, the **Macedonian** or **Greek**, and the **Roman**, each of which reigned over the Jewish people. Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, appeared on earth during the Roman empire, and established His universal, eternal kingdom, the holy Church.

The **mountain**, from which was carved the stone, represents the Holy Virgin Mary, and the **stone**, Christ and His eternal kingdom.

Note: See the Book of Daniel, chapters 1-2.

Friends of the Prophet Daniel — Ananias, Azarias, and Misael — the Furnace of Babylon.

Shortly after, the friends of the Prophet Daniel, Ananias, Azarias, and Misael (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego KJV), underwent a great trial of their faith. King Nebuchadnezzar set up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon, a great image of gold. For its dedication all the important and distinguished people of the Babylonian kingdom were gathered. It was declared to all the people that when they heard the sound of the trumpet and musical instruments, they must fall down and worship the golden image. Whosoever did not comply with the order of the King would be thrown into a burning fiery furnace. Upon the sound of the trumpet, all fell to the ground. Only three — Ananias, Azarias, and Misael — failed to worship the image.

The King was enraged, and commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual, and to bind them and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. The flames were so fierce that the soldiers who threw them in the furnace fell dead. But Ananias, Azarias, and Misael remained unharmed, because the Lord sent His angel to guard them in the midst of the flames. They sang, glorifying the Lord.

Nebuchadnezzar sat on a high throne near the furnace. When he heard the singing, he was astonished, then dumbfounded. He rose up in haste and said to his counselors, "But I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not burnt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Then he came near to the furnace and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come out and come here."

When they came, it was seen that the fire had had no power over them, even their coats and hair were not singed, nor did they smell

of fire. Nebuchadnezzar, seeing this said, "Blessed be your God, Who sent His angel and delivered his servants that trusted in Him."

The King forbade anyone, on penalty of death, to speak anything amiss against the God of Israel.

Note: See the Book of Daniel, chap. 3.

39. The Fall of the Babylonian Kingdom.

After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom of Babylon began to fall apart. The successors of Nebuchadnezzar changed frequently. Finally, after seven years, Belshazzar (whom the Prophet Daniel calls the son of Nebuchadnezzar) came to the throne and ruled about seventeen years. In the seventeenth year of his reign, when the Medes and the Persians threatened to attack him, Belshazzar carelessly feasted in Babylon, not thinking of the danger.

One day during a feast, King Belshazzar, for the profanation of the true God and in praise of his idols, commanded that the vessels be brought which Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the Temple in Jerusalem; he and all those with him drank wine in them. Such blasphemy resulted in the judgment of God. A hand appeared in the air which wrote some sort of words on the wall.

Belshazzar began to tremble from fear, and he cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The wise men of Babylon came, but none of them was able to read the handwriting on the wall.

Now the Queen came into the banquet house and said to Belshazzar, "Let not thy thoughts trouble thee, O King. There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God — it is Daniel. He will explain the meaning of the words." At that time Daniel was far away from the King's court.

When Daniel was brought in, the King said to him, "If thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom."

Daniel refused the rewards. He reminded the King of how God persuaded the proud Nebuchadnezzar. "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knowest all

this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of Heaven, and hast drunk wine in the vessels of His House; and thou hast praised the idols; and the God in Whose hand thy breath is, and Whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. For this reason God sent a hand which wrote these letters. This is what is written: **MENE, TEKEL, FERES**

"**MENE** means God hath **numbered** thy kingdom and determined its end;

"**TEKEL** means thou art **weighed** in the balance, and art found to be wanting;

"**FERES** means thy kingdom is **divided** and given to the Medes and Persians."

The King immediately rewarded Daniel as he had promised.

That same night the Median and Persian armies, under the leadership of the Persian King Cyrus, invaded the city and took possession of it. Belshazzar was slain and the Babylonian kingdom fell. In its place arose the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians — the silver in the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, as the Prophet Daniel had explained to him. The Persian King Cyrus made Darius, the Median, King over Babylon.

Note: See the Book of Daniel, chap. 5.

40. The Median-Persian Empire. Prophet Daniel in the Lion's Den.

King Darius came to love Daniel and made him one of the three main rulers in his kingdom; the King thought to set him over the whole realm. Other important persons envied Daniel and decided to kill him. They knew that three times a day Daniel prayed to God, opening the window toward Jerusalem. Therefore, they came to the King and asked him to establish a royal statute that within thirty days, whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man, save the King, should be cast into a den of lions. The King agreed. But the Prophet Daniel, as before, did not cease to pray to God every day and beg His mercy. His enemies reported this to the King. Then Darius understood that he had been deceived, but he was unable to change his order, and he was compelled to permit Daniel to be thrown to the lions.

