

December 21

B. Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ

"A marvelous wonder appears today! For our Savior is now hastening to be born in the flesh for us in the cave from the Virgin"; "Zion, triumph!", "Jerusalem, be glad", "Creation celebrates in advance as it joyfully magnifies the One who has wrought such glories upon earth". "Come, let us who are born of earth ceaselessly hymn with one voice the Virgin Theotokos Mary"; "All you ends of the earth be filled with joy; for the Theotokos draws near to give birth to the King of the universe". On the Forefeast the faithful come to offer all the Nativity hymns: "already Christ comes to be born in Bethlehem, to save the universe, for He is the only Lover of mankind"; "Let us today now hasten to celebrate His Nativity beforehand with uprightness of mind", "pouring out tears like myrrh for Christ Who is being born in the flesh for our sake, therefore let us be cleansed of our filth for the Immaculate One who comes in purity".

Troparion, see Dec. 20.

Kontakion, tone 2

**As we contemplate Him who holds the whole earth in His hand
Wrapped in swaddling clothes in Bethlehem,
Let us offer prefestal hymns to the one who gives Him birth:
As every mother she rejoices
For she holds the Son of God in her womb.**

From December 21 the great prostration (Refer to Nov. 14) is discontinued: "Although it is the Fast, there are no prostrations in church".

Holy Martyr Juliana of Nicomedia

St. Juliana, daughter of wealthy parents, while yet in childhood was betrothed to a certain nobleman. Having accepted Christ and not inclined to her Pagan groom, St. Juliana refused to be joined in marriage and for her faith in Christ was subjected to cruel torture after which she was beheaded in Nicomedia in 304. Seeing the firmness of the martyress in her suffering, 500 men and 130 women accepted Christ for which they all were cut down by the sword. The relics of St. Juliana are now in Naples.

Kontakion, tone 3

**O Virgin, rendered most pure with the goodness of virginity,
And now having been crowned with the martyr's crown,
You grant healing and salvation**

**To those in need and affliction who approach your shrine:
For Christ pours out divine grace and eternal life.**

Refer to the Typicon (Ustav): Where the feast for the Hierarch Peter is celebrated, we sing the Canon for Saint Juliana at Compline together with the Three Ode Canon, and her stichera follow.

✠. Repose of our Father among the Saints Peter, Metropolitan of all Russia

He was born in Volhynia and since childhood was nurtured by his parents in the awe of God. When he was 12 years old, St. Peter, moved with love for asceticism, accepted monasticism and soon showed himself a paradigm of high virtue and piety, for which at a mature age was ordained a presbyter. He loved to read the Holy Bible and write icons.

After many years of asceticism, St. Peter founded the Monastery of the Savior on the Rata River in which he became the Rector, (now village of Dvoretz (Palace)). As Hegumen of the monastery St. Peter became glorified by his own life, and became known to the princes and noblemen and on a broader scale to the whole country.

In 1308 St. Peter was installed as the Metropolitan Kiev and all Russia and settled in Vladimir on the Kliazma. The hierarch worked much to build up piety in his extensive flock: he himself went throughout the diocese, instructing the people in the faith and holy life, built temples, reconciled princes warring among themselves, himself went to the Horde to intercede for the clergy before the khan and so forth.

In 1325 St. Peter transferred his see to Moscow that promoted its exaltation, since it then was yet insignificant as a city and to uniting all the Rus about him. Having set the foundation of the famous Dormition (Uspensky) Cathedral, St. Peter died in peace in 1326. Glorified while yet alive with the gift of insight, St. Peter after his death also became glorified for numerous miracles and healings.

The Holy Church hymns him, as "the joy of the heavenly ranks, and on earth the praise of bishops, the glory of priests, the rule of monastics and confirmation of the church", "comfort of the needy, advocate of widows and orphans and great defender of the Russian land".

His relics repose in the Moscow Dormition (Uspensky) Cathedral. In their presence local princes kissed the cross in loyalty to the Grand Prince of Moscow. Russian hierarchs were elected and named here.

Concerning the transfer of his relics see Aug. 24.

Troparion, tone 4

**Now make glad, O Land that before was barren:
For behold Christ revealed in you a lamp,
Openly shining in the world,**

**And healing our afflictions and illnesses:
Therefore dance and make glad with boldness:
For he is a hierarch of the Most High,
His co-worker in these things.**

Kontakion, tone 8

**As a victorious and amazing wonderworker of our land,
Today we hasten to you with love, weaving hymns for you, O God-bearer.
For having boldness before the Lord,
Deliver us from multi-diverse circumstances,
That we may cry out to you:
Rejoice, O confirmation of our city.**

**Refer to the Typicon (Ustav): If the day of Metropolitan Peter falls on
the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ.**

Paramoea and the rest see Aug. 24.

Martyr Themistocles



He was born in Myra in Lycia and was a shepherd of his flock. During the Decius persecution he fearlessly confessed himself a Christian, was tortured for this and beheaded by the sword in the year 251.

Suffering of St. Juliana, Princess of Viazma

St. Juliana was the spouse of Prince Simeon Mstislavovich of Viazma, who served at the court of George Sviatoslavich, Prince of Smolensk. She serves as a paradigm of the highest spousal chastity. During his residence in exile in Torzhok George, more than once unsuccessfully attempting to defile the princess adorned with unearthly beauty, finally killed Simeon, hoping after this to seize his spouse without hindrance. The chaste Juliana opposed the bestial passion of George, and in his rage over this chopped her up with the sword in the year 1406. The relics of St. Juliana, glorified by healings, repose in a hidden place in the cathedral church of Torzhok.

Rest of Procopius of Viatka, Fool-for-Christ

The Blessed Procopius, son of a peasant of the village of Koriazhinsky near Khlynov, in the country of Viatka, at 20 years of age has taken up the ascetic effort of folly. The Lord glorified him with the gift of insight and wonderworking. The blessed one predicted his death by a knife. He was killed by relatives in this manner in the year 1627. His relics, glorified by healings, are found in the Dormition St. Trypho Monastery (see Viatka Diocese).

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp 0464-6
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