The next day, early in the morning, the King hurried to the lions' den and cried, "*Daniel, servant of the living God! Is thy God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?*" (Dan. 6:20).

Daniel answered him from the den, "*O king! My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee O king, have I done no hurt*" (Dan. 6:21-22).

The King then commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den, and they cast his accusers into the den of lions. Before they had even come to the bottom of the den, the lions seized them and broke all their bones in pieces.

Then King Darius wrote a decree. I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast forever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end (Dan. 6:26).

The Prophet Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian. He made many predictions which were later fulfilled.

Daniel predicted the birth of Christ the Saviour precisely in **seventy weeks** of years, that is, in 490 years. He predicted also that Christ would be put to death, and after Him would follow the destruction of the Temple and city and the cessation of the Old Testament sacrifices (Dan. 9:23-27).

Note: See the Book of Daniel.

41. The Return of the Jews from Captivity in Babylon and the Construction of the Second Temple.

The Jews were in captivity in Babylon seventy years. The Persian King Cyrus, in the first year of his reign over Babylon, allowed the Jews to return from captivity to their fatherland and to build a Temple to the Lord in Jerusalem. Forty-two thousand Jews returned to their homeland. The Jews who remained in Babylon helped them with gold, silver and other necessities, and beyond that with rich donations to the Temple. The King returned the sacred vessels which

were taken from the Temple of Solomon by Nebuchadnezzar.

Having returned to Jerusalem, the Jews first of all resumed sacrifices to the Lord God, and then, the next year, they laid the foundations for the new Temple. The Samaritans, having found out about it, expressed a desire to take part in the building of the Temple, but the Jews, in order to keep the services to God pure, refused them. After nineteen years the Temple was finished. The new Temple was not as rich and splendid as the Temple of Solomon. The old folk, remembering the splendor of the former Temple, wept over the fact that this second Temple was poorer and smaller than before.

But the Prophet **Haggai**, whom the Lord sent to the Jews, comforted them. He predicted that the glory of this latter Temple would be greater than that of the former because to this Temple would come the Desire of all nations, Christ the Saviour of the World (cf. Haggai 2:6-9).

The Prophet **Zechariah** foretold the triumphant entry of the Saviour into Jerusalem upon a colt, the foal of a donkey (cf. Zech. 9:9).

The Prophet **Malachi** prophesied that the advent of the Messiah was near and that before Him would be sent a Forerunner, that is a precursor like the Prophet Elijah, to prepare people to receive the Saviour (cf. Mal. 3:1, 4:5). Malachi was the last prophet of the Jews. After him for more than four hundred years, words of the prophets were not heard among the Hebrew people, until the appearance of the Forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist.

42. The Greek Empire.

The Translation of the Books of the Old Testament into the Greek Language.

For a long time, about two hundred years, the Median-Persian empire continued. The Jews, upon returning from captivity in Babylon, remained under the power of the Persian

Then the Persian kingdom was conquered by the Greek King Alexander the Great, King of Macedonia, who was also sovereign over Egypt and Syria. Alexander the Great, the most powerful king of his time, respected the holy Temple of Jerusalem and throughout his life he was especially protective of the Hebrew people.

After his death the kingdom disintegrated, and it fell to four of his military chiefs. One of these, Ptolemy, having become King of Egypt, subjugated the Hebrews and brought many thousands of Jews to Egypt.

Under his son, **King Ptolemy II Philadelphus**, who was kindly disposed to the Jews, a magnificent work was done. By his command **the books of the Old Testament were translated from the Hebrew language into Greek**. The translation was made by seventy interpreters, that is, scholars. Greek was the most commonly used language of that time. This translation was of enormous benefit for it enabled even the pagans to read the Holy Scriptures in a language known to them. In this way the empire of the Greek King served to spread the truth about God among the heathens.

For about a hundred years the Jews were under the power of the Greek kings reigning in Egypt. However, the Greek kings reigning in Syria did not treat the Hebrews and the faith in the true God in the manner that the Egyptian kings did. While living under the power of Syrian kings, the Jews endured much sorrow. The Syrian kings began to persecute them for the true faith and to force them into idolatry. An especially brutal oppressor was the King Antiochus Epiphanes.

Martyrs for the Faith, the Maccabees.

King Antiochus Epiphanes wanted all of his subjects to speak the same language, Greek, and to worship only Greek gods, that is, idols. Many of the Jews obeyed the King, but there were others who were ready to die rather than to forsake the true faith.

The royal rulers tried to force the elder Eleazar to eat food forbidden by the law of Moses — pork. When he refused, they tried to persuade him to bring his own meat, such as was lawful for him to use, and to pretend that he ate the flesh taken of the sacrifice commanded by the King. To this he answered, "It is not becoming at my age to be a hypocrite; if young people find out that Eleazar, being fourscore and ten years old, has now gone to a strange religion, then they may be tempted to desert the faith." Then they turned him over to the torturers, and Eleazar died courageously for the faith.

Once the woman Solomonia and her seven sons were brought before the king himself. The King compelled them to eat pork, but they boldly replied, "We are ready to die, rather than to transgress the laws of our fathers." Then the King handed them over to brutal torture. They cut out their tongues, cut off their fingers and toes, pulled the skin off their heads, and burned them alive in hot frying

pans. Thus six of the brothers were martyred. The King tenderly tried to convince the youngest not to oppose him. He assured him with oaths that he would reward him, and finally turned to his mother to counsel her son to save his life. But she bowed herself toward him and said, "O my son, fear not this tormentor, but being worthy of thy brethren, accept death, that I may receive thee again in the future eternal life." The King then turned the youngest son over to death by torture harsher than all the rest. Last of all, after the sons the mother died. This family of martyrs is known as the **Maccabean martyrs**.

In defense of the true faith and their homeland there arose a priest Mattathias with his five sons. Many zealots of the Law of God soon gathered around them. One of the sons of Mattathias was especially distinguished for bravery, Judas Maccabeus (named for the Maccabean martyrs). Judas Maccabeus won many victories over the Syrians with only a small group of soldiers. But once, he was surrounded by a large army of Syrians (22,000 troops), and he had only 800 men. Judas died the death of a hero. He would not consent to flee from his enemy and thereby darken his glory.

His brother Simon finally defeated the Syrian army, and having rid the city of Jerusalem of them, purified the Temple, and freed his people from the power of the Greek kings. In gratitude for this, the Jews established that from that time until the advent of the Saviour, the eldest of the family of Simon would be the chief priest and ruler of the people.

Note: See the Books of the Maccabees.

Translator's note: In the King James Version, these books are found in the apocrypha of the Old Testament. KJV does not include the story of Simon.

43. The Roman Empire. The Universal Expectation of the Messiah.

Having been freed from the empire of the Greek kings, the Jews did not have long to make use of their freedom. The Romans, having conquered the whole known world, also subjugated the Jews (64 B.C.). They placed over Palestine the procurator Antipater from the tribe of Esau, an Idumean (or Edomite). He very cleverly secured the confidence of the Romans, but was soon poisoned.

After him, his son Herod, called Herod the Great, was appointed governor of Galilee. He was a suspicious, brutal and cunning man. He also, like his father, skillfully gained the confidence of the Roman authorities and was declared King of the Jews. In order to find favor among the Jews, King Herod restored the Jerusalem Temple. Having received the title of King, he was still subordinate to **Caesar**, the Roman Emperor. From the time that the Jews came under Roman power, they were always subject to a **Roman ruler**, a deputy of the Roman Emperor. The Jews were allowed to keep their **Sanhedrin**, their council of high priests and elders of the people; but the power of the Sanhedrin was strictly limited. The Sanhedrin, for example, could not impose the death penalty without the permission of the Roman ruler, to whom belonged the highest authority in Israel.

The worldwide control of the Roman empire shook paganism to its foundations. Rome was the capital of the world and there gathered the scholars, writers, merchants and other representatives of all the nations. Each one brought with him his own pagan faith. These people, seeing the endless variety of pagan idol-deities, became convinced that all these pagan gods were devised by the people themselves.

Many of the pagans began to lose faith and hope in the future. In order to seek blissful oblivion, they began to indulge in every sort of amusement. Some, falling into despondency, ended their lives by suicide.

But the best of them, observing that the world was headed toward destruction, nevertheless maintained the hope that from somewhere would come a **Saviour**, if not from among the people, then from above. The Jews, dispersed throughout all the world after their captivity in Babylon and other later captivities, spread the news about the imminent coming of the Saviour of the world. Therefore, the gaze of the best people in the pagan world began to turn to the east, to Palestine.

Among the Romans and other pagan people there arose the general belief that in the East there would soon appear a powerful king who would subjugate the entire world.

In Palestine itself, among the Jews, the expectation of the Messiah was especially intense. Everyone felt that the time was coming for the fulfillment of the prophecies and the salvation of Israel.

The prophecies of the Prophet Daniel about the date of the appearance of Christ were especially precise. He foretold that after a period of seventy weeks of years came to an end, a fourth great

kingdom would arise during which the Saviour would arrive. This was the exact specification of the time of the advent of Christ.

Upon the appearance of every prominent preacher, everyone involuntarily asked if he were the Christ. Even the semi-pagan Samaritans hoped that soon would come Christ the Saviour, Who would resolve all the quarrelsome questions between them and the Jews concerning the faith. Unfortunately, not only the pagans, but also the Jews themselves mistakenly imagined what Christ would be like. They did not picture Him as the Prophet Isaiah and other prophets represented Him, as one that would bear our sins, suffer for us and, though innocent, be condemned to death. The Jews had no idea that Christ the Saviour would come to earth for the purpose of teaching people, through His example, word, deeds, and suffering, to love God and each other. They desired to see Christ not like this, but rather with worldly power and glory. Therefore, they thought that Christ would come in worldly glory and would be the earthly king over the Jewish people. He would free the Jews from the power of Rome and would subjugate the whole world, and the Jews would reign over all the peoples of the earth.

Only a few devout and righteous people awaited Christ with humility, faith and love. They expected the true Saviour of the world, Who would come to deliver people from enslavement to sin and the power of the Devil. He would **"trample on the head of the serpent,"** as God said to the first people in Paradise, to save people from eternal death and to open the gates to the Kingdom of Heaven for eternal blessed life with God.

When the time came, God gave the promised Saviour of the world, His Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. The Son of God dwelt in the Holy Virgin Mary, and by the action of the Holy Spirit, received from her a human body and soul; that is, He was born from the Most-holy Virgin Mary and became **God Incarnate**.

The birth of Jesus Christ occurred in the days when Herod the Great, the Edomite, reigned over the Jews, in the time of the Roman Emperor Augustus.

Palestine.

The land of **Palestine**, upon whose soil our Saviour lived, is comprised of a comparatively small strip of land, about 150 miles long and 80 miles wide, situated along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

In the north of Palestine, on the slopes of Mt. Lebanon, lies **Galilee**. Picturesque hills, green pastures, and innumerable gardens make

Galilee the most beautiful part of Palestine. Its chief adornment is the **Sea of Galilee**, which is also known as the Lake of Gennesaret or Tiberias. It is more than twelve miles in length, and a little more than five miles in width. At the time of the Saviour, the shores of this sea were covered with lush vegetation. Palm trees were growing there, along with vineyards, fig trees, almond trees, and flowering oleander. Beautiful cities, Capernaum, Tiberias, Chorazin, and Bethsaida, situated on the banks of this sea, were not large, but densely populated. The inhabitants led simple and industrious lives. They cultivated every plot of land, and engaged in commerce and various trades, the chief of which was fishing.

To the south of Galilee lies **Samaria**. The inhabitants of Samaria, the Samaritans, were in constant conflict with the Jews. They even built themselves a separate temple on Mount Gerizim in order to avoid going to Jerusalem.

The largest part of Palestine, to the south of Samaria, is Palestine at the Time of the Saviour called **Judea**. The western part of it is level plain, interrupted by small streams flowing into the Mediterranean Sea. This plain gradually rises toward the east and is bordered by the Judean hills; from ancient times it was famous for its fertility. The slopes of the Judean hills are dressed in green, covered with whole groves of olive trees; more distant and higher mountains become rockier and more dismal. Among these hills is the great city of **Jerusalem**, the capital of Judea and of all Palestine.

The largest river in Palestine is the Jordan. The **Jordan** begins in the mountains of Lebanon in the form of sparkling mountain streams. Downstream in the valley these streams form a single river which spills into and forms the Sea of Galilee. From this sea, the Jordan flows out in the form of a fast wide river with low, green banks; at that time this was called the Valley of the Jordan. Approaching Judea, the banks of the Jordan become higher and drier, composed of bare rocks, devoid of any vegetation. Only the backwaters along the Jordan are thickly covered with reeds. There crocodiles swim, and wild beasts hide. This was the Jordan desert in which John the Baptist lived and preached. At the end of its course, the Jordan flows into a most wild and uninhabited country and empties into the Dead Sea.

Now we call the land of Palestine the **Holy Land**, since it was sanctified by the life of the Saviour.

